The schooling experiences of secondary school learners from child- headed households in Thulamahashe Circuit, Bushbuckridge District, Mpumalanga Province, RSA

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that The schooling experiences of secondary school learners from child-headed households in Thulamahashe Circuit, Bushbuckridge district, Mpumalanga Province, RSA is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE:_________________ DATE:_________________

MRS V.N. CHIDZIVA
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my two lovely children, Tanaka and Taonaishe Lameck Chidziva.
ABSTRACT

Child-headed household is a phenomenon that is growing in South Africa. As such, it is imperative to uncover the realities of children in this situation. This study explores and describes the schooling experiences of secondary school learners from child-headed households. This qualitative study included a sample of 20 grade 10 and 11 learners from four secondary schools. Data were collected through structured interviews and document analysis. The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyze the data. The findings suggest that secondary school learners from child-headed households live in poverty and encounter experiences such as absenteeism, psychological trauma, gender-based discrimination, lack of adequate food and scholastic materials, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy. These experiences impact negatively on their schooling. The study recommends that learners from child-headed households should get more care and support from educators and other stakeholders.
KEY CONCEPTS

Child-headed households

Orphan

Vulnerable child

Household

Psychological trauma
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CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background

For many years, the researcher has been concerned about the schooling experiences of learners from child-headed households. For the past five years, the researcher has been an educator in Bushbuckridge, and subsequently observed that there are a number of learners from child-headed households. Abdool and Abdool (2008) indicate in South Africa the majority of orphans who live in child-headed households are below the age of 18. They estimated that by 2014 the number of children living in child-headed households would be about 5.7 million. This implies that there will be many learners attending schools who come from child-headed households.

Bill (2006) expounds that if you can engage parents and help them with their children’s education, then you are likely to improve the performance of pupils in our schools. This statement implied that parents play an important role in their children’s education which leads to better performance. Having realized that there are many learners without parents, the researcher was interested in highlighting that, in the absence of parents, the performance of learners will be hampered.

According to Regan (2006), children in child-headed homes suffer from depression caused by high levels of stress. He goes on to suggest that there are symptoms of depression that can be observed within children from child-headed homes. These include frequent absences from schools or poor performance in school, social isolation and reluctance to communicate. This implies that children from child-headed households encounter some experiences which
educators must be aware of. Pillay and Nesengani (2006:132) observe that “children are dependent upon parents for socialization and provision of affection. They highlight that parents are still the primary care givers responsible for their children’s social education and self-actualization”.

Children from child-headed homes experience inadequate socialization and their poor performance may be attributed to the fact that they have no one to support, encourage and motivate them in their academic work. According to Regan (2006), parental involvement in schools results in improved pupil attainment and ownership. Without parents, children will not achieve much and Pillay (2006) also noted this when he concludes that, in the absence of parents, children will suffer. Pretorius (2009) contends that a child must be educated and socialized in the family to enable him to live in social contexts. One can argue that families play a central role in the socialization and education of the child, if there are parents in that family.

On closer inspection, the researcher has realized that quite a reasonable number of children in Thulamahashe circuit Bushbuckridge region, Mpumalanga province come from child-headed households. It was therefore imperative for educators to understand the challenges and experiences that these learners face and not assume that all learners have parents. These assumptions only helped to aggravate the situation rather than providing solutions.

Abdool and Abdool (2008) observe that HIV/AIDS compels many adolescents to become parents early in life. This deprives them of their childhood and gives them the burden of fending for the family and being a caregiver at the same time. This is a reality which cannot be ignored. So many learners are coming from child-headed homes mainly because of HIV and
AIDS. Regan (2006) emphasizes that parents are important in the education of their children. Parents help in making sure that homework is done in time. They give guidance and counseling to their children at home and they also provide a conducive home environment for the child. This means that in child-headed households, due to the absence of parents, there is no one to give advice and coaching after school, therefore this has a negative impact on their performance at school.

Research has indicated that South Africa is facing an escalation in the number of children orphaned by HIV and AIDS. Ritcher (2004) estimated that by 2012 orphans would be between 3.6 and 4.8 million. He concludes that there is evidence to suggest that children in child-headed households will not have the advantage of growing up in homes where they are not supervised by adults.

1.2 Purpose of the study

This study investigated and described the experiences of learners from child-headed households in Thulamahashe Circuit, Bushbuckridge District, Mpumalanga in South Africa. It provided a detailed description of experiences of learners from child-headed households, which inescapably affected their performance and gave suggestions to teachers on what they must do to cover that gap.
1.3 Primary aim

This study aimed to explore the schooling experiences of secondary school learners from child-headed households in Thulamahashe Circuit, Bushbuckridge district in Mpumalanga Province in South Africa.

1.4 Secondary aims

The secondary aims of this study were:

- To identify the schooling experiences of secondary school learners from child-headed households in Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga.

- To investigate the psychological challenges faced by secondary school learners who live in child-headed households.

- To explore the nature and impact of financial difficulties experienced by learners in child-headed households.

- To identify the causes and nature of absenteeism in child-headed households.

- To investigate the circumstances leading to the emergence of child-headed households.

- To establish how the performance of learners in child-headed households is influenced by their living conditions.

- To determine how the schooling of learners who live in child-headed households is affected by the absence of parents or caregivers.
1.5 Significance of the study

This research is significant in the domain of teaching and learning in general. It explores the schooling experiences faced by secondary school learners from child-headed households. It provides ways and means of teachers to assist such children to realize their full potential. Teachers will gain more insight into the phenomenon and this will enable them to respond positively and effectively in helping learners who live in child-headed households in the challenges that they face. This study is hoped to assist teachers, the department of education and social workers in influencing policy development and advocating policy implementation. It will also help to develop the researcher, extend her horizons, foster personal growth and broaden her knowledge.

This research intends to assist educators and other stakeholders in the district of Bushbuckridge. This study will also help teachers to keep in mind that no matter their social background, children come to school ready to learn with high hopes for success (Epstein and Sanders, 2000: 289). This implies that whether learners have parents or not, despite their experiences as a result of coming from child-headed households, they are willing to succeed in their schooling activities. This research also intends to raise awareness in teachers on the experiences of learners from child-headed homes. It is anticipated that the district of Bushbuckridge would be assisted to improve and eventually get desirable results.

1.6 Research question

This research sought to gain insight into the schooling experiences of learners from child-headed households in Bushbuckridge. It specifically answered the following question.
What are the schooling experiences of learners from child-headed households in Thulamahashe secondary schools?

The following sub-questions were also answered:

a) How does living in a child-headed home impact on the schooling experiences of learners?
b) What are the circumstances leading to the establishment of child-headed households?
c) What are the psychological challenges faced by learners who live in child-headed households?
d) How does gender discrimination in child-headed households impact on the schooling experiences of learners?
e) What are the causes and nature of absenteeism in child-headed households?
f) How do the living conditions of children in child-headed households affect their performance at school?
g) How does the absence of parents affect the schooling experiences of learners in child-headed households?

1.7 Literature review

Literature on the schooling experiences of learners who live in child-headed households was reviewed. It covered the psychological trauma faced by these learners, the financial difficulties, gender discrimination, causes and nature of absenteeism and how it affected the performance of these learners. It was also important to review literature on how poverty and lack of scholastic materials affected the schooling of child-headed households. Literature on the
circumstances leading to the establishment of child-headed households and the effect of the absence of parents and care givers on child-headed households was also reviewed.

1.8 Paradigm

This research was carried out within the interpretive paradigm. This meant the duty of the researcher was that of understanding what was going on. The researcher placed emphasis on the process of understanding and interpreting the world in terms of its actors.

Cohen, Manion and Morison (2000) suggest that since the interpretive paradigm focuses on action. It was suitable for this research because as a practicing teacher, the researcher wanted to find out the schooling experiences of learners from child-headed households and the extent to which teachers knew and understood these experiences.

1.9 Theoretical framework

Awoniyi, Aderanti and Tayo (2011; 33) explain that theoretical framework involves presentation of different theories showing the generalizations already accumulated in reaction to the problem. The ecological systems model was used. The ecological systems model was developed by Uri Bronfenbrenner (1917 - 2005). This model used different types of relationships and surroundings of a person to help explain the development. The ecological systems model is divided into different layers of the child’s environment and these are the micro-system, the meso-system, the exo-system and the macro-system. Thus the ecological model includes the home, community and school of learners from child-headed households. For example, in the micro-system, a good example is that of parents, who have an influence on the child. Learning
does not only depend on the teachers’ knowledge but also on the parents’ knowledge. This implies that in the absence of parents, the learning of children from child-headed homes is incomplete.

Comer and Hayness in Lemmer and Van Wyk (2010: 204) worked within an ecological systems approach and argue that schools need partnership with parents. So in the case of learners from child-headed households there is no such partnership. This research sheds light on what happens to learners who do not have parents. Woolfolk (2010: 67) again says that the parent influences the child. In other words, there is no one to influence the child positively in a child-headed home.

1.10 Research design

Awoniyi et al. (2011: 45) say that research design is more or less a blueprint of research or it is like the plan of a house. This study was oriented in the interpretive paradigm making use of qualitative approach because the researcher was interested in understanding the experiences of secondary school learners who live in child-headed homes. The qualitative research design was used since it is contextual, exploratory and descriptive in nature. Macmillan and Schumacher (2010: 6) state that interpretive or constructivists researchers use systematic procedures, rather than trying to be objective, researchers’ professional judgments and perspectives are considered in the interpretation of data. There is less emphasis on numbers and more emphasis on values and context. In this study, the researcher had an in-depth understanding and interpretation of the subjective experiences of learners from child-headed households.
1.11 Phenomenology

This study utilized a phenomenological approach, which according to Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 139), “is a study that attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives and understandings of a particular situation. In other words, a phenomenological study tries to answer the question, what is it like to experience such and such?”. This meant that considering the topic under study the question, “what is it like to be a learner from a child-headed home?” was answered. However, Macmillan and Schumacher (2010: 346) emphasize that the researcher needs to suspend or bracket preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to elicit and better understand the meanings given by the participants.

1.12 Data collection

Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 139) have concluded that in phenomenology researchers depend most on lengthy interviews. The interviews are carried out a sample of participants which has been selected carefully. In this research, data collection was done through interviews and document reviews. Interviews and document review will complement each other and possibly compensate for any limitations and inadequacies encountered with either of the two.

1.13 Interviews

In this study, unstructured interviews were used. Awoniyi et al. (2011: 15) pointed out that there is no format in an unstructured interview. The interviewer does not need to follow a laid pattern of asking questions. The interviewer has the ability to ask questions that are broad in the order that is most suitable. (Macmillan and Schumacher, 2010: 206). This allowed in-depth
analysis and pursuit geared towards each respondent. The researcher had time to interact on a one-on-one basis and pursue the responses of participants by asking for clarification or explanation. The interviews were tape recorded with permission from participants and then transcribed.

1.14 Document Reviews

These refer to records of past events in the form of letters, diaries and documents usually preserved in collections (Macmillan and Schumacher, 2010: 361). The researcher used students and personal files, school reports, mark sheets or mark schedules, school registers and other school records. This furnished her with information she needed from learners coming from child-headed households. In this study, school reports, mark sheets and schedules helped to conclude on the performance of learners from child-headed households. A school register helped to conclude on the attendance of these learners. Permission was obtained from relevant authorities to access the documents mentioned above.

1.15 Sample

The unit of analysis chosen for this study comprised grade 10 and 11 learners from four secondary schools in Thulamahashe circuit. The sample of this study was drawn through purposive sampling and consisted of 20 learners drawn from four secondary schools within Thulamahashe Circuit in the Bushbuckridge district. Purposive sampling is a type of sampling that is based on the judgment of the researcher and it allowed the researcher to select a sample that is representative of the population. It is sampling that enables the researcher to choose the individuals or small groups that know the phenomenon of interest. Considering the
topic under study, the researcher deliberately chose learners who came from child-headed homes.

The sample size was suitable and appropriate as the researcher used qualitative inquiry. According to Macmillan and Schumacher (2010: 489), “There are statistical rules of probability sample size, they are only guidelines for qualitative sample size. Thus qualitative samples can range from 1 to 40 or more. Typically, a qualitative sample seems small compared with the sample needed to generalize to a larger population”. Two teachers per school were also interviewed from the four secondary schools.

The researcher chose Thulamahashe Circuit because she knew the location of schools most of which were close to her hometown. Therefore, she did not incur excessive travelling expenses. The researcher purposely selected this circuit because she was teaching at one of the schools in the circuit during the time of this study.

1.16 Data analysis

In the analysis of interviews and documentation, the researcher sought for themes that related to the experiences of learners from child-headed households. After transcribing the interview, Creswell (2003) suggests that the researcher should take the following steps, which the researcher followed.

a) Identifying statements that relate to the topic.

b) Grouping statements into meaningful units.

c) Seeking divergent perspectives.
d) Constructing a composite.

Data analysis was carried out as soon as the data were obtained. This entailed categorization of emerging themes.

1.17 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues such as informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality were addressed before embarking on the research. This ensured that the respondents were informed about the implications of the research. Consent forms were designed and the researcher explained to the participants the nature of the study and what was expected of them. Participants were told of their right to withdraw at any stage of the research. The nature of the study and what was expected of them was explained to the participants were informed about the parameters of confidentiality that were provided by them (Macmillan and Schumacher, 2010).

1.18 Limitations

This study had limitations due the small size of the sample that was used. The results therefore were not generalized and were used within the context of Bushbuckridge region.

1.19 Key concepts

Child-headed household, orphan, vulnerable child, household.

A child-headed household is any household where a child under 18 years of age or up to 18 years of age carries care-giving responsibilities (Sloth-Nielsen, 2003). There are many definitions of a child-headed household Nielsen (2004) reiterated that child-headed households are
generally considered to be those where the main caregiver is younger than 18 years of age. Phillips (2011:163) defines “a child-headed household as one in which the oldest child has assumed most of the responsibilities of a parent. These households more often than not lack the capacity to adequately provide for children forming part of the household.”

UNAIDS (2004) defines a child-headed household as a household where children have lost both parents due to HIV/AIDS and have usurped responsibilities of providing for younger siblings. This definition has limitations as it only considers children whose parents have died as a result of HIV/AIDS. However, for the purposes of this study, children who had lost their parents due to various circumstances, and children who had been abandoned by their parents were considered. In this study therefore, a child-headed household was considered to be a household in which everyone who lived in that household was younger than 18 years old. It is a household consisting of children only and the household head is the eldest child who has the responsibilities of running a household such as fending for the family and caring for siblings. (Foster and Williamson, 2000). This is consistent with the South African constitution (1996) section 28(1) which defines a child as any person under the age of 18.

An orphan is defined as a child that has lost both parents. This definition is as outlined in section 28(1) of the South African Constitution (1996). The Draft Children’s Bill (2002) in South Africa defines an orphan as a child who has no surviving parent caring for him or her after one of the parents has died. The term “orphan” is a socially constructed concept whose meaning and content differ from culture to culture and country to country. In some cultures, for
example, it refers to children who have lost both parents, while in some cultures it refers to children who have lost one parent.

Malinga (2002) identifies three categories of orphans, which are maternal, paternal and double orphans. Maternal orphans are children whose mothers have died but whose fathers are alive. Paternal orphans are those whose fathers are dead but the mothers are alive. Double orphans are those whose parents (both) are deceased. On the other hand, Case et al. (2004) defines double orphans as children for whom either both parents are deceased, or the other parent has unknown vital status, or both parents have unknown vital status, even if alive are unlikely to influence their children’s care.

Maqobo and Dreyer (2007) suggested another category of orphans: HIV/AIDS orphans. These are described by international policy makers as children aged between 15 or younger who have lost either their mother or parents because of HIV/AIDS. This study considered all the above categories of orphans.

A vulnerable child is a child between 0-18 who is in need of care and protection. Vulnerable children are those who have no or limited access to their basic needs or those for whom only some basic rights are fulfilled (Skinner et al., 2004). For the purposes of this study, children who live in child-headed households are also referred to as vulnerable children.

A household refers to one or more people who share cooking and eating arrangements. According to statistics South Africa household members are persons who sleep in the common home for four or more nights a week. In this study, a child-headed household therefore refers to children who are siblings living together and sleeping in a common home.
1.20 List of Acronyms

HIV - Human Immune deficiency virus

AIDS - Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

OVIC - Orphans and vulnerable children

UNAIDS - Joint united Nations Program on HIV/AIDS

UNICEF - United Nations Children’s Fund

USAIDS - United States Agency for International Aid

1.21 Summary

Chapter one presented a brief overview and orientation to the study. Chapter two reviews the relevant literature in relation to the schooling experiences of secondary school learners in child-headed households. The research design and methodology is outlined in chapter three. Chapter four provides data presentation, analysis and interpretation. In chapter 5 the conclusion and recommendations are presented.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one discussed the background to the study, purpose of the research, primary aim, secondary aims and significance of the study research questions, paradigm and theoretical framework. This chapter reviews current literature on challenges faced by children from child-headed households, the experiences of orphaned children as a result of HIV/AIDS, the effects of poverty on the performance of learners, the schooling experiences on the children from child-headed households, the circumstances leading to the establishment of child-headed households and the impact of the absent father in a child-headed household.

Much of the literature on child-headed households report on experiences of orphaned children by HIV/AIDS only yet according to Bundy et al. (2008), it is important to remember that HIV/AIDS is not the only factor that causes children to be orphans or made vulnerable. He highlighted that concentrating purely on children affected by HIV/AIDS can result in the need for others being ignored. Therefore, he made it clear that the needs of a “child orphaned by AIDS” are similar to the needs of a “child not orphaned by AIDS” Tyabazayo (2008) also reiterates that children living in child-headed households generally experience the same problems as children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS.

It was kept in mind that some of the children living in child-headed households are not orphans at all. The 2006 General household survey in South Africa found out that only 8% of the children living in child-headed households were children who had lost both their mothers and fathers, and 80% had living mothers (Meintjies, Hall, Marera and Boulle, 2010).
2.2 Challenges faced by children from child-headed households

2.2.1 Psychological trauma

Ogina (2010) highlighted that the increasing number of orphans in most African countries present certain challenges. Parents are the ones who generally fulfill their children’s physical, social and psychological sense of belonging. The research by Ogina (2010) indicates that parents play a supportive role in their children’s learning experiences. This means when a child is orphaned, the child’s support structure and experiences may suffer. Children without parents are usually traumatized by their parents’ death which is then followed by a change in their living conditions. These children suffer from emotional trauma from losing their parents or caregivers, who in some cases die after a long illness. Under these circumstances older children assume parental role and responsibilities by taking care of siblings. According to Mchombu (2009), stigmatization, abuse, name calling, being forced to engage in unprotected sex in turn make them more vulnerable to infections like HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Problems such as these will impact negatively on the children’s mental well-being and will lead to emotional distress as well as withdrawal and behavioral regression. This will overstrain them physically and emotionally. Orphans also manifest emotional and behavioral symptoms in the form of anxiety, depression, anger, outbursts and regression.

Bennel (2005) explains that in some schools teachers identified a number of problems that affect children in child-headed households. Aggressiveness and disruptive behavior were some of the major problems affecting learners who come from child-headed households; sexual abuse, failure to concentrate in class were some of the problems noted. These children’s lives
are shaped by inadequate care and support from adults. As a result, they are vulnerable to poverty, malnutrition, diseases, physical and psychological trauma and exploitation. Fox (2001:122) noted that,” children in child-headed households face tremendous, emotional and psychological challenges and live in constant memories of their deceased parents. The majority of children suffer feelings of loneliness, trauma, desperation and sadness because of the combined effects of bereavement and stress associated with shouldering an adult role at a young age, low self-esteem, fear and a sense of alienation”.

The study by Nielsen (2004) further expounds that only focusing on practical issues can sometimes hide the less deprivations and needs of growing up in child-headed households. These include the absence of adult guidance and mentoring and the need for love and security. Tsegaye (2005) added that child-headed households face tremendous emotional and psychological challenges and live with the constant memory of their deceased parents and their lingering agony and death. He further observes that the majority of the children suffer feelings of loneliness, desperation and depression following bereavement and stress associated with shouldering an adult role at a young age. Children in child-headed households have low self-esteem, fear and a sense of alienation.

Phillips (2011) noted that children in child-headed households are psychologically traumatized because of loss of parents in their childhood. The situation becomes worse due to the fact that the members of the extended family and the community may reject them. As a result child-headed households are emotionally unstable. Their psychological problems are worse as compared to other children who live with their parents. Child-heads have problems of fear and
a desire of their parents since they have the responsibility of taking care of their siblings and taking care of the household. It is important to emphasize that the psychological trauma is increased by the fact that some of the child-heads witnessed the illness and death of their parents.

Fox (2001:120) added that “children in child-headed households also suffer stress in the process of adapting to adult roles and responsibilities of caring on with minimal resources of the needs of survival parenting and security. Children in child-headed households are at risk of neglect, violence, sexual abuse and other abuses, which lead to psychological trauma. They live with both fears and hopes of their future as they grapple with overwhelming responsibilities which are beyond their experience or capacity”. Some become depressed, anxious and pessimistic. Phillips (2011) further explains that children in child-headed households reported a sense of religious disorientation because of growing up without spiritual guidance. These children also have little or no time and interest to play, and if they do have time they feel more comfortable playing with their own siblings than with other children. Pouslen (2006) further noted that the majority of children in his study in child-headed households who were visited lived in dilapidated mud houses, or under plastic shelters. These conditions not only expose children to wind and rain, but also exacerbate their sense of insecurity at night.

Pillay (2011) reiterated that the lack of parental guidance, support, and love leaves an indelible mark on the psychological well-being of children in child-headed households. Du Toit and Forlin (2009) in Pillay (2011:4) added that “the absence of parents raises questions on the acquisition
of values, beliefs and practices of children. Children who head families struggle with issues such as self-confidence, self-esteem, emotional stability, poverty group sociability and morality”.

Foster and Williamon (2000) report that children who live in child-headed homes have psychological challenges which include becoming withdrawn, passive or developing sadness, anger, fear and antisocial behaviors. Such children experience additional trauma from lack of nurturing guidance and a sense of attachment which may impede their socialization process through damaged self-confidence, social completeness and motivation. UNAIDS (2001) further reveals that children in child-headed households find it difficult to find a sensitive ear as most of their behavioral changes may not always be understood as distressed and may sometimes be punished by adults or just ignored. Adults, in this case teachers are not able to deal with the children’s emotional and psychological needs and are rarely aware of such needs.

Ganga and Chinyoka (2010) further noted that children in child-headed households showed signs of depression which include low self-esteem, exhaustion for prolonged periods, discouragement, helplessness and loss of worthiness. Some of the children in their study also displayed Maniac Depressive Bipolar Disorder and the symptoms of such disorders include uncontrollable weeping and suicidal threats interjected with hyperactivity. Some of the children also showed that they had Minor and Partial Amnesia as they showed signs and symptoms of forgetfulness that affected learning and grasping of concepts. The children were also emotionally deprived and this affected their learning. Daniel and Mathias (2012) suggests that the numerous and conflicting roles encountered by children in child-headed households caused tension in their lives which required creative responses to resolve.
Ganga and Chinyoka (2010) further observed that the death of parents in some instances makes children vulnerable and exposes them to physical and psychological risks over which they have no control. According to Safman (2004), emotional devastation is common among orphaned children who live alone as a result of the death of their parents. There is also the question of sheer continued survival of these children in the absence of their parents. The feeling of helplessness is very costly in terms of psychological well-being and may be reflected in the lack of concern, involvement and vitality in social and school activities. However, Maqobo and Dreyer (2007) note that the effects of death and bereavement are not always negative. Positive effects on children who live in child-headed households are that they behave more responsibly and more maturely out of sheer need to survive.

2.2.2 Financial difficulties

Foster et al. (1997) and Meintjies (2010) agree that child-headed homes are unable to obtain social grants from the government as financial support. This is because there is usually no primary adult care giver who can apply for the grant, as most of these children are 16 years old or younger. Snider (2006) defines the primary caregiver as a person older than 16 years, whether or not related to a child who takes primary responsibility for meeting the daily needs of the child. Tabazayo (2009) argues that this presents problems, as there are children who are under 16 years heading households. He further remarks that some of the children who are refused to be primary care givers because they are 16 years or younger are in fact performing care giving duties. The study added that children heading households would find it difficult to be appointed as foster parents of their siblings. He concluded therefore that a foster care grant
has no impact whatsoever on the phenomenon of child-headed households because a foster parent must be appointed by a court of law, a process that is long and complicated.

Phillips (2011:153) observes that, “although children living in child-headed homes are theoretically eligible for one or more of the grants available, applications are complicated, time consuming and frequently unsuccessful owing to the fact that the required documents or information cannot be supplied resulting in the disqualification of the application”. Neilsen (2004) reiterates that children living in child-headed households may struggle to get births registered. In the case where the application is successful, it takes several months to receive the first payment, and as a result very few children in child-headed households receive the social security grant. Ayieko (2003) also added that child-headed households have difficulties in getting the social security grants because they are minors and as a result they do not qualify to apply for financial support. Social workers response in this regard is too slow and in some cases it does not exist.

Booysen and Bachman (2003) highlight that the situation is further aggravated by the fact that most of these children are orphans and the death of their parents result in them left to care for themselves because surviving relatives are already too burdened to adequately care for the children that they have inherited. In some instances when parents die, orphans are cheated of property and money that are rightfully theirs. As a result, children become household heads and have little option but to seek to support themselves and their siblings. Maqobo and Dreyer (2007) also emphasized that child-headed households encounter financial challenges because they do not have parents to work for them. As a result they are forced to take the adult role of
supporting the family. According to Bennel (2005) lack of finance in a child-headed household has a negative impact on the functioning of that household. The youngest siblings in the household become vulnerable because they are too young to generate income for themselves. More so, the number of orphans and vulnerable children who do not attend school or drop out is increasing permanently due to economic hardships because they cannot afford school fees and uniforms. Mchombu (2009) explains that this leads to orphans acquiring inadequate education. Girls may feel compelled to marry when still under age in an effort to generate income. The research by Fox (2001) also added that with limited education, external support and no means to generate income to provide for their families and a sense of desperation a number of girls in child-headed households end up as prostitutes or get married at a very early age, often too much older men. Booysen and Bachman (2003) reiterate that the most important reason for high infection rates among girls from child-headed households is the frequency of sexual intercourse with older men who seduce naive girls with offers of cash, consumer goods and supposed status. Girls who are orphaned by HIV/AIDS, who lack family support and peer networks may become vulnerable to further sexual harassment and exploitation. Due to financial difficulties, the boys on the other hand may join armed groups to make their way to the streets to look for employment.

Meintjies et al. (2010) indicated that the majority of child-headed households do not have adequate and regular income because they do not receive social grants. This is because most of these households are located in remote areas where the delivery of services is poor. Although social grants are the main source of income for most people in South Africa. Most children in child-headed households do not receive such grants. This is due to the fact that they are older
as compared to children in other households. Few of these children do qualify to receive social grants. The situation becomes worse as there are no pensioners in these households. This means that it is difficult for child-headed households to get financial assistance through social grants.

According to Phillips (2011), in South Africa, living conditions of child-headed homes have been found to be worse than those of other households. Children in such homes have no access to proper housing, adequate sanitation, water and electricity. Phillips (2011) further reveals that most children in child-headed households depend on an irregular and unstructured allowance provided by adults, neighbors or other relatives. As a result, child-headed households experience a substantially higher poverty rate. Nielsen (2004) expounds that rules of inheritance in customary law make children vulnerable to being dispossessed of their houses and land. Property grabbing by families and communities who seize land, cattle and other assets when a household dies also leads to deep financial crisis of child-headed households. Ogina (2010) suggests that due to financial difficulties children living in child-headed households lacked food and clothing and were emotionally deprived and this affected their learning.

Daniel and Mathias (2012) identify lack of income as one of the stressors of children living in child-headed households. UNAIDS (1999) noted that as a result of lack of income, these children solely lack care and support and also are badly nourished. Loss of parents, lack of cash and the need to balance school attendance with food production were chronic stressors for the children heading households. Freeman (2004) added that due to financial difficulties children in
child-headed households do not have adequate food and they become malnourished and as result suffer from many health problems including severe malnutrition, diarrhoea, pneumonia, skin problems and stomach pains caused by unhygienic and insufficient food, housing and environment. Due to the combined effects of poor nutrition, poor health and physical and psychological exhaustion, many of the children in the study by Freeman (2004) who lived in child-headed homes exhibited stunted growth.

According to the Nelson Mandela Children’s fund report (2001), financial difficulties encountered by children living in child-headed homes lead to hunger, poor housing, exploitation, child labour, early marriage, inadequate medical care, prostitution, criminal acts and drug abuse. According to Neilsen (2004), lack of income in child-headed households leads to many deprivations and challenges and these include difficulties in getting proper food and shelter, and serious threats to their education. Financial difficulties also lead to a higher risk of being sexually abused by neighbours and relatives, more prostitution and child labour. Uncared children tend to develop risk coping mechanisms that expose them to further risks of HIV infection such as being on the streets of major urban centres whereby they are vulnerable to sexual abuse by adults. There is also more likelihood of pursuing life in the streets. Mangiste and Alemu (2002) explain that the number of orphans is growing putting increasing number of children at risk both indirectly through lost educational opportunities and more directly by forcing them to survive in high risk situations in the streets and in child-headed households. Orphaned children do not have secured means of income and as a result the elderly may drop their education in order to supplement the little income they have.
Snider (2006) further highlights that economic hardships lead to the children living on their own to look for means of subsistence that increase their vulnerability to HIV infection, substance abuse, sex work and delinquency. Meintjies et al. (2010) agrees with Snider (2006) that due to financial difficulties, child-headed households are less likely to live in formal dwellings with poor service delivery. This is partly because they are disproportionately located outside cities where better services are available. Child-headed households are at risk of having to cope not only without adults but also with poor living conditions than other children.

### 2.2.3 Gender-based discrimination

According to Neilsen (2004), girl children are especially vulnerable in the emergence of child-headed households. Gender-based discrimination which often leads to the sexual division of labour means that girls are more likely than boys to have to care for terminally ill family members. This deprives them of their right to education and often means they have to do tasks that affect their right not to be subjected to child labour. Orphaned girl children are especially vulnerable to being victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking. According to Mangiste and Alemu (2002), orphaned children are frequently abused by relatives or members of the community and this leads to low self-esteem and self-efficacy. The situation is further worsened by the fact that they lack parental role models and access to traditional forms of sex education. Their inferior socialization will not equip them with positive life skills. Many HIV/AIDS orphans experience sexual harassment especially girls. Due to cultural taboos concerning any sexual activity by girls, they have little access to preventive measures and other services. Booysen and Bachman (2003) added that more girls than boys are withdrawn from
school or have their entry postponed. They highlighted that girls are twice as likely as boys to
drop out of school. Mangiste and Alemu (2002) further observe that girls may be forced to
engage in commercial sex as an economic survival strategy while boys may be street children.
Sarin (2003) added discovered in most cases girls become the first to withdraw from school.

In their research on gender discrimination in child-headed households, Snider (2006) and Sloth-
Neilsen (2004) observe that girls do most of the chores and decide on the major operations
from day-to-day. They further note that boys see girls as more efficient in housekeeping and
rely on them to do most of the chores alone around the home. Daniel and Matthias (2012:193)
added that “girls usually take on the roles of care and domestic labour while boys frequently
receive more education than girls. In some instances under customary and some religious laws,
girls at puberty, are considered mature enough for undertaking a woman’s social roles of
reproduction and household activities. In some communities, girls may be forced into marriage
or asked to take full responsibility of household activities”. Tsegaye (2005) explain that girls
heading households and their siblings faced rape or attempted rape on numerous occasions.

According to Pillay (2011), many girls expressed their frustration with the heavy household
responsibilities. They could not cope with the situation of being a mother and a child at the
same time. They become depressed as a result of living on their own. In many instances they
struggled for survival and encountered difficulties in their learning activities.

2.3 The schooling experiences of children living in child-headed households

According to the African Child policy forum (2005), children living in child-headed households
find it hard to go to school because of lack of money, scholastic materials and even if they do,
the majority does not attend school regularly because they feel tired, have inadequate food to sustain them during school hours or because they are frequently sick. It was therefore imperative to look at the schooling experiences in detail.

2.3.1 Absenteeism

Pillay (2011) gives detailed narrative of the experiences of learners from child-headed households. She revealed that because of an increase in child-headed households, educational institutions are likely to be affected by absenteeism and possible drop out of learners as these children require time to run households and to take care of younger siblings. Poulsen (2006) reiterates that members of child-headed households may be pulled out of school by their caring responsibilities. In child-headed households, there is no one who has authority to make the children go to school, and that is why attendance is irregular. Often times, learners from child-headed households do not go to school because they have to beg in the streets or find part time jobs, just to be able to feed younger siblings. Andrews et al. (2004) also added that there is a lower attendance to schooling among orphans. Mangiste and Alemu suggest that the socio-economic impact of HIV/AIDS on children has resulted in the decline of school attendance as children resort to child labour. Children get the double burden of taking care of their families and raising their siblings. This may demand them to drop out of school. Guarcello et al. (2004) explain that rates of absenteeism among learners from child-headed homes are high because they have to take care of younger siblings or to work. The rate of absenteeism is high and the rate of premature dropout increases as children are forced to work or take caretaking responsibilities.
Bundy et al. (2006) explains that attendance at school also declines especially if children have to work or care for others. On the other hand, Snider (2006) suggests that children in child-headed households absent themselves from school due to lack of parental guidance and encouragement. It is often difficult for orphans and all children in child-headed households to continue education without interruption. Consequently, regular or seasonal absenteeism is common. The cycle is self-propagating and the more time a child is absent from school, the more they fall behind. Unfortunately, this frequently results in the child having to drop out of school. Bundy et al. (2006) expounds that although there is lack of direct empirical data on the impact of being orphaned or made vulnerable on the performance in schools, one can infer from the difficulties such children face that they might perform poorly at school.

Gilborn et al. (2001) suggests that absenteeism among children who are heads of households reduces school enrolment and attendance rate. Snider (2006) noted that HIV/AIDS orphans are have less access to education and lower enrolment rates than non-orphans. As observed by Bundy et al. (2006), the issues faced with children whose parents have died of HIV/AIDS related illnesses are in many ways no different to those of children whose parents have died of other causes. According to Snider (2006), children in child-headed homes have more responsibility for care of younger siblings and household livelihood. As a result, they experience disrupted schooling as they take on increasing caretaking roles and livelihood responsibility of the household. These new roles increase their vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. Giese, Meintjies et al. (2003) argue that many children living in child-headed homes drop out of school or attended erratically because they were begging in the streets, doing piecework or turning to petty crime to try to feed themselves and their families.
Desmond and Graw (2002) added that absenteeism is a major challenge among child-headed households. The impact of HIV/AIDS related illness in the home reduces access to education for a number of reasons including economic hardship, the need for children to perform household duties, the need to find employment and the effects of grief and stress on children affect their attendance at school.

Oghuvhu (2010) did a research on the attendance and academic performance of students in secondary schools. He noted that a student that is not regular in school faces learning problems resulting from late coming to school, truancy, inability to read and not consulting teachers. The research revealed that some students develop a negative attitude towards school as a result of poor attendance or absenteeism. As has already been indicated earlier, children in child-headed households do not attend school regularly, and this will affect their performance. Oghuvhu (2010) further reiterated that the relationship between attendance and academic performance in secondary schools is fairly correlated. In other words, attendance influences academic performance. This research concluded that an increase in attendance will also increase academic performance. According to Sloth-Neilsen (2004), school attendance is related to higher achievement for students of all backgrounds. Students who attend school regularly score higher than their peers who are frequently absent. Regular unexcused absence leads to academic failure, dropping out of school, substance abuse and gang and criminal activity.

According to the research done by the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund (2001), children who belong to child-headed households are sometimes excluded from the education system, and many times are forced to leave school as a result of poverty so that they comply with the
responsibilities of heading households. Phillips (2011) also added that the household-head usually lacks the time to attend school and being too occupied with the responsibilities of caring for siblings and having to generate income to supply food and other essentials for the family. However, Meintjies et al. (2010) contradicts the above findings and rather reported that in their research, they discovered that the attendance rate of children living in child-headed households was not found to be significantly lower.

According to Tsegaye (2005), heavy household duties among children living in child-headed households are the main cause of absenteeism and non-school attendance of children from child-headed households. These findings are supported by Roalkvam (2005) and Mkhize (2006) who further observed that children heading a household may experience difficulties in focusing their education while bearing the responsibility of a household. Bundy (2006) supported the above findings by concluding that attendance at school declines especially if children have to work or care for others. The opportunity cost of children’s time therefore becomes very high because it may mean that the child needs to work or stay at home to take care of household duties.

According to UNAIDS (2004), the ability to stay in school suffers significantly when a child loses both parents. Orphans who lost both parents are even more likely to drop out of school and to be drafted into child labour. Phillips (2011) added that additional factors among orphans include hefty domestic care giving responsibilities and grief. Maqobo and Dreyer (2007) noted that orphans are less likely to be in school and are more likely to fail behind or drop out.
According to Guarcello et al. (2004), most children are orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS and an increase in orphan-hood is overwhelming. Orphaned children must perform some form of work to support themselves and or their families interfering with or precluding schooling. The worse are forced into streets where they become involved in prostitution or other harmful exploitative forms of work. Evidence indicates that children’s participation in formal schooling is decreasing school enrolment and school attendance of students in child-headed households is also decreasing. However, Bennel (2005) explains that the provision of school meals is a major incentive to attend school among the disadvantaged children who live in child-headed households in South Africa.

2.3.2 Poor performance

According to Tsegaye (2005), most children living in child-headed households who live in urban areas have to work late in the evening to make a living by buying and selling cigarettes, roasted grain, lottery tickets and other activities. As a result, most of these children score poorly in some subjects especially those that require extra time and help. This can be traced to lack of pedagogic support. Mkhize (2006) in a PhD thesis entitled, “Social functioning of a child-headed household and the role of social work” noted that the majority of children from child-headed households drop out of school, face problems of lack of parental guidance, inadequate socialization, financial and material support. Inadequate socialization of orphaned children leads to low self-esteem and performance.

Safman (2004) further suggests that children who live in child-headed homes especially those who are orphaned by HIV/AIDS are not only less likely to get access to schooling, but also often
have a lower performance in school than children who are not. This can be attributed to the preoccupation with the death of their parents and the isolation and stigma associated with the loss of parents to HIV/AIDS. In addition, the undertaking of additional work that comes with supporting oneself after one’s parents have died often makes it difficult for orphaned children to concentrate in school. Germamm (2005) indicates that many of the children who live in child-headed households and attend school struggle with performance due to either hunger, lack of time to study, irregular attendance or thinking about other things whilst at school. This is not surprising considering the major adult caring roles child-headed household members have to take charge of on a daily basis.

Swift and Maher (2008) observe that many orphans feel tired and dejected because of their experiences and thus generally do not perform well. Pillay (2011) added that in most cases orphans go to school psychologically and emotionally affected. They feel hungry, exhausted and sick. This in turn will affect their performance. Taggart (2007) in Pillay (2011) explains that the situation becomes worse considering the poor resources and large class facilities at schools. The majority of teachers have not been trained to deal with such learners and the magnitude of difficulties that they are often presented with.

According to Pillay (2011), children in child-headed households express disillusionment of their living circumstances, for example, poor sanitation and unhygienic living conditions. Many of the learners in child-headed households do not have adequate furniture such as tables and desks to do their school work. Learners are forced to take adult responsibilities even when they are still children in need of adult care and supervision. This has resulted in negative psychological
consequences which in turn lead to poor performance. Pillay (2011) also indicates that children living in child-headed households live in poverty. Notably, poverty is harmful to one’s mental and physical well-being and it is likely to impact on the learner’s academic performance especially when they do not have educational materials.

It is also imperative to look at the challenges in the health care of children living within child-headed households because this has an impact on their learning at school. Phillips (2011) explains the health care challenges faced by children in child-headed households. She notes that the health status of child-headed households is in most instances abdominal and their impoverished situation prevents them from accessing medical care systems.

Maqobo and Dreyer (2005) observed that orphaned children had behavioral problems and showed signs of emotional disorders and psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety. As a result they performed badly because they failed to concentrate in class. Teachers in most cases failed to recognize the psychological challenges that these children face. Teachers therefore failed to address these challenges. The situation becomes worse as the children become fearful, depressed and frustrated. Consequently, these factors lead to poor performance in school. According to Bundy (2006), children in child-headed homes have emotional reactions; they may withdraw, feel shame or dwell on their impending situation. Once a relative is suffering or has died, their concentration and work will suffer. Meintjies et al. (2006) also added that orphaned children who live in child-headed households fell asleep during lessons and were always late for their classes. They failed to do their homework and if
they did they did not compete it. In most cases these children were severely punished by their teachers.

Maqobo and Dreyer (2005) suggest that adolescence in child-headed households feel deprived of the opportunity to share the first achievements with the parent. In fact, their development may be more affected. Orphaned children are a little too old for the school classes they are in; coupled with the fact that many of them are depressed. This implies that a good proportion of them are not benefiting from the existing design of educational programmes. Guarcello et al. (2004) also noted that in many HI/AIDS affected contexts; orphans are less likely to be enrolled at their proper educational level than non-orphans of the same age. This may result in poor performance.

Aldri (2001) supports the findings by Maqobo and Dreyer (2005) when he explains that for those orphans who remain in school, performance deteriorated due to worry, depression and other physiological manifestations of anxiety. According to Bundy et al. (2006), both in school and in a troubled home, the child is having emotional reaction which must not be forgotten. As a result, concentration and work at school will suffer. Furthermore, enrolment, attendance and performance of an orphan may be affected by many different factors. Performance suffers as a result of absenteeism and lack of parental care and support.

Andrews et al. (2006) added that children from child-headed households were vulnerable and they showed signs of hunger such as vomiting water, shivering or collapsing in class. They were also found to steal food from other learners, lack concentration, fall asleep in class, beg for food and not playing with other children. Children in child-headed homes also signs of exhaustion,
change in behavior, being dirty, not having a uniform or wearing a uniform that is too small or that is torn. Their performance at school also declined and they appeared withdrawn and sad. They repeated grades, regularly absent themselves from school, arrived late and failed to complete their assignments. This resulted in poor performance in class. Two indicators of vulnerability that were raised significantly than the rest were the appearance of children’s clothing and hunger. In general, teachers were found to be aware of the warning signs of children’s vulnerability and failed to act appropriately.

Vaughn et al (2000) in Pillay (2011) corroborates the above finding in their study where it was found out that learners from poor homes especially child-headed homes are likely to perform poorly in school when they added responsibilities such as child caring for the siblings or contributing to the family income. Bundy et al. (2006) suggest that even when he or she finds time for an educational activity the child from a child-headed home may be hungry. Hunger is the same as malnutrition, but both interact strongly to affect cognitive function and learning ability. It is the sense of emptiness or lack of food which is distracting and dulls thinking ability. This results in the impairment of the growth of the function of bodily organs. It has been found out that it is the malnourished children whose performance is most affected when they come to school lacking a meal earlier in the day.

2.3.3 Lack of scholastic materials

Masondo (2006) explains that the rate of non-attendance amongst children heading households is high due to lack of funds for school fees, books and other essentials. This is irrespective of the fact that there are many legal provisions for exemption of poor and
vulnerable children. There are some incidents where children have been suspended from school for failing to pay fees. Tsegaye (2005) corroborates this finding in his study on child-headed households. He found out that, in many cases, households with orphans cannot cover school fees and are withdrawn from school to reduce family expenses. This is also supported by Bundy et al. (2006) who added that poverty, illness or death in the household can lead to a reduction in resources allocated for children’s schooling. The outcome is either a delay in enrolment or no enrolment at all.

The cost of schooling which includes fees, uniforms and textbooks is too high for a poor child-headed household, which will have little or no money to cover the costs of education. Snider (2006) also added that children in child-headed households maybe unable to afford school fees, uniforms and other supplies to attend school. Andrews et al. (2006) noted that a lack of parental guidance, homelessness, inability to pay school fees and inability to purchase uniforms emerged as barriers to education of children experiencing orphan-hood. Apart from the demands made by teachers, children in child-headed homes registered their embarrassment at being without uniforms, or having no alternative but to wear uniforms that were too small or worn through.

School uniforms presented a major challenge in accessing education for orphaned children. Meintjies et al. (2003) noted that, in some instances, children were refused admission or were sent home and told not to return until they obtained uniform. They further indicated that most teachers did not have an insight into the children’s home circumstances. Orphans in the study indicated desperation at rigid uniform requirements by teachers. Children in some households
reported that they shared uniforms with their relatives and neighbours. In some instances they alternated going to school with their siblings using the same uniform. Meintjies (2003) indicates that orphans expressed ambiguity about school. Although they spoke positively about being with friends, having the opportunity to learn and to get an education and benefiting from school feeding schemes, they protested about being chased away for not paying school fees or for not having the correct uniform and being punished for falling asleep in class as a result of hunger and exhaustion, without exception. However, every child wanted the opportunity to complete their schooling. Bundy et al (2006) also explains similar findings and concluded that usually a child-headed household is a poor home which has little or no money at all to cover the costs of schooling.

2.3.4 Discrimination and stigmatization

Tsegaye (2008) noted that learners from child-headed homes suffer from isolation, and to avoid isolation and ridicule from both learners and teachers, orphans may refrain from attending school thereby depriving them of their social development. Maqobo and Dreyer (2007) added that on many occasions orphans are scorned by other children, discriminated against and isolated to such an extent that they find it better to stay away from school. Others feel badly when they have no money for school uniform, or pocket money to take to school. Swift and Maher (2008) suggest that children who lose parents to HIV/AIDS can also face stigma and discrimination including physical abuse and isolation. According to UNAIDS (2001), sexual exploitation and drug use increase the risk that orphaned children will contract the same virus that their parents succumbed to. Stigma and discrimination may influence orphans to drop out
of school and this is detrimental, as it means that they will not acquire life-saving information on how to avoid HIV/AIDS infection. The stress of their situation takes its toll on orphaned children’s education and the challenges that these children face are traumatic. Mangiste and Alemu (2002) expound that, in some instances, HIV/AIDS orphans must grapple with the stigma and discrimination which can deprive them of social services and education.

Maqobo and Dreyer (2007) explain that education is a crucial determinant of the well-being of future generations, and a universal human right as it develops analytical and critical thinking in children and equips them with knowledge and a means to choose healthier diets, behaviors and life styles. Children who live in child-headed homes cannot profit from schooling because of problems. As a result, they are indirectly discriminated. Bundy et al. (2006) point out that orphan stigmatization and discrimination of children living in child-headed homes are rampant within the school. As a result, a school may become less appealing for the child, and without protection, these children may drop out of school.

Aldri (2001) also explains that stigmatization against orphans and vulnerable children is common in schools for many reasons. If their condition is a result of to HIV/AIDS, discrimination may arise from a fear of the disease. Schools may become less appealing for such children. Unfortunately, the teachers and other pupils may not be sensitive to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children and consequently these children may drop out of school. UNAIDS (2004) indicated that children from child-headed homes leave school because they are discriminated against, are psychologically distraught or cannot pay school fees. Bundy et al. (2006) explains
that there are numerous incidents of orphans being bullied by peers. Orphans also experience stigmatization from friends, and this led to anxiety, fear, high levels of depression and stress.

Subbarao and Coury (2004) suggest that at school, HIV/AIDS orphans may be singled out or rejected by their school mates, which can create barriers to health care, education and access to social events. In their study conducted in Tanzania, Nshamba and Kagera, all orphans interviewed reported harassment by school mates and peers. Similar findings were reported in Malawi where some orphans described having stones thrown at them, being insulted or having less access, among other things, to food, material items and school opportunities than other children. The study revealed that orphans may drop out of school and this makes them even poorer.

Pillay (2011) suggests that negative experience at school which emerged from the findings was the bad treatment that some participants faced from other learners, especially those who were living in better socio-economic circumstances. Most of the learners in child-headed homes had negative experiences with some of the learners at school. Phillips (2011) noted that discrimination at school occurs when children in child-headed homes fail to produce birth certificates or identification documents. This results in some schools refusing to register such children. In Rwanda, the dropout rate of children belonging to child-headed households is high, even when they receive benefits to cover schooling expenses. In South Africa, health care services are mostly unavailable for children living in child-headed households.
2.4 The schooling experiences of learners from child-headed homes as a result of poverty

2.4.1 What is poverty?

According to Weihmeier (2005), poverty is defined as the state of being poor. It is important to look at the effects of poverty on child-headed households as studies have revealed that children in child-headed households are extremely vulnerable and live in poverty. Swift and Maher (2008) indicate that orphaned children in child-headed households were poorer than orphaned children living with other living arrangements. Germann (2005) reiterates that child-headed households represent a group of highly vulnerable children in a community.

Phillips (2011) reiterated that child-headed households live in poverty. Therefore, it is imperative to look at what literature say on the effects of poverty among children and how it affects performance at school. Woolfolk (2010) explained that poor children are at least twice as likely as non-poor children to be kept back in school. The longer the child is in poverty, the stronger the impact is on achievement. Woolfolk (2010) explains the factors that lead to lower achievement of children who live in poverty or what she referred to as low-socio-economic status.

2.4.2 Home environment and stress

The children in poverty experience higher levels of stress hormones than children in middle class and wealthy families. Adebe (2009) also suggests that children in child-headed homes suffer from psychological and psychosocial problems, and poverty deprives them of their desired satisfaction in spiritual, psychosocial, economic, physical and political well-being. For
example, Adebe (2009) noted that as there is no mother in the home, the older girl child takes the role of mother while the elder boy will struggle as he tries to become the head of the family. The older child may stop school as he/she becomes the bread winner while younger siblings remain in school. Endemic poverty leads to destitution. Booysen and Bachman (2003) noted that HIV/AIDS deepens conditions of poverty as children are expected to work and are deprived of their education and care. HIV/AIDS orphans in the South African context are likely to be poorer and less healthy than children who are not orphans as a result of HIV/AIDS. In their poor home environments, children are likely to suffer damage to their cognitive and emotional development. According to Andrews et al. (2003), children in child-headed households live in poverty, and as a result, they experience inappropriate sleeping arrangements, poor hygiene, poor grooming, inappropriate and dirty torn uniforms. Impoverished and without parents to educate them, orphans and other children face every kind of abuse and risks, including becoming HIV-positive. Mangiste and Alemu (2002) explain that sexual abuse is common among child-headed households, and it leads to lower self-esteem. Many are forced into exploitative and dangerous work, including exchanging sex for money, food, protection and shelter.

Ganga and Chinyoka (2010) observed that children born and orphaned in poor families often remain poorer up to the very end leading to life stresses and eventually some multiple psychological disorders that are detrimental to one’s well-being. The underprivileged children experience a number of psychological traumas that may lead them to psychological disorders. Orphans in schools displayed various signs and symptoms of psychological disorders such as Somato form disorders due to the effects of poverty.
Woolfolk (2010) further added that high levels of stress hormones can interfere with the flow of blood in the brain as well as the synaptic connections. Furthermore, Shonkoff (2006) in Woolfolk (2010) stated that stress hormones can deplete the body’s supply of tryptophan, an amino acid that calms impulsive and violent behavior.

2.4.3 Low expectations and low academic self-concept

Woolfolk (2010) suggests that because poor children may wear older clothes or be less familiar with books and school activities, teachers and other students may assume that these students are not bright. The teacher may avoid calling them to protect them from embarrassment of giving wrong answers, or because they make the teacher uncomfortable.

Woolfolk (2010) added that low expectations thus become institutionalized, and the educational resources provided are inadequate. Borman and Overman (2004) explain that, ultimately, underprivileged children come to believe that they are not very good at school. Low expectations, along with a lower quality educational experience can lead to a sense of learner helplessness, which refers to the expectation based upon previous experiences with a lack of control that all one’s effort will lead to failure.

2.4.4 Peer influence and Resistance cultures

Woolfolk (2010) explains that some researchers have suggested that low socio-economic status students may become part of a resistance culture. In order to maintain their identity and their status within the group, poor or low socio-economic status students must reject the behaviors that would make them successful in school such as cooperating, studying or even coming to
classes. If students continue to adopt performance avoidance goals, they will develop self-defeating strategies to avoid looking stupid. They withdraw, claim not to care, exert little effort or even drop out of school. Once students define academics as “uncool”, it is unlikely that they will exert the effort needed for real learning.

O’connor (1997) noted that this is not to say all low socio-economic status students resist achievement. Many children are high achievers in spite of either their economic situation or negative peer influences. Okagaki (2006) and Woolfolk (2010) suggest that educators should not forget that aspects of schooling such as competitive grading, public reprimands, stressful testing and assignments and repetitive work that is too hard or too easy can encourage resistance in all students.

2.4.5 Home environment and resources

Woolfolk (2010) explains that families in poverty seldom have access to high quality pre-school care for their young children, the kind of care that enhances cognitive and social development. Underprivileged children spend more time watching television. They have less access to books, computers libraries, trips and museums. As a result, they face verbal, reading and Mathematics difficulties.

2.4.6 Tracking/poor teaching

Woolfolk (2010) suggests that a final explanation of the lower achievement of many of the poor children is that these children experience tracking and therefore have a different academic socialization, that is, they are actually taught differently. Oakes (1999) reiterates that such
children are tracked into low ability classes, and they may be taught to memorize and be passive whereas, on the other hand, children from wealthy families are more likely to be encouraged to think and to be creative in their classes.

2.4.7 Less access to education

Houser (2009) indicates that poverty is a culture, and it is a socio-economic class that traps individuals in a vicious cycle, and future generations find it difficult to break from. Poverty can have a severe effect on a child’s performance at school. Students from low socio-economic background lack access to nutritional food and basic health care. Houser (2009) further explains that students who do not receive the necessities of health care are more likely to become absent from school due to situational circumstances like a sick to the stomach feeling caused by a poor diet or tooth ache due to poor dental care. Students who live in poverty cannot learn and therefore fall further and further behind their peers at school. They have higher rates of absenteeism, which affects performance.

The above revelations are supported by Oghuvbu (2010) who noted that academic performance of students in secondary schools is fairly and positively correlated, that is, attendance influences academic performances. Maqobo and Dreyer (2007) explain that children in child-headed homes which result from HIV/AIDS face pressures of having to care for parents and siblings while trying to earn an income. This causes children to drop out of school, even while their parents are still alive. The pressure to abandon schooling intensifies when one or both parents die.
Andrews et al. (2006) added that poverty by far remains the most powerful determinant of school improvement and educational opportunity in the country. The report further suggests that, among other negative social forces, poverty invariably affects the schooling process and impacts on student educational experiences and outcomes, as South Africa’s poverty rate stood at 57% in 2001. It is true that poverty severely limits the opportunity for achievement among children and young people who live in these communities. Children who live in poverty experience high absenteeism rates, poor academic performance and violence in and around school premises. Poverty also contributes to high levels of psychosocial trauma, fragmentation of family units and an increase in the number of child-headed households who attend school. So far, the discussion has revealed that the effects of poverty have huge consequences on children from child-headed households as they live in abject poverty.

Desmond and Crow (2007) revealed the impact of poverty on the education of children. They observed that children who live in poverty have less access to education and lower enrolment rates than their peers. They are unable to afford school fees, uniforms or other supplies to attend school, or may have increased responsibility and household livelihood.

2.4.8 Malnutrition

Daniel and Matthias (2012) identified poverty and food insecurity as acute stressors of children who live in child-headed households. Desmond and Crow (2007) and Safman (2004) suggest that children in child-headed households suffer from malnutrition due to poverty. Malnutrition results in an increase in the rate of conduct disorders and stunted growth. Due to poverty, the cognitive development of children is affected and this leads to low educational levels among
poor children, which are also caused by high levels of stress. There is also a relationship between poverty, malnutrition and common mental disorders. Adebe (2009) indicates that there is a strong positive correlation between child destitution and orphan-hood. He highlighted that most of the challenges faced by children who live in child-headed households are related to poverty and they include malnutrition, lack of food, sanitation problems and social inequalities. Maqobo and Dreyer (2007) expound that malnutrition is also related to illness. Children who are malnourished are likely to fall ill. According to Bennel (2005), poor children are frequently ill which seriously affects their education. Much higher levels of illness related problems among orphans would indicate that these children are not being as well looked after as other children. They are also less likely to receive the medical attention and health care that they need. Poverty is the root cause of this vulnerability.

2.4.9 Teenage pregnancy

Pouslen (2006) suggests that poverty and child-headed households are the major contributors to teenage pregnancy. As a result of poor or no parental guidance and control, children engage in sexual activities at a very young age. The study by Mfono (2003) suggests that teenagers in child-headed households live a reckless life. They have sex with older men so that they can get money they need for survival. There is a strong relationship between poverty and teenage pregnancy. As a result of poverty girls in child-headed households involve themselves in unprotected sex and as a result face the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS, gonorrhea and other related diseases. Luker and Kristin (2006) observe that poverty causes teenagers to fall pregnant. Teenagers who become pregnant in schools perform poorly
because of the dual role of being a mother and a learner. The situation is so stressful and school attendance is also disturbed. Poverty in child-headed households plays a major role in exacerbating teenage pregnancy.

2.5 Circumstances leading to the establishment of child-headed households

2.5.1 The HIV/AIDS pandemic

Phillips (2011) expounds in Southern Africa many of child-headed households are a result of the effects of HIV/AIDS. Foster et al. (1997) indicate that the death of parents as a result of HIV/AIDS has resulted in orphan-hood and child-headed households. Daniel and Matthias (2012) have noted that HIV/AIDS is still a major cause of orphaning. Abdool and Abdool (2008) suggest that the number of orphans as a result of HIV/AIDS is expected to be at a level of 5.7 million in 2014. This is in agreement with Johnson and Dorrington (2011) who predict that by 2015 there would be 5.7 children who would have lost one or both parents as a result of HIV/AIDS in South Africa.

The figures above are alarming and they indicate that there will be many orphans in schools who are living in child-headed households. According to the Nelson Mandela HSR survey (2005), 2.6% of the children aged between 12-18 years claimed to be heads of households. This means that the majority of these children are children who are in secondary schools. In 2005, the 2.6% represented about 180 443 child-headed households in South Africa.

Tybazayo (2009) indicates that there are many factors that lead to the establishment of child-headed households. In the past, amongst Africans, the extended family served as an institution
of support and care for children in the absence of parents; child-headed households never
developed. Phillips (2011) and Daniel and Matthias (2012) added that the extended family can
no longer absorb the orphaned children. Abdool and Abdool (2008) suggest that it was
traditional for children who would have lost both parents to be absorbed by the extended
family, but this is now being eroded by the epidemic and relatives are no longer available to
cope with the rising number of HIV/AIDS orphans. As a result, a new family type structure
emerges as an increasingly familiar pattern, the child-headed household. The extended families
that would traditionally have cared for these orphans are less and less able to do so as they are
in turn financially and emotionally overburdened by the disease. Abdool and Abdool (2008)
added that the HIV/AIDS pandemic forces many young adolescents into drastically premature
parenting roles. Phillips (2011) suggests that the formation of child-headed households is
attributed to the fact that children choose to remain together despite the lack of adult support
because they do not want to be separated from their siblings and they wish to protect their late
parent’s property out of fear of being exploited by their potential carers and a promise to a
dying parent to keep the family together. It is therefore imperative to look at the impact of
HIV/AIDS on a child’s home. Gilborn (2001) summarized the impact of HIV/AIDS on a child’s
home as tabulated below.
2.5.2 The impact of HIV/AIDS on a child’s home

Table 1

Gilborn et al. (2001) suggests the impact of HIV/AIDS on a child’s home life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increased</th>
<th>Reduced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.Poverty</td>
<td>.Access to food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Household responsibility</td>
<td>.Access to health services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Psychosocial distress</td>
<td>.Access to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Vulnerability to abuse, child labour and sexual risk</td>
<td>.Material goods such as clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Stigma and isolation</td>
<td>.Guidance, protection and love from adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Hunger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.Malnutrition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gilborn et al. (2001)

2.5.3 Other factors leading to the emergence of child-headed households

Neilsen (2004) indicates that children can be orphaned or left without care givers for a range of reasons, not just because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. For instance, parents may die from other causes such as motor vehicle accidents. They may migrate and otherwise abandon their children.

A study conducted by Nieuwenhuis and Engerbrecht (2000) in Limpopo noted that that parents who had acquired Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) homes in the townships
left their children to care for themselves while they went to Gauteng in search of employment. Foster et al. (2000) also suggest that, in some instances, child-headed households are as a result of migrant labour due to the concentration of work in the cities. Such children are left without financial means to care for themselves and roamed after school soliciting the services of mine workers, staying in the hostels and were eager and willing customers.

Without parents, children may find themselves in child-headed homes. Foster et al. (2000) suggest that there might be no known relative in the family to take care of the children after the death of parents; such children end up staying alone. In some instances, even if the relatives are known, they might not want to take care of the children because they have their own lives to live, they have no space or they are in need of care themselves or they do not have love for the children. In their research, Foster et al. (2000) added that the children did not want to move to the relatives’ households especially if the relatives were living close by and would visit them regularly. Some of the children did not want to be split and they desired to retain access to and ownership of the family’s land and other property. By avoiding being split up among various relatives and being able to stay in their home and familiar surroundings, children may face less emotional and psychological trauma.

Tsegaye (2005) expounds that in some instances following the death of their parents, older children or adolescents feel that they have acquired the requisite skills during the parent’s illness and are capable of coping with the household responsibilities. Foster et al. (2000) however suggest that this situation puts the child or adolescent head in a role that he or she may not be prepared to undertake even if visited regularly by close relatives or friends. Children
may find themselves living on their own because of the death or illness of a relative who had previously taken charge of these orphans.

Tsegaye (2005) noted that children in rural areas seem to have a greater opportunity to remain in their parents’ home after their death because living costs are higher in some cities which leads some orphans to relocate to rural areas where food, accommodation and education costs are lower and where community structures might be more stable. In some instances, determination by orphans to continue with their schooling resulted in the emergence of child-headed households. This happens when poor non-orphaned rural children are drawn to urban centres due to limited access to schools in their areas and form a family unit to share costs and attend their education. In some countries, children might set up their own households as a result of the intervention of NGOs which are increasingly espousing the home-based approach as opposed to institutional care.

Germann (2005) suggests that child-headed households may emerge because grandparents care for many orphans and households where grandparents have no ties with extended families are especially vulnerable to becoming child-headed households after the grandparents have died. In addition to such households, single mother households are vulnerable to becoming child-headed households. The number of such households is likely to increase considerably in the face of poverty as the number of new orphans increases and as care-giving grandparents and uncles become sick and die. Households headed by children represent a new coping mechanism in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in communities. Edmondson (2004)
suggested that urbanization, poverty, migration and new residential patterns have caused an increase in child-headed households.

2.5.4 Categories of child-headed households

Tsegaye (2005) indicates that child-headed households can be categorized into two:

a) Accompanied child-headed households: These are households where a child is providing income and care to siblings in which parents or primary care givers are incapacitated by chronic illness, old age or disability.

b) Unaccompanied child-headed households: This is where a child is supporting and taking care of siblings without an adult in the household because both parents have died, cannot be found, are unknown or have given up supporting the children for economic reasons. A child with no siblings taking care of him or her also falls into this category.

2.6 The effects of lack of parental involvement on children in child-headed households

2.6.1 Importance of parents/caregivers

According to Pretorious (2009), a household without an adult caregiver does not provide children with the chance to learn the skills of their development. Phillips (2011) asserted that the natural bond between a child and his parents or main caregivers forms during early childhood. This bond is believed to provide a secure zone in which children feel protected. Children learn ways of coping with stress and anxiety from their parents and parental behavior in times of stress. Therefore, they model themselves on their parents in other behaviors as well.
Parents teach their children moral standards, for example, they encourage positive behavior and they discourage unwanted behavior.

Pretorius (2009) added that through his family education, the child is introduced to his human environment in particular. He or she learns what is socially acceptable and unacceptable in terms of behavior, attitudes and views concerning fellow man. Parents consciously or unconsciously convey their attitudes, views, preferences and censures to the child. The child learns to accept the social share he has to be in life including demands imposed by his specific culture. Parents are the most important fellow beings upon who the child can rely to provide for their physical and psychological needs. The fulfillment of the needs and the fact that the child is a member of a stable social group offer him or her the personal experience of safety in terms of which he or she may develop freely and the home base from which he or she explores this world.

2.6.2 The importance of the family

Pretorius (2009) emphasizes that the family remains the child’s primary educational institution and although the individual’s socialization is a life-long process; it is the basic context and the first social environment in which both the child’s personality and his or her first philosophy of life are formed. The child’s socialization therefore begins in the family situation and the family. It is important to point out that Pretorius (2009) assumes that the traditional family consists of a mother, father and children. Socialization in the family implies that the child will learn who he is and where he fits into life, what is right and what is wrong with regard to behaviors, values, objectives and attitude and what to expect from life and what life can expect from him. In the
family with a mother and father, a child learns to interpret the meaning of situations and how to behave socially in relationship with others.

Pretorius (2009) further suggests that the family is ideally suited to fulfill the socialization function, and it is a small social group in which members communicate intimately and intensively. The parents have ample opportunity to step in if the child’s behavior is socially unacceptable. Parents act as role models for the child’s development of socially acceptable patterns of behavior. The parent is motivated to socialize the child because he wants to achieve a specific education goal with the child. Pretorius (2009) expounds that the mother traditionally fulfills the role of nurturer of the children and the father that of protector of the family against external threats. The family is the ideal institution to fulfill this essential function of providing the basic needs of the child until the child can take care of himself or herself. He concludes by commenting that parents often live for one another and for the children whom they are responsible. In the absence of parents or caregivers in child-headed homes, unfortunately no one is responsible for the children. Evans (2012) suggests that concern about child-headed household stems predominantly from the lack of adult supervision, as young people are seen as having to take on parenting responsibilities at an early age which can impact both on young care-givers and the children they are caring for.

Duval and Miller (1985) in Pretorius (2009) suggest that the family gives human beings a sense of basic function and worth that the world of work only occasionally provides. It is in the family that adults and children enjoy the life of each other in family gatherings and celebrations, around the family table, in family rituals, on family trips and in many other activities that family
members find satisfying. Ayieko (2003) noted that that the death of a father, for example, deprives children of male authority, a status symbol in many communities, but the subsequent death of a mother further deprives the children of crucial emotional and mental security as well. Furthermore, such children live and manage their own household activities without the supervision of an adult.

Phillips (2011) highlights that in child-headed households children are disadvantaged because they do not have the opportunity to learn skills that are needed in life. In South Africa, related problems result from not growing up with parents or caregivers. Sexual abuse, child labour and prostitution are common features of child-headed households. They have been found to have no safe or stable environment to grow up in and not having parents or caregivers results in difficulties in accessing documents such as birth certificates and identity cards. Neilsen (2004) added that these children live in a setting lacking love and security. They experience feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, vulnerability, loneliness, emptiness, a desire for a fulfilling life and a fear of the unknown.

### 2.6.3 The effects of father absence on child-headed households

Roalkvam (2005) suggests when fathers are actively involved the growing of their children from a very early age in life it leads to social, emotional, cognitive and moral development. The absence of fathers has negative effects in their life. Children who still go to school and are staying with their fathers perform better. They have a positive self esteem. They do not have behavioral problems. Subbarrao and Coury (2004) explain that father involvement is important for the educational, social and occupational success of their children in young
adulthood. Since most of the children in child-headed households do not have parents, or do not live with them, the absence of the father especially, will have disastrous impact on the growth and development of the children. It will seriously affect cognitive development which is directly related to their schooling.

Pretorious (2009) noted that according to the socialization theory, the male role model is important for cognitive and emotional development of children. The absence of the father therefore leads to poor performance in school work thereby reducing the child’s educational attainment. Children who grow up without the father may suffer from greater depression and emotional distress, may exhibit greater behavioral and learning difficulties in school and maybe forced to take adult responsibilities at an early age. It has been found that these children are more likely to have lower educational and economic achievements. The absence of the father is equally disastrous as the absence of the mother, as the mother traditionally fulfills the role of the nurturer of the children.

2.6.4 Risks and social problems encountered as a result of the absence of parents in child-headed households

Adato (2005) indicates risks and problems facing child-headed households as a result of the absence of parents in the households. It has been discovered that lack of food is a serious challenge. Lack of proper energy and nutritional requirements has indirect effects. Parents fend for their children and must provide basics such as food. In the absence of parents, children may lack proper food.
Children from child-headed households have no parents to assist them financially; as a result, they lack money to pay fees, books, materials and uniforms. Adato (2005) added that the lack of these necessities is a problem both in a practical sense and in terms of stigma. Older children miss school because they must seek paid employment. Some children turn to alcohol in their distress with further detrimental effects upon their education.

Child-headed households have problems of alcohol and drugs, and as a result, they are at greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases from economic coping strategies involving sex. They have a tendency to turn to theft and criminal activities in order to survive because there are no parents or caregivers to fend for them. Adato (2005) explains that lack of parental figure is a cause of discipline problems, for example, older children were reported to bring friends in the home because there is no parent to discourage such behavior. Girls from child-headed homes choose to become pregnant so that they can access the child-support grant. All these risks and problems in child-headed households result from lack of parental support and guidance and they affect the schooling of children who live in such homes.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, literature and research important to the topic was reviewed. The relevant literature reviewed in this chapter centered on research that has been done on child-headed households. It focused on challenges faced by children in child-headed households, the schooling experiences of children living in child-headed households, the effects of poverty on learners from child-headed households, circumstances leading to the establishment of child-headed households and the effects of living without parents. It has been highlighted in the
literature review that children who live in child-headed homes suffer tremendous emotional and psychological stress and encounter related challenges which have an impact on their schooling. The next chapter will provide a description of the research approach that was used in this study.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In chapter two, relevant literature on child-headed households was reviewed. This chapter presented methods employed in this study. This chapter outlines the research design and the supporting methods of data collection, sampling techniques and the research process of data collection that were used in this study.

3.2 Research design

A qualitative research approach, specifically a phenomenological research method was used in this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) assert that the purpose of a phenomenological study is to describe and interpret the experiences of participants regarding a particular event in order to understand the participants’ meaning ascribed to that event. This study therefore aimed to describe and interpret the schooling experiences of secondary school learners who live in child-headed households in Thulamahashe Circuit, Mpumalanga.

Creswell (2008) further asserts that the basis of phenomenology is that there are multiple ways of interpreting the same experience and that the same experience and the meaning of the experience of each participant is what constitutes reality. In this study, all of the 20 respondents were given an equal opportunity to describe and narrate their experiences as learners who lived in child-headed households. There were similarities and differences in the experiences of the respondents and these were noted and recorded. According to Greenstein (2006), a phenomenological study is focused on understanding the participants’ voice that is
the reason why this approach was used in this research. The approach enabled the participants to narrate their experiences. According to Mason (2006), the qualitative research approach enabled the researcher after data analysis to understand and explore the richness, depth, context and complexity within which children in the research operated. An excellent definition of qualitative research is provided by Creswell (2008). He states that qualitative research begins with assumptions, a world view, the possible use of theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe a social or human problem. Qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting and data analysis that is inductive. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of the researcher and a complex description and interpretation of the problem.

Greenstein (2006) explains that qualitative research can be employed when one is exploring new territory or new ways of looking at a familiar topic. Therefore, qualitative research allowed the researcher to produce data that is holistic, contextual, descriptive, in-depth and rich in detail. Ezzy and Rice (2000) support this when they explain that the main goal of a qualitative approach is to obtain an in-depth description and understanding of action, events and expression of words.

Creswell (2008) states that qualitative research allows for open discovery and documentation of personal perspectives and views. It also focuses on participants’ perceptions and experiences and ways of making sense of their lives. The researcher therefore felt that a qualitative approach was appropriate for the study since it was likely that extensive descriptions of
participants’ schooling experiences will be produced. Macmillan and Schumacher also added that a qualitative research design allows the researcher to make sense of different comments and experiences conveyed by the participants.

3.3 Paradigm

This study employed an interpretative approach. Henning (2005) states that within an interpretative paradigm, the researcher tries to make a meaning of people’s beliefs, values and intentions with particular reference to why and what meaning they make of a given situation or context. Therefore, the researcher’s understanding is informed by the group in the study and requires that the researcher is especially sensitive to the role of given context. Since I will be interpreting the research participants’ description of the challenges that they face as child-headed households and how it affects their schooling, my research is situated in the interpretative paradigm.

Interpretative research is mostly concerned with interpreting meaningful human and social action while emphasizing that all manner of explication or theorizing in the social sciences should be understandable to the human actors themselves. Babbie and Mouton (2001) explain that the interpretative paradigm gives the researcher the opportunity to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors. The task of the researcher becomes that of understanding what is going on as it places emphasis on the process of understanding. Interpretative research offers an opportunity to engage in in-depth descriptions and understanding of actions and events.
Terreblanche and Durrein (1999) explain that interpretative research aims to learn and understand what is meaningful to research participants through their eyes or perspectives. This process requires understanding the meaning behind particular behaviors in a specific context and it seeks to understand contextual meanings of human creations, words and experiences can only be ascertained in relation to the contexts in which they occur. This paradigm helps the researcher to make sense of her participants’ experiences of living in child-headed households.

Cohen et al. (2000) suggest that interpretative research aims to understand the subjective world of human experience. To retain the integrity of the phenomena to be investigated, efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within. The imposition of external form and structure is resisted since this reflects the viewpoint of the observer as opposed to that of the actor directly involved. It is imperative to reveal that there are limitations encountered as a result of using the interpretative approach. For instance, it may be tempting to include the researcher’s own pre-conceptions or expectations. In other words, qualitative researchers do not deny human subjectivity. Another challenge may be that the participants may not be willing to share or open up.

In spite of the limitations above, the interpretative approach ensures that data obtained from informants are valid even though they may represent particular views or have been influenced by the researcher’s presence. In this study, the researcher has minimized researcher’s bias by spending enough time on the field and employing multiple data collection strategies to corroborate the findings. More so as a researcher, I kept in mind that the goal of qualitative research is to understand participants from their own point of view in their voice.
3.4 Phenomenological approach

The specific interpretative approach adopted for this study is phenomenology. An attempt will be made to explain what is phenomenology as well as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The present researcher will explain the origin and philosophy of phenomenology.

Willig (2001) explains that phenomenology is concerned with the ways in which human beings gain knowledge of the world around them. Phenomenology identifies different approach to human understanding and it argues that certain forms of knowing may be more constructive than others. It provides detailed guidance as to how such superior forms of knowing may be achieved. Such recommendations have inspired phenomenological research methods. It is important to be aware however that phenomenology does not constitute unified and closed propositions and practices. As a philosophical framework, it has undergone change and development since its inception hundred years ago, while its application as an empirical research method has taken a number of forms.

The phenomenological paradigm as postulated by Holstein and Gubrium (1994) identified a series of steps that would take the philosopher from a fresh perception of familiar phenomena to the extraction of essences that give the phenomena their unique character. Knowledge derived from this way would be free from the common sense notions, scientific explanations and other interpretations or abstractions that characterize most other forms of understanding it would be knowledge of the world as it appears to us in our engagement with it.

Mcmillan and Schumacher (2010) state that phenomenological study describes the meaning of lived experiences. The purpose of a phenomenological study is to describe and interpret the
experiences of participants regarding a particular event in order to understand the participants’ meanings ascribed to the event. This can be thought of capturing the experience as perceived by the participants. The basis of phenomenology is that there are multiple ways of interpreting the same experience and that the meaning of the experience of each participant is what constitutes reality. A phenomenological study focuses more on the consciousness of human experiences. Typically there is a search for essential or invariant structure in the meanings given by the participants.

Klave (1996) describes phenomenology as being interested in elucidating both which appears and the manner in which it appears. It studies the subjects’ perspectives of their world, attempts to describe in detail the content and structure of the subjects’ consciousness to grasp the qualitative diversity of their experiences and to explicate their essential meanings.

Awoniyi et al. (2011) explain phenomenology as a form of qualitative research in which the researcher attempts to understand one or more individuals experience a phenomenon. In this study, twenty learners from four secondary schools were asked to describe their schooling experiences. Macmillan and Schumacher (2010) however emphasize that when using phenomenology, the researcher needs to suspend or “bracket” any preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to elicit and better understand the meanings given by the participants. As a researcher, I constructed reality from the standpoint of the participants’ perspectives. This is supported by Macmillan and Schumacher (2010) who further explain that the goal of qualitative research is to understand participants from own points of view and choice. There is focus on the meaning of events and actions as expressed by participants.
3.5 Sample and sampling techniques

Purposive sampling was used to select information-rich participants. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) state that purposive sampling or judgmental sampling is a procedure that relies on the researcher’s judgment regarding which of the elements within the target population should be part of the corpus. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) also indicate that in purposive or purposeful sampling, the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest. Creswell (2008) suggest that on the basis of the researcher’s knowledge of the population, a judgment is to be made about who should be selected to provide the best information to address the purpose of the research. According to Marlow (1993), sampling is necessary because we cannot include everyone in the study and the sample should be representative of the population.

The criteria for selection was that the participants were supposed to be living in a child-headed household and were to be in grade 10 or 11, because in the researcher’s view, these were relatively senior students, articulate and accessible, unlike the matriculants who were considered to be a very busy class. The sample size consisted of five learners per school from the four secondary schools. The four secondary schools were also purposely selected because they were close to the researcher’s school and hometown and no excessive travelling expenses were incurred. A total of twenty learners both female and male were therefore selected. Ten participants were boys and the other ten were girls aged between 15-21 years old. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) suggest that a typical sample size for a phenomenological research is 5-25 individuals who have direct experience with the phenomenon being studied. In the present
study, it was however acknowledged that the researcher’s judgment left learners from child-headed households in other grades.

3.6 Data collection

3.6.1 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used as the research instrument. An interview schedule was constructed in such a way that it was in line with the objectives of the research. Creswell (2008) alludes to the fact that researchers use semi-structured interviews in order to gain a detailed picture of the respondent’s particular topic. The method gave the researcher and the respondent much more flexibility than the conventional structured interview. Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999) suggest that semi-structured interviews are less formal and the use of this method is flexible and useful for gaining insights into people’s personal beliefs and perceptions. The use of semi-structured interviews also provided an opportunity to get to know people closely and gain insights into how they feel and think.

With semi-structured interviews, the researcher constructed an interview schedule. This schedule acted as a guide and a reminder during the interview. It was not followed rigidly. This allowed the researcher to remain free to enquire more deeply into particular areas to follow the priorities and concerns of the interviewees, who could introduce topics the researcher had not thought of (Smith, 1996).

Macmillan and Schumacher (2010) suggest that semi-structured questions have no choices from which the participants select an answer. Rather the question is phrased to allow for
individual responses. Semi-structured interviews can also be in-depth interviews which use open response questions to obtain data on participants’ meanings - how individuals conceive their world and how they make sense of the important events in their lives. However, in the present study the researcher constructed questions which were specific enough to encourage her participants to talk about the topic and general enough to encourage them to do it in their own way from their own perspective and with their own emphasis. Open ended questions used had the advantage of providing the researcher with an opportunity for developing rapport with her participants.

Smith (1996) indicates that the interviewer or the researcher is responsible for the collection and analysis of data. Thus as a researcher, I had to develop listening and empathy skills. The interview method helped the researcher since she was dealing with emotional processes and personal issues. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) explain that phenomenological researchers depend almost exclusively on lengthy interviews perhaps one or two hours in length. Bearing this in mind, the interview sessions in this study lasted for one hour.

During the interviews, the researcher worked with her participants to arrive at the heart of the matter. She listened closely as her participants described their experiences as secondary school learners from child–headed homes. The researcher was very watchful regarding cues in her participants’ expressions, questions and occasional side tracks. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) also suggest that a typical semi-structured interview looks more like an informal conversation. The present researcher therefore made sure that the participants did most of the talking while she did most of the listening. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher was careful to
suspend any preconceived notions or personal experiences that would unduly influence on what she heard the participants saying. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) indicate that such suspension sometimes called “bracketing” can be extremely difficult for a researcher who personally experienced the phenomenon under study. Fortunately, the researcher never stayed in a child-headed home, she lived with her parents throughout her secondary school years.

The present researcher always kept in mind the suggestions by Leedy and Ormrod (2005) that during the interview the researcher must begin the conversation with a small talk that can break the ice. This is exactly what she did. The present researcher was also courteous and respectful to her participants all the time. During the interviews, she showed genuine interest in what the participants said. She did this through body language like smiling and eye contact. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) indicated that rapport between the researcher and the participants can also be neutral encouragements such as “go on” and “what do you mean?” The present researcher employed these encouragements in the interviews.

3.6.2 Strengths of interviews

The semi-structured interviews that were used in the study allowed for individual, open-ended responses. Semi-structured interviews encouraged two-way communication because by nature they are less intrusive to those being interviewed. In the interviews that were carried out, the researcher not only obtained verbal responses from the respondents, but also the chance of interacting with the interviewees. Interviews are handy as they allow interviewees to remember and recall what happened and to generate opinions on questions that are asked. The other advantage of this type of interview is that it confirms what is already known and the
information obtained from interviews provided not just the answers, but also the reasons for the answers. Smith (1996) observes that this method gives the researcher and the respondent much more flexibility, and the researcher is also able to follow up particular interesting avenues that emerge in the interview and the respondent is able to give a fuller picture.

In a semi-structured interview, the investigator had maximum control over what took place in the interview and it was reliable in the sense that the same format was used with each respondent. Responses were also probed, followed up, clarified and elaborated to achieve specific and accurate responses. Interviews were illuminating because interviewees were asked to clarify examples whenever necessary and the respondents asked the interviewer to clarify, for example, if a question required a yes/no answer.

### 3.6.3 Weaknesses of interviews

Macmillan and Schumacher (2010) indicate that the disadvantage of the interview is its potential subjectivity, bias and its high cost and time-consuming nature. Depending on the expertise of the interviewer, the respondent may be uncomfortable in the interview and unwilling to report true feelings. Most of the weaknesses of interviews arise from the fact that interviews are face-to-face encounters. This becomes more complex in a situation where the issue being studied is a complex one like that of living in child-headed households.

Sometimes the interviewer may ask leading questions to support a particular point of view and the interviewer’s perception of what was said may be inaccurate. Since interviews involve one person talking to another, anonymity is not possible. This becomes more complex when the issue being studied is a sensitive one, like in the present study, the respondents would
sometimes find it difficult to open up. Although confidentiality can be stressed, there is also potential for being less than forthright because the subjects may believe that sharing certain information would not be in their best interest. The respondents may try to respond in such a way as not to offend or try to please the researcher. Some of the respondents may give responses that they think are accurate rather than sticking to honesty.

During the interviews, a tape recorder was used and this resulted in suspicion about the motives of the researcher initially, but she was able to assure her respondents that she was not a spy. She explained to them the motives of her research and told them not to be anxious and afraid. As a result, the tape recorder did not ultimately damage the integrity of the interviews. The researcher also emphasized during the interviews that the information that they gave her would be treated with confidentiality. The reduction of bias is paramount within a qualitative methodology, and throughout the process the researcher remained faithful to her participants.

3.6.4 Pre-testing the research instrument

Macmillan and Schumacher (2010) refer to pretesting as pilot testing. They indicate that it is necessary to pre-test the research tool in order to determine whether the interview questions are clear and non-leading and unambiguous. During pretesting, the procedures should be identical to those that will be implemented in the study. It also highlights potential problems and areas that might have been omitted. Pre-testing the interview schedule helps to reveal and correct errors or problem and it contributes to the credibility, dependability and trustworthiness of a qualitative research tool which is an interview schedule in this particular
study. The following four key questions suggested by Adams, Khan, Reaside and White (2007) were asked during the pre-test stage:

a. How comprehensive is the list of questions?

b. Is the language appropriate?

c. Are the other problems or multiple issues in one question?

d. Does the interview schedule as developed help to motivate the respondent?

A pretest was discussed with the supervisor of this research who assessed the interview schedule and with two colleagues of the researcher who were also Master's students to determine if there were any leading and ambiguous questions. However, it is acknowledged that using people who were not representatives of the unit of analysis was a limitation of the study. It took about one hour to carry out the interviews. This was the duration of completion of the interview. The people participating in the pre-test were requested to give feedback and make comments. A few problems were highlighted during the pre-testing of the research tool. It was noted that two of the interview questions were leading and the researcher re-phrased the questions.

3.6.5 Interviews with teachers

The present researcher conducted similar interviews with the class teachers of the identified children. She conducted one formal interview with two educators per school to enhance her understanding of data. The researcher also taped and transcribed the interviews with teachers.
3.7 Document analysis

Official records and documents were another source of information. The researcher requested and studied the attendance registers and mark schedules for all the five learners per school. Macmillan and Schumacher (2010) indicate that documents describe functions and values of how various people define an organization. The researcher reviewed these official documents so as to check the performance and progress my participants as well as their attendance. The review of these official school documents suggested the trends of these children. As the above documents are official documents for the school, permission to review such documents was sought first. The researcher requested attendance registers and mark schedules from January 2011 to September 2012 so as to have a proper understanding on the attendance, performance and progress of the learners.

3.8 How data was analyzed

According to MacMillan and Schumacher (2010), qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among categories. Analysis is an on-going part of the study. Qualitative analysis is a relatively systematic process of coding, categorizing and interpreting data to provide a single phenomenon of interest. In this study, the analysis interpreted data to provide the schooling experiences of secondary school learners from child-headed households. The researcher critically examined and synthesized pages of interview transcripts and document analysis.

Analysis was done during data collection as well as after all the data had been gathered using the steps suggested by Creswell (2003), Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) and Smith and Osborn.
The first step involved arranging data into different categories and types. Secondly, the researcher had to read through all the data so as to obtain a general sense of information and to reflect on its overall meaning. Thirdly, a detailed analysis with a coding process was initiated. The coding process generated the themes for analysis. These themes displayed multiple perspectives from individuals and were supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence. The last step involved making an interpretation or meaning of the data, this involved noting the lessons that were learnt. These lessons were reflected in the recommendations of this study.

3.9 Research context and environment

Thulamahashe circuit is a research site for this study. It is located in Bushbuckridge Region, Mpumalanga Province. It has a total of 11 secondary schools. All the 11 secondary schools are public schools. The schools in this circuit mainly use Xitsonga as their home language. There are however a few schools that use both Xitsonga and Sepedi. The researcher is an educator in one of the secondary schools. Since all the five schools were secondary schools, on average, the age range of learners varies from 14-22 years. The schools in the circuit are exclusively black in their educator and student complement. The four secondary schools under my study are Mnisii, Mathebula, Ndlovu and Manyike secondary schools (referred in this study by pseudonyms). The four schools are all situated in a rural setting and nearly all the learners in these schools come from the villages.

The problem in the circuit is unemployment and poverty. As a result, the learners too come to school with different problems since they live under poverty. They enroll learners with financially poor or challenging backgrounds. Most of the parents or guardians of this area are
too poor to afford any significant expense. All the schools used in this study did not charge
school fees. The researcher selected the four schools because they were the most convenient
to her, they were not far from each other and this was an advantage since she encounters
financial difficulties. This reduced travelling expenses for the researcher who did not receive
any funding for the research.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues were considered before conducting the research (see appendix A). Permission to
do the research in selected secondary schools in Thulamahashe circuit was obtained from the
head of department (Department of Education, Mpumalanga province.) The researcher firstly
presented a request to conduct research in Thulamahashe circuit (see appendix B) to the
department of Education. The department requested her to submit a copy of the approved
proposal first before it could give the researcher permission to conduct her research.

The researcher then approached the principals of the four selected secondary schools. Each
principal requested a letter of introduction and this was done (see appendix C). The letter from
the HOD provided his details. Some of the principals also requested a brief background and
purpose of the study and this was done.

The letter of introduction also provided information on the study, the research participants as
well as how schools would help with the recruitment of participants. The letter of introduction
also provided the details of the researcher and the supervisor’s contact details. This was to
enable the principals concerned to verify anything that they wanted concerning the research.
The researcher was also granted permission to interview the children by the principals of the four schools, but the class teachers of these children were informed by the principals first. In some cases, older siblings gave permission to use their younger siblings in this research. The researcher explained the purpose of the research to the principals, class teachers and children concerned.

Once permission to interview the children was granted, the researcher agreed with the schools and the children on the day and times of the interviews. The interviews were conducted after school so that learners could not be disturbed in their studies. The interviews were conducted from 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm. This was in accordance of the Research manual for Mpumalanga Department of education (see appendix D).

Creswell (2007) explains that it is a critical issue in every research that respondents should grant informed consent before participating in the study. Before the research, the researcher explained the nature of the research and that participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. The participants were therefore informed of the right to withdraw from the study at any point if desired. In addition, they were informed that they could choose not to respond to any questions during the interview if they felt threatened, intimidated or uncomfortable. Confidentiality was also discussed with the participants before they participated in the study.

Since the participants in this study did not have parents and were staying alone, consent forms were obtained from the relatives of the children indicating that minor learners could participate in the study. In other cases where no relatives were available, the older siblings (if available)
signed the consent forms. In extreme cases where older siblings and relatives were not available, the principals gave such consent. This was a highly sensitive area and care was taken not to distress the children.

Graziano and Raulin (1993) explain that research subjects must be protected against deception, dangerous procedures and invasion of privacy. Subjects have a right to know what is going to be done to them and to be given clear, enough information that they can freely consent to or refuse. The researcher kept in mind during the research.

Graziano and Raulin (1993) further emphasize that another basic safeguard concerns the responsibility of the researcher to maintain strict confidentiality to any information gathered about subjects. This is particularly important when the research deals with sensitive personal information about the subjects or information derived from normally confidential records such as school records. Throughout the research, the researcher kept this in mind. Regarding the above issues, the researcher used numerical codes rather than subjects’ names or any record that contain sensitive information. The researcher made sure that she was responsible for ensuring that such information did not become known to others who may be in a position to misuse it.

3.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, a description of the research approach used in the study was provided. The research design, paradigm, phenomenological approach, sampling techniques, data collection process, research context as well as ethical issues were described.
4.1 Introduction

In chapter three, the methodology was discussed. This chapter presents the data analysis and interpretation. The results or the findings of the study were presented and discussed in accordance with the objectives of the study. The study investigated the schooling experiences of secondary school learners in child-headed households in Thulamahashe circuit. The responses were analyzed thematically and illustrated with verbatim quotes from the participants. The following emerging themes were discussed. Absenteeism, poor performance, psychological trauma, financial difficulties, lack of scholastic materials, effects of poverty, circumstances leading to the establishment of child-headed households and life without parents.

This chapter therefore provides a holistic picture of the schooling experiences of secondary school learners in child-headed households. Before looking at the schooling experiences of learners a description of the respondents is provided.
4.2 Description of the respondents. Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym of learner interviewed</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age at interview</th>
<th>Other household members</th>
<th>School level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Thomas</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Staying with a friend</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Thabo</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Staying alone. No other household Members</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Eunice</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Staying alone. No other household Members</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Alice</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Own baby (2 years old) Older sister 21 years</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Thoko</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Two younger siblings (7 and 14 years)</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Wonderful</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Siblings 8 and 10 years old</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ntsako</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Own baby 4 months old. Boyfriend 23 years</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Bonakele</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Staying alone. No other household Members</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Paledi</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Sweetness</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Staying alone. No other household Members</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Goodness</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>One sibling (12 years)</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Witness</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Two siblings (11 and 9 years)</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Lloyd</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Lives alone</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Alina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Own baby (2 years)</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Godfrey</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>One sibling (14 years)</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Khensani</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Own baby (1 year)</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Nyiko</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Two siblings (10 and 7 years)</td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Anike</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Lives alone</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Collins</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Lives with a girlfriend and own child of 5 months</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Johana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Two siblings (10 and 12)</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis is an ongoing process in qualitative research. It starts when literature relevant to the study is read during the data collection phase and as the interviews are being transcribed. This study employed a specific phenomenological approach referred to as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The next section attempts to describe this approach.

4.4 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Smith and Osborn (2003) explain that Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) aims to gain an understanding of how participants view and experience their world. IPA is a relatively recent qualitative approach which is concerned with trying to understand lived experience and how participants themselves make sense of their experiences. It is therefore concerned with the meanings those experiences hold for the participants.

IPA is phenomenological in that it wishes to explore an individual’s personal perception or account of an event or state as opposed to attempting to produce an objective record on the event or state itself. At the same time, while trying to get close to the participant’s personal world, IPA considers that one cannot do this directly or completely. Access is dependent on the researcher’s own conceptions which are required to make sense of that other personal world through a process of interpretative activity. IPA is also a strongly ideographic approach concerned with detailed analysis of the case either as an end in itself or before moving to similarly detailed analysis of other cases. It attempts to go beyond what people are saying by taking that which research participants say. The method attempts to uncover what participants think and feel.
In this study, the researcher decided to use IPA as it allowed learners in child-headed households to tell their own stories about their schooling experiences and the challenges that they face without being biased by the pre-determined notions that a research presents to them. In this way the research becomes very much the work of the children heading a household. IPA was used in this study because of its capacity to investigate human experiences that are internal and unique to children who are secondary school learners but living in child-headed households.

4.5 Inductive Analysis

Mcmillan and Schumacher (2010) argue that qualitative analysis is primarily an inductive process of analyzing data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories. Although analytical styles vary among researchers, the general inductive process and techniques that they use are universal. In qualitative studies, there is usually a great amount of data to be analyzed, summarized and interpreted.

During data analysis process pages of field notes or interview transcripts must be critically examined and synthesized. The study followed the steps suggested by Smith and Osborn (2003). The first step involved reading the transcript a number of times. Knowing the data enabled the researcher to have a more enlightened and complete subsequent analysis. The margin on the left was used to make notes on significant information that the respondent was saying. The notes on the left margin were used to summarize, paraphrase and pick up on contradictions as well as to identify the similarities and differences. Comments were then made on the interviewee’s use of language.
The second step involved using the notes and comments on the left margin to develop meaningful constructs or themes of what was said in the responses. The researcher used expressions that allowed theoretical connections based on the specific responses of the interviewees when generating the themes. As soon as the researcher worked through the 20 transcripts, she compiled a list of themes. The researcher then generated super ordinate or subthemes.

The following section focuses on discussing themes that emerged from the study.

4.6 Absenteeism

Absenteeism emerged as one of the major challenges that learners from child-headed households experience. When they were asked how living in a child-headed household affect their schooling. The respondents gave various experiences.

Paledi stated: “It is sometimes very difficult to come to school every day. Sometimes I wake up late I have a lot of work to do. I need to prepare for my younger siblings first and make sure that they go to school. When I finish late I may decide not to go to school because I am afraid of the punishment that the teachers give. So it is better to be absent that day.”

For this respondent, being absent is as a result of being a child and a parent at the same time. He has to take time to prepare for his siblings, and this will make him late, and then the teachers’ forms of punishment for late comers discourage him from going to school if he is late.
In a similar tone, Bonakele said: “Sometimes I do not go to school because there is no one to wake me up. I sometimes oversleep and when I wake up I must fetch water and do my regular chores before I go to school. There is a lot of work that I must do before I go to school.”

Ntsako stated: “When I wake up, I must fetch water, sweep the yard, prepare for my baby and take her to school. There is a lot that I must do before I go to school. I sometimes become too tired to go to school.”

Alice similarly stated: “Sometimes I just fell too tired to go to school. I sleep late doing my homework. I also have to wash, cook and clean the house. I sometimes fail to wake up early to go to school the following morning because I would be too tired.”

The above statements illustrate the fact that children in child-headed households are sometimes too occupied with taking care of household duties. Consequently, they may fail to go to school. This finding is in agreement with Bundy (2006) and Phillips (2011) who indicate that in child-headed households, the opportunity cost of children’s time is very high because it may mean that the child needs to work or stay at home to take care of household duties. Snider also discovered that absenteeism among children who are heads of households reduces attendance rate.

It also emerged during the interviews that some learners from child-headed household sometimes absent themselves from school because of doing part-time jobs. This is verified by a number of participants.
Wonderful said: “In some cases, I do not go to school because I have to do some part-time jobs so that I can have money to buy electricity and food. When I am not at school, I have to look for firewood and sale it so that I can have an income.”

Thabo revealed the following: “There are many people building houses in the location these days. I go and make bricks for them. It is a good business and it enables me to have money for myself. I usually do it during weekends but if things are tight I do not go to school; instead, I will go and make bricks.”

Godfrey stated: I become absent when I am doing some part-time jobs like painting houses and I also do gardening for some people to get money for food and other things.”

The information above reveals that attendance of learners in child-headed households is irregular because they have to look for part-time jobs to generate income needed for household essentials and necessities. This finding is in accordance with Meintjies et al. (2003) and Wild (2001) who noted that absenteeism is a major challenge among child-headed households because of economic hardships. Children need to find employment and this affects their attendance at school. The finding also agrees with that of Phillips (2011) who also found out that some children in child-headed households lack time to attend school because they are sometimes too occupied with the responsibilities of having to generate income to supply food and other essentials in the family and they have to perform work to support themselves.

It also emerged that absenteeism among child-headed households is irregular because of their caring responsibilities. Some of the respondents indicated that they are sometimes overburdened with the burden of taking care of the family and other family responsibilities.
Alice reported the following: “I have a child who is always sick. Sometimes I do not go to school if my child is sick. I have no one to take care of my child if he is sick and I cannot live him at the crèche if he is sick.”

Wonderful stated: “If my younger brother is sick, I have no option but to go with him to the clinic. He is always sick and sometimes if I do not go with him to the clinic, I stay at home with him until he is fine.”

The above information reveals that attendance of children in child-headed households is irregular because of the double burden of taking care of the family and raising the siblings. These children do not have parents and as a result they take the role of parents and therefore attendance is irregular. Poulsen (2006) concurs with this finding when he found out that learners in child-headed households may be out of school because of their caring responsibilities. Guarcello et al. (2004) also came up with the same findings that absenteeism among learners from child-headed homes is high because they have to take care of younger siblings or to work.

Out of the twenty respondents, six indicated that they are certainly absent at least once every month to go and collect their pension.

Witness stated: “I am not absent many times. I only do not go to school when I go to collect my grant.”

Khensani revealed the following: “I have to go and collect my child’s grant and on such days I am absent from school.”
The above information illustrates that children in child-headed households struggle with regular attendance because every month they have a day to be absent so as to go and collect their grants. Although this is a genuine cause, it means that such children miss school during the time of collecting their grants.

Some of the children who participated in the study absented themselves from school because of lack of parental guidance and encouragement.

Witness stated: "During weekends I usually visit my friends or they come to my place. We usually drink too much and when it is Monday morning I am usually too tired to go to school."

Goodness said: “When my boyfriend visits me and sleep at my place, I cannot go to school the following morning.”

Nyiko Revealed the following: “Sometimes my girlfriend decides to come to my house and stay with me. During such days, it is hard for me to go to school.”

These responses highlight that the absence of parents in these households leave the children vulnerable as there is no one to give guidance and counseling about the risks involved in such behaviour. Besides that, there is no one to discourage such behaviour. It is therefore clear that children in child-headed households sometimes absent themselves from school due to lack of parental guidance and encouragement. This finding is in agreement with Poulsen (2006) who also found out that there is no one at home who has the authority to make children go to school in a child-headed home, and that is why attendance is irregular.
A minority of the respondents however on the contrary indicated that no matter how difficult it is for them they made sure that they do not absent themselves from school so that they can at least eat a free meal at school.

Eunice indicated: “It is better to go to school than to be at home the whole day because at school I can eat.”

In a similar tone Joanna revealed the following: “The main reason why I do not want to be absent from school is that I want to eat at school and sometimes I carry the left-over in my lunch box to eat for supper at home.”

Paledi stated: “There is a lot of work for me to do at home, but I make sure that I attend school every day because if I do not go to school, I do not have anything to eat at home. I always go to school so that I can eat.”

The responses above clearly indicate that to some of the children living in child-headed households, a school meal is an incentive for them. Some of these children chose to be at school every day so that they can have a free meal, and because there is no food at home, some children in these homes opt to go to school most of the time so that they do not starve at home. Most of these children come to school on empty stomachs so for them coming to school is an opportunity to fill their empty stomachs. This finding is in accordance with Bennel (2005) who noted that the provision of school meals is a major incentive to attend school among the disadvantaged children who live in child-headed households in South Africa.
A review of some registers posed a challenge to the researcher in two out of the four schools. Registers were not marked up to date and the researcher discovered that marking of registers is irregular. In one of the schools, one of the educators did not mark the register for more than two months. In that case, it became very difficult to confirm learner attendance. However, in two of the schools, a review of the registers confirmed that children in child-headed households have a challenge on attendance. Their attendance is irregular due to various reasons explained above.

4.7 Poor performance

During the course of the study, the researcher analyzed reports and mark schedules for the respondents from the period January 2011-September 2012. It emerged that poor performance is a challenge that learners from child-headed households face. A minority of the respondents in the study performed well. On the other hand, most of them did not meet the minimum requirements needed to pass a grade. They gave different reasons for their poor performance.

When asked about their performance, learners gave various responses.

Khensani said: “I am not impressed with my performance at school. This is because every day when I come to school, I am tired and I fail to concentrate. I sometimes fall asleep in class as I am totally exhausted during lessons.”

Godfrey had something similar: “I find it very difficult to concentrate in class. Most of the time, I sleep in class because by the time I come to school I would be exhausted already because I wake up early to prepare for my sibling.”
Thabo said: “I do not know what is wrong with me, even when I want to concentrate I fail. I am sleeping or dozing in class most of the time. I feel embarrassed each time when my mathematics teacher wakes me up in his lesson almost every day.”

Eunice stated: “I fail to concentrate in class because I am too pre-occupied with the death of my parents.”

Alice echoed similar sentiments: “I am too exhausted by the time I come to school. My baby is sometimes crying during the night and I sleep late. The following morning when I am at school, I am either dozing or sleeping.”

The above responses are an indication that most of the learners in child-headed households fail to concentrate at school. They fall asleep in class and they come to school tired as a result of added responsibilities such as caring for the siblings or performing household chores. This finding is in accordance with Vaughn (2001) and Bundy et al. (2000) who noted that concentration at school is often difficult for learners who live in child-headed households.

It also emerged during study that one of the reasons for poor performance of children in child-headed households is hunger. Learners revealed that hunger affects their concentration and ultimately performance at school. This is verified by the following respondents:

Nyiko said: “Most of the time I come to school without eating anything because there will not be anything for me to eat in the morning. Sometimes when I am in class I shiver and feel too weak. I cannot concentrate and I will be wishing if it can be break time so that I can eat food that we
are provided with at school. During break, I eat too much and after break I cannot concentrate again because I will be too full.”

Alina stated: “All lessons before break are difficult for me. I cannot concentrate because of hunger. I feel dizzy and weak until I eat during break time.”

In a similar tone Lloyd stated: “To be honest, I come to school on an empty stomach most of the time and I cannot concentrate. All the lessons before break are a disaster for me because I do not understand anything because I will be hungry sometimes I shiver and feel weak.”

Alice revealed the following: “It is not easy to learn when your stomach is grumbling. At least lessons after break are better.”

The responses above are an indication that hunger is a serious challenge encountered by learners who live in child-headed households. Virtually all of the respondents stated that their poor performance is a result of hunger. This study has noted that these learners do not eat anything before they go to school and as a result they fail to concentrate especially before break. However, the situation becomes better after break time when they eat a meal provided by the school. Responses from the learners show that their poor performance is as a result of failing to concentrate because of hunger. This finding agrees with Snider (2006) who noted that children in child-headed households were vulnerable and they showed signs of hunger. He found out that that hunger often leads to lack of concentration, falling asleep in class and this ultimately resulted in poor concentration and poor performance at the end. The finding also agrees with Germann (2005) who also found out that children who live in child-headed homes struggle with performance due to hunger. Phillips (2011) concurs with Germann (2005) who
again found out that on a daily basis schools have to content with learners who are hungry and exhausted and this affected their performance at school.

It also emerged in this study that virtually all the respondents indicated that they do not have adequate study time at home and their home environment is not conducive to study. This resulted in poor performance. Here is what some of the respondents said.

Thomas said: “It is very difficult for me to study at home because after eating supper I am too tired to read. More so even if I want to read I do not have a chair and a table to study at.”

Lloyd said: “Reading at home is a challenge. There is no one to wake me up to study because I am all alone in the house.”

Thabo also stated: “It is difficult to do the homework and assignments that we are given by our teachers because I have no one to ask at home. Most of the time I just copy from other learners.”

Anike revealed the following: “I always fail my homework because I do not have anyone to assist me at home and besides I do not have the time to do the homework.”

The above statements highlight that poor performance in child-headed households is attributed to lack of study time, and the fact that the home environment is not conducive to studies. This study has revealed that poor performance is also due to failure to do and complete homework and assignments. These findings are in tally with Germann (2005) and Phillips (2011) who indicate that learners in child-headed households struggle with performance because of lack of study time and disillusionment of their living circumstances. These findings also concur with
Meintjies et al. (2006) who also explain children in child-households (mostly orphans) failed to do and complete their homework or struggled to concentrate and as a result under-performed.

When the respondents were asked about what aspects of the experience of living in a child headed-household would they describe as challenging the following themes emerged:

- Psychological trauma
- Financial difficulties
- Lack of scholastic materials

4.8 Psychological trauma

It vividly emerged in the study that learners face a lot of psychological trauma as a result of living in child-headed households. The traumas that they faced varied from one learner to the other. However, some of the learners indicated that they were traumatized by the death of their parents. The fact that they assume parental role and responsibilities also stressed them. This is verified by the following statements:

Thoko stated: “The death of my parents haunts me every day, especially the way my mother suffered before she died. She was very sick and when she died my hopes for living were shattered. Sometimes when I think of that, I cry even when I am in class. Sometimes I ask God why? I cannot cope with my situation of being a mother, a father and a child at the same time.”
Wonderful stated: “I have constant memories of my late parents. I am suffering like this because my parents are late. It is painful when other learners talk about their parents in my presence.”

Joanna responded: “I am very disappointed with my mother she is not dead but she has deserted me for the past four years. I live like an orphan but I am not. I am very stressed most of times and lonely because I cannot make ends meet.”

Sweetness postulated: “When I look at myself I am nothing because my parents died. I cannot do anything on my own. When I am at home and things are difficult, I just go and sit at my mother’s grave and tell her all my problems and worries and this relieves me.”

The responses above are an indication that the majority of learners in child-headed households are traumatized by the death of their parents and their living conditions. This finding is consistent with that of Ogina (2010) who found out that children without parents are usually traumatized by their parents’ death, which is then followed by a change in their conditions. These learners sometimes cry at school and at home, and this shows they are traumatized by their situation at home and school. This finding agrees with Phillips (2011) who suggests that children living in child-headed households experience a strong longing for their parents and as a result they experience a higher level of psychological and emotional strain. It also emerged that in a child-headed household, learners suffer stress as a result of failing to adapt to role and responsibilities. This is in line with Tsegaye (2003) who also suggests that learners in child-headed household stress as a result of adapting to adult roles and responsibilities.
4.9 Gender based discrimination

It emerged during the study that in child-headed households where there were boys and girls who attend secondary school, girls were more vulnerable than boys and they did most of the household chores as compared to boys. This finding is verified by the following statements from some of the girls.

Witness stated: “Most of the times I do most of the work at home. My brother always tells me that it is my responsibility as a girl to do household chores.”

Thoko also said: “My brother always tells me that boys do not sweep, wash and cook. I do everything for him some days he goes to school and I remain at home doing all the work.”

The statements above reveal that in a child-headed household where there are both boys and girls, the latter do most of the work in the household. Gender-based discrimination exists in these households. This finding agrees with Neilsen (2004) who observes that girl children are especially vulnerable in the emergence of child-headed households. They do most of the chores in the household. The findings by Daniel and Matthias (2012) also concurs with the finding of this study in that by seeing girls as more efficient in housekeeping, the boys rely on them to do most of the chores around the home.

4.10 Sexual abuse

Most of the girls disclosed that they have suffered sexual abuse in one way or the other as revealed by the following statement: “I do things that I do not want to do. I sometimes sleep
with men who promise to give me help. Some of these men take advantage of my situation, they come to me with some groceries and cash and I respond by sleeping with them.”

Eunice responded: “I have a baby not because I wanted to but my boyfriend at that time insisted that I must have a baby to show that I loved him. I was desperate and I agreed. I was afraid that if I refused he would stop supporting me financially. Now I feel cheated because ever since I got pregnant he has disappeared and my baby stresses me.”

Alice stated: (crying) “I have sex with men in return for the financial and material support that they give me. What stresses me most is that some of these men refuse to use condoms, and as a girl I cannot tell a man to use a condom because it shows that I am not honest.”

In a similar tone, Joanna stated: “I become a victim of circumstances. I am an orphan and some men take advantage of me. Sometimes I sleep with old married men because they give me money and other things.”

The statements above depict that sexual abuse is a common problem that affects girl learners who live in child-headed households. It has emerged in this study that sexual abuse is a serious challenge that affects girl learners. This makes them vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. This finding is consistent with that of Bennel (2005) and Neilsen who found out that, children in child-headed households are subjected to sexual abuse because of the absence of adult guidance and mentoring. This also tallies with the finding by Phillips (2011) who found out that the sexual abuse that the learners encounter expose them to psychological risks over which they have no control.
During the course of the study, it also emerged from the teachers that learners from child-headed households face serious psychological problems.

One teacher suggested: “These learners face tremendous psychological challenges. Most of them have behavioural disorders like Bonakele (pseudonym) and Paledi (pseudonym) are most of the problematic students in the school. They are always late frequently absent and are among a group of learners who use drugs. They have been caught several times in the toilets during break and disciplinary measures have always been taken for them.”

Another teacher stated: “These learners have a low self-esteem; they are easily angered and suffer from depression and outbursts. You realize that in class they do not participate and they look down upon themselves and they cry easily.”

Another teacher said: “In my class, I have four learners who are heading households. Their behaviour is the same, they are withdrawn from other children and they have limited concentration in class, but their behaviour is disturbing at times. For example, one of the girls likes fighting and two of the boys use drugs.”

The statements above revealed that learners from child-headed households face many psychological challenges as a result of staying alone with no parents to monitor and supervise them. Teachers indicated that these learners display behavioural problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, especially boys. Teachers further indicated that learners in child-headed households display limited concentration; they easily cry and have a low self-esteem. These findings agree with Mchombu (2009) who suggests out that, children in child-headed
households manifest behavioural symptoms in the form of depression, anger, withdrawal and outbursts because of emotional distress.

4.11 Financial difficulties

Under this theme various subthemes emerged and these are less access to grants, coping strategies for girls, coping strategies for boys and lack of adequate food.

4.11.1 Less access to grants

A minority of the respondents indicated that they were receiving social grants from the government for social support. The majority stated that they were not receiving any financial support and they gave varied reasons. Anike stated: “I am not earning any grant. When I contacted the social workers, they keep on telling me that my case will be solved.”

Nstako said: “I do not have a birth certificate and an ID; as a result, I am not earning any grant. The social workers promised to come back and solve my problem in 2009 up to now.”

Goodness stated: “When I turned 18 years in grade 2011, my grant was automatically stopped.”

These statements show the financial situation that most of the children in child-headed homes encounter. Only a few of the respondents receive the social grant. Most these children do not receive the social grant mainly because they do not have the required documents or they have reached the cut off age which is 18 years. This finding confirms the findings by Meintjies (2010) who found out that, child-headed households have less access to income support through social grants. This also tallies with the findings by Phillips (2011) who discovered that although children living in child-headed households are theoretically eligible for one or more grants
available it is true that applications are time-consuming, complicated and unsuccessful. In the above statements, it has emerged that some of the children in child-headed households cannot access the grants available because they do not have the required documentation. This finding is in agreement with that of Tsegaye (2005) who found out that the response by the social workers in this regard is too slow or non-existent.

4.11.2 Coping strategies for girls in child-headed households

It has been indicated that only a few of the respondents receive the social grant. All of the respondents however indicated that they encounter financial difficulties. Those who are earning the social grant indicated that it was not enough considering the various expenses that they have to cover. Some of the girls in the study indicated that they had to support themselves and their siblings because there is no parent to work and support them. It emerged during the course of this study that both boys and girls encounter economic hardships. Girls were found to be at high risk of sexual abuse and HIV infection. This finding is verified by the following statements from some of the girls.

Alina stated: “My boyfriend supports me with cash and most of the things that I need. He sometimes comes to stay with me at my place. During weekends, I sometimes visit him. I have a child with him and he supports me together with the baby.”

Thoko said: “Life without parents is tough!” There was a long pause at this stage as the respondent started crying. She continued, “I was bewitched last year when I suffered from continuous menstruation. The man that I was going out with deserted me; he was everything to me. I strongly believe that his wife bewitched me. My neighbours took me to a sangoma who
told me that the wife of my boyfriend bewitched me. The sangoma cured me and the bleeding has stopped. I have learnt a lesson that, I will not have sexual relations with married men again!” The respondent looked very sad and worried at this time.

Eunice stated: “I have several boyfriends and older men who give me cash. I have sex with them when they want. I use protection with some of them and others do not want to use condoms. I am not happy with my lifestyle because I know there is HIV/AIDS, but there is nothing that I can do.”

The statements above reveal that girl learners in child-headed homes were being sexually abused because of the financial difficulties that they encounter. It has emerged that 60% of the girl learners in the child-headed homes have multiple sexual partners who offer them cash and other essentials that they need. These girls end up having sexual relations with older men. This finding agrees with Tsegaye (2005) who suggests out that as a result of desperation, a number of girls end up as prostitutes. This study agrees with the findings by Booysen and Banchman (2003) who also suggest that there was high infection rate among girls in child-headed households because of the frequency of sexual intercourse with older men who seduce and lure them with offers of cash, consumer goods and supposed status.

4.11.3 Coping strategies for boys in child-headed households

On the contrary, boy learners in child-headed households had other means and ways of survival different from girls in the same situation. The following statements show coping strategies for boys in child-headed households.
Godfrey stated: “I do some part-time jobs like gathering firewood for selling and making bricks for people who are building their houses. It really helps me because I get something for my upkeep.”

Paledi said: “I have made a contract with a carwash to help them wash cars. There are usually many cars to be washed during weekends. It helps me to have money to do this and that.”

Lloyd stated: “During weekends, I move from one house to another asking for piece jobs like working in the garden and cleaning houses and yards.”

The above statements indicated that boys in child-headed households encounter financial difficulties, but their means of survival are quite safe, for example, working in the garden, washing cars and collecting firewood. It is evident from the extracts above that boys do not engage in prostitution like girls as a survival mechanism and they are not vulnerable to sexual abuse by adults. This finding does not concur with Booysen and Bachman (2003) who suggest that due to financial difficulties the boys may join armed groups to make their way to the streets to look for employment.

4.11.4 Lack of adequate food

It emerged in this study that due to economic hardships or financial difficulties, virtually learners in child-headed households do not have adequate food and therefore badly nourished. This is verified by the following extracts from the respondents.
Sweetness said: “Food is a real challenge to me and my siblings. We rely on food from the school. Last year, the situation was better because my younger brother was given leftovers at his school. This year, the situation is bad because my brother says there are no more leftovers.”

Witness stated: “I rely mostly on the meal that we eat at school during break. When I go home sometimes there is nothing, I just sleep and wait to eat again tomorrow. I am shy to bring a lunch box to school to carry some leftovers as other learners may laugh at me.”

Nyiko stated: “Last year, I had no challenge of food because every month end our teacher for nutrition used to give us food like beans and meal rice, but now I do not know what has happened. She tells us that she cannot give us now because the food being received by the school is not even enough for the school.”

Khensani revealed the following: “The grant that I get enables me to buy some food but is not enough for the whole month. When it gets finished, I rely mostly on the food from school.”

Teachers also revealed that learners who come from child-headed households suffer from lack of food and were therefore malnourished. When teachers were asked about the challenges that these learners face, they indicated that shortage of food is a major challenge. Here are some of the responses by the teachers.

One of them said, “These learners have a challenge of food, and by just looking at them you can tell that some of them are malnourished.” Another also said, “Because they do not have enough income, it is obvious that they cannot afford to buy the basic food that will last for a month.”
The last teacher said: “Some of these learners show signs of severe malnutrition and this means that they do not have adequate food.”

From the statements above about teachers and learners, it has emerged that shortage of food is a real and serious challenge in child-headed households. This finding agrees with that of Tsegaye (2005), Neilsen (2004) and Daniel and Matthias (2012) who all found out that, due to financial difficulties, children in child-headed households do not have adequate food and consequently become malnourished.

4.12 Lack of scholastic materials

When the participants were asked the question “What aspects of living in a child-headed household would you describe as challenging?” they responded that they had a serious challenge of uniforms.

4.13 Uniforms

During the course of the study, it emerged that most of the respondents had a serious challenge with uniforms. Only a few had no challenge with uniform at all. The researcher found out that most of the learners from child-headed households had no proper uniforms. Its either the uniforms were too old or were incomplete. Learners without proper uniform expressed their frustration. The following statements depict some of the challenges that some of the participants faced with regard to uniforms.

Eunice stated: “Since 2011, I have never had school shoes. The pair that I used to wear is now too small, so that is why I wear these slippers (showing off the red slippers). What frustrates me
is that teachers always tell me to buy proper school shoes. Where on earth will I get them? I also
do not have a school bag. I use a plastic bag to carry my books.”

In a similar tone Lloyd said: “I do not feel comfortable with my school uniform especially my
school trousers; it is now old and small. I do not have school shoes and a school jersey. In winter,
I wear my own brown jersey and others wear blue school jerseys. I feel bad when some of the
teachers tell me to bring a school jersey. I do not also have a school bag.”

Alina stated: “Sometimes teachers will punish me for not having the school jerseys and shoes.
Last year, a certain business man donated shoes to our school for orphans and poor children like
us. Unfortunately, I did not get my size. Another thing that frustrates me is that I do not have a
school bag. I use a plastic bag.”

The above statements show that learners in child-headed households do not have school shoes,
jerseys and bags. Some of the girls’ shirts and skirts were worn out as well as the trousers and
shirts for boys. The learners also indicated their embarrassment at being without the proper
uniform. Learners also expressed their desperation at rigid uniform requirements from the
teachers.

The findings are at tandem with the findings by Meintjies et al. (2003) who found out that
school uniforms presented a further hurdle in accessing schooling for children living in child-
headed households. However, no learner has reported being sent home and not to return until
they obtained the proper uniform. This aspect is not supportive of the findings by Meintjies et
al. (2003) who found out that in some instances children were refused admission or were sent
home and told not to return until they obtained uniform. Also, no learner indicated that they
had been chased away for not paying school fees as all schools in this study do not charge any school fees. This again is at variance with the findings by Meintjes et al. (2003) who found out that in some instances learners were chased away for not being able to pay school fees.

Although learners in this study admitted that they are not charged any school fees or buy any stationery such as textbooks, pens and exercise books, they however expressed their frustration at not having money for educational trips undertaken by schools and also not having pocket money like other learners who have parents. This is verified by the following respondents.

Ntsako stated: “Yes we do not pay any fees but it is so frustrating when a school organizes a trip and you cannot go. Last year, I cried when other learners went to Durban, but I could not go. I did not have money to go.”

Bonakele said: “It is painful when you see others buying a quarter and you do not have money to buy also.” A quarter refers to a quarter loaf of bread at school stuffed with polony, cheese, chips and achaar.

4.14 Effects of poverty

When asked about how living in a child-headed household impacts on their schooling, it emerged that learners in child-headed households live in poverty; they are extremely vulnerable and poor. Under this theme, teenage pregnancy as a result of poverty is also going to be discussed.

Khensani stated: “I am poor and cannot make it at school.”
Nyiko said: “I do not think that I can pass my matric exam because of poverty. Even when I pass, who will take me to university?”

Collins stated: “My situation at home is so bad that sometimes I think that is why I am not passing.”

The above statements show that children in child-headed households live in poverty and they have low self-expectations and low academic self-concept. This finding agrees with Woolfolk (2010) who found out that poor children come to believe that they are not good at school and this leads to failure. Woolfolk (2010) also found out that poor children withdraw and claim not to care about school. Also the findings by Houser (2009) are at tandem with the finding of this study that poverty can have a severe effect on the child’s performance at school.

4.15 Teenage pregnancy

It emerged during the study that poverty leads to teenage pregnancy. Out of the ten girls who were interviewed in this study, three had children and two of the girls were pregnant during the course of this study. This means that half of the girls who participated in the study became pregnant. Records on pregnant learners from the four schools confirmed that most of the learners who fell pregnant were from child-headed households.

Alina stated: “I got my baby because of my situation at home. My boyfriend supported and is still supporting me financially, and therefore, I ended up having a child with him, but it is difficult for me now to concentrate on my studies.”
Ntsako revealed the following: “I hate my child because I got him out of desperation to survive. Now I am regretting because it is not easy to have time with my books.”

Alice said: “If my parents were there, I was not going to have this baby. Poverty has caused all this.”

Sweetness also stated: “If you are hungry, you end up putting yourself in risky and dangerous positions just to have food on the table. This is why I ended up being pregnant.”

From the statements above, it is clear that child-headed households are at risk of teenage pregnancy because of living in poverty. In other words, poverty has a role in perpetuating teenage pregnancy. This finding agrees with that of Mfono (2003) who found out that teenage pregnancy is high among child-headed households due to poverty teenagers in child-headed households get involved in unprotected sexual activities as a means to survive their circumstances. The extracts also reveal that these teenagers who become pregnant do not make it at school. This finding is tallies with that of Luker and Christine (2006) who found out that teenagers who become pregnant in schools perform poorly because of being a mother and a learner. It also emerged during the analysis of mark schedules that these girls who become pregnant and become mothers performed poorly at school.

4.16 Circumstances leading to the establishment of child-headed households

This section focuses on the circumstances that led to the establishment of child-headed households. The findings are on what led learners to live in child-headed households. The
question on the circumstances leading to the establishment of child-headed households brought various responses from the respondents.

4.16.1 Child-headed households as a result of the death of parents

It emerged during the course of this study that some of the respondents indicated that they live in child-headed households as a result of the death of their parents. These learners did not reveal the causes of the death of their parents. However, they all mentioned that the parents got very sick and later died. This is verified by the following extracts from the respondents.

Thabo stated: *I live alone without my parents because they both got very sick and died in 2009. My mother died in March and only after three months my father also died.*”

Paledi stated: “*I do not know why both of my parents died in the same year. What I know is that they were both very sick. When they died, I decided to stay with my siblings in our parent’s home.*”

Eunice said: “*My father died first then my mother followed after being sick for a very long time.*”

The statements above show that most of the learners who come from child-headed households have lost both of their parents. It is not clear whether the parents died of HIV/AIDS or not because none of the respondents mentioned that. Only one can assume that the “long illness” that they mentioned could be as a result of HIV/AIDS. This assumption could be true and it agrees with the finding of Phillips (2011) who found out that HIV/AIDS is a major factor leading to the establishment and increase in the number of child-headed households in Southern Africa.
4.16.2 Failure of the extended family to absorb orphaned children

Some of the respondents indicated that the death of their parents left them with no option but to live on their own. They attributed this to the fact that their extended families could no longer absorb them.

Thoko said: “My relatives did not even attempt to stay with us. After the death of my parents my uncle announced that I was old enough to care for my siblings.”

In a similar tone, Anike stated: “My grandmother had six other orphans that she took care of. She wanted me to stay with her but I realized that I was old enough to stay alone in the house of my parents.”

The statements above clearly indicate that the extended family can no longer absorb these orphaned children. This finding agrees with Abdool and Abdool (2008) who found out that the extended family is now being eroded by the epidemic and relatives are no longer available to cope with the rising number of HIV/AIDS orphans. Despite the fact that the extended family can no longer absorb the orphaned children these children did not want to be separated from their siblings and therefore decided to stay on their own.

4.16.3 Child-headed households as a result of migrant labour

A minority of the respondents indicated that they stayed with their mothers only and they left them saying they were going to look for jobs in Gauteng. Their mothers never came back nor do they support them financially.

Thomas stated: “I do not know the whereabouts of my father. My mother never told me who my father is. I used stay with my mother, but from 2008 I have been staying alone since she went to search for employment in Johannesburg she has never come back.”
Witness said: “My mother is a bad woman. She left me in 2008 saying she was going to Johannesburg to look for a job. She has never returned and I have been staying alone with my younger siblings.”

These statements revealed that some learners live alone because their mothers have gone to look for employment in Gauteng. This finding is in accordance with Foster (2000) who found out that child–headed households in some instances are as a result of migrant labour due to concentration of work in the cities.

4.16.4 Child-headed households as a result of being abandoned by parents

Some of the respondents indicated that they were left alone because the parents decided to remarry and never came back. In other words, their parents abandoned them in order to commit themselves to their new marriages. This finding is supportive of Neilsen (2004) who found out that some children stay on their own because their parents have abandoned them.

4.17 Life without parents

When the respondents were asked about how life is like without parents, virtually all of respondents indicated that life without parents is difficult. Their main concern was that no one was there to guide them, supervise them and encourage them and as a result they feel so lonely and stressed.

Bonakele stated: “I wish my parents were there for me. Sometimes I feel I need someone to give me the guidance so that I can make right decisions. I always feel that if my parents were there, life would not be like it is today. I am lonely and stressed.”

Goodness said: “There is no one to supervise me at home. I do what I want and I feel it is dangerous. I decide for myself, for example, if I want to go to school or not. If you have parents they can encourage and monitor you. I feel lonely and discouraged.”

Godfrey revealed the following: “It is painful when my friends talk about their parents. There are times when I feel lonely and distressed because I have no shoulder to lean on.”
The above responses show that learners who do not have parents are lonely, stressed and discouraged most of the time, and they lack adult supervision. This finding is supportive of Neilsen (2004) who found out that these children experience feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. They are lonely and empty and as a result they have a desire for a fulfilling life and a fear of the unknown. Tsegaye (2005) also agrees with this finding as he also found out that children without parents are lonely and distress because they are deprived of mental security as well as crucial emotional security. Furthermore, such children live and manage their own activities without the supervision of an adult.

4.18 Risks and social problems encountered by child-headed households

4.18.1 Risks encountered by girls

As already indicated before, girls get pregnant and therefore are at a greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

For instance Sweetness stated: “I have multiple sexual partners because I am trying to survive.”

The statement above reveals that girl learners in child-headed households are at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases because they want to survive. This finding is in agreement with that of Adato (2005) who suggested that children in child-headed households especially girls are at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases from economic coping strategies involving sex. It also emerged in this study that some of the girls in child-headed households choose to become pregnant so that they access the child support grant.

This is verified by Khensani who said: “When I decided to become pregnant, I thought the child-support grant would aid me, but I have made a terrible mistake.”

4.18.2 Risks encountered by boys

During the study, it emerged that one of the risks encountered by boys in child-headed households was the use of drugs so as to help them cope with their stress.
Thabo stated: “I use drugs to forget all my problems. If my father was alive, he would not tolerate this.”

Paledi said: “My friends come to my place with drugs and we use them because there is no parent to stop me from doing this.”

Wonderful revealed the following: “Drugs and alcohol are part of my life because I relieve my stress. If I had parents I do not think that I was going to do this.”

These statements above show that boys in child-headed households resort to drugs believing that they relieve their stress. All the boys who admitted that they use drugs indicated that if they had parents they were not going to stress and therefore they would not use drugs. It showed that boys from child-headed households face risks of drug abuse. This finding is supportive of Adato (2005) who found out that child-headed households turn to alcohol in their distress and this has further detrimental effects upon their education. Child-headed households also experience problems of alcohol and drugs and as a result they are at a greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

4.19 Conclusion

This chapter described, presented and analyzed mainly the results of unstructured interviews that were conducted with secondary school learners who live in child-headed households in Thulamahashe. In addition, it analyzed the documents collected for this research. Therefore, the results obtained in this study reflected the schooling experiences and challenges that learners in child-headed households face. In some instances, there were similarities as well as differences on the information provided by participants. It can be concluded that learners from child-headed households face some terrible schooling experiences. The findings indicated that the responsibility of a household is extremely difficult to secondary school learners who live in child-headed households and this presented challenges that have an impact on their education.
Chapter 5: Major findings, conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This study was undertaken to explore the schooling experiences of secondary school learners in child-headed households in Thulamahashe circuit, Bushbuckridge District in Mpumalanga province in South Africa. The research question was: What are the schooling experiences of learners from child-headed households in Thulamahashe secondary schools? Chapter one presented a brief overview and orientation to the study. In chapter two, relevant literature in related to child-headed households was reviewed. In chapter three, the research design and methodology was outlined. In chapter four, data were presented, analyzed and interpreted. This chapter discusses the study’s main findings in terms of the themes and possible implications. The chapter also highlights the recommendations and conclusion of the study. It eventually makes recommendations for further studies.

5.2 Main findings

This section presents the experiences of secondary school learners in child-headed households that emerged from the study. The major findings were:

5.2.1 Absenteeism

Absenteeism is a major challenge that is encountered by learners who live in child-headed households in Bushbuckridge Mpumalanga. In relation to this finding, some class teachers do not mark their registers regularly and this posed as a serious challenge where registers were used as a follow up to check on the attendance of learners.
5.2.2 Poor performance

Poor performance is a challenge faced by learners in child-headed households. The majority of them were repeating a grade.

5.2.3 Psychological trauma

Learners in child-headed households faced tremendous psychological trauma because the majority lost their parents and a few had been abandoned by their parents.

5.2.4 Gender based discrimination

Gender-based discrimination is common in a child-headed household with both boys and girls. Girls do most of the chores and decide on the major operations from day to day. Boys rely on girls to do most of the chores around the home.

5.2.5 Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse among girl learners in child-headed households is a challenge and is attributed to the fact that they need financial and material support especially from older men.

5.2.6 Less access to grants

Learners in child-headed households encounter financial difficulties as 65% of them do not receive any financial support from the government either because they have reached 18 years or because they do not have the required documentation.
5.2.7 Coping strategies for girls

Most of the girl learners in child-headed households have multiple sexual partners who offer them cash and other essentials that they need.

5.2.8 Coping strategies for boys

Boys in child-headed households engage in some part-time jobs such as collecting firewood, working in the gardens and washing cars, for example, in exchange for cash. However, drug abuse among boy learners in child-headed households is a challenge. The use of drugs had further detrimental effects on their education and ultimately the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

5.2.9 Lack of adequate food

Learners in child-headed households lack food, they experience hunger and they are malnourished and this results in failure to concentrate during lessons especially those that are taught before break.

5.2.10 Lack of scholastic materials (uniforms)

Learners in child-headed households lack scholastic materials. They do not have proper uniforms especially jerseys and shoes. They also do not have proper bags to put their books. They use plastic bags to carry books. In relation to this finding, teachers in some schools exacerbate the situation by the rigid uniform requirements that they imposed.
5.2.11 Effects of poverty

Learners in child-headed households live in poverty; they are poor and vulnerable, and as a result, they have low self-expectations and low self-esteem. They believe that they are not good at school and this leads to failure.

5.2.12 Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy among learners in child-headed households is a challenge. Half of the girls from child-headed households who participated in the study became pregnant and their performance at school was bad. Some of the girls who became pregnant failed to meet the minimum requirements needed to pass a grade and they were repeating.

5.2.13 Circumstances leading to the establishment of child-headed households

Most of the children in child-headed households lost their parents, and the extended family could not absorb them. A few of children in child-headed households opted to live on their own despite the invitation by the extended family members to stay with them. Some of the children in child-headed households were abandoned by their parents.

5.2.14 Life without parents

Virtually all the learners in child-headed households live a difficult life as there is no one to guide, supervise and encourage them. As a result, child-headed households suffer from loneliness and stress.
5.2.15 Risks encountered by girls

Girl learners in child-headed households are at risks of contracting sexually transmitted diseases because they have sexual relationships with older men who will give them cash, and also because they have no parents to give them guidance.

5.2.16 Risks encountered by boys

Boys in child-headed households resort to drugs believing that they will relieve their stress of staying on their own.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations to teachers

1. Teachers should regularly teach teenagers in child-headed households life skills, the consequences of unprotected sex and dangers of drug abuse.

2. Teachers should mark attendance registers regularly and there is need for proper supervision by school management to ensure that registers are up to date so that it becomes easy for anyone to follow up on the attendance of learners in child-headed households.

3. Teachers should give learners in child-headed homes attention, emotional support, love, warmth and a sense of belonging.

4. All secondary school teachers should be responsible for learner(s) from child–headed households when they are at school and should regularly give them counseling as there is no family discipline and parental guidance in such homes.
5. Teachers should adopt education and public information which will help to eliminate
prejudices against the girl child.

5.3.2 Recommendations to the Department of Education

1. There is need for comprehensive counseling for learners who live in child-headed households
because of the psychological trauma that they face; therefore, the department of education
must employ at least one professional counselor per school to offer professional counseling
to learners who live in child-headed households.

2. Secondary school teachers should be well-trained through workshops by professional
counselors through the department of Education on how to give guidance and counseling to
learners who live in child-headed households.

3. All schools through the department of Education should be allowed to recommend to the
department of social Development that all learners who have reached the age of 18 who live
in child-headed households must continue to receive the support grant as they are still in
need of care and support.

4. In relation to the above recommendation, social workers should be deployed in schools to
improve the efficiency of the social-welfare system.

5.3.3 Recommendations to the government

1. The government, through the department of Education, should provide food parcels to
learners who live in child-headed households. The food parcels should be distributed by
schools as they are aware of learners in child-headed households.
2. The nutrition program in rural schools should be extended to include breakfast such as soft porridge or cereals so that learners in child-headed households have at least a meal before classes so that they can have energy to concentrate on their studies the whole day.

5.3.4 Recommendations to the Department of Health

The department of health should work in collaboration with schools. It should have a programme of sending health personnel to all secondary schools at least once every month to teach teenagers about the dangers of unprotected sex, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy.

5.3.5 Recommendations to the Private sector

The private sector through the community social investment programs can do more to ensure the sustainability of supply of basic needs such as food and uniforms for learners who live in child-headed households.

5.3.6 Recommendations to principals

1. Principals of schools should ensure that their schools do not have rigid uniform requirements that they impose especially to the vulnerable children from child-headed households.

2. The school management team should be flexible and invite faith-based organizations once every term to provide spiritual and moral guidance to learners who live in child-headed households and all the teenagers in the schools.
5.4 Conclusion

This study was undertaken to explore the schooling experiences of secondary school learners in child-headed households in Thulamahashe circuit, Bushbuckridge district, in South Africa. The research was concerned about gathering and interpreting schooling experiences encountered by secondary school learners in child-headed households. This assisted the researcher as an educator to gain a better understanding of the experiences and challenges which learners in child-headed households face. The study revealed many schooling experiences and other challenges that affect their learning experiences and these are: absenteeism, poor performance, psychological trauma, sexual abuse, lack of adequate food and scholastic materials, poverty, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy.

5.5 Recommendations for further research

The purpose of this section of the dissertation is to explain the limited scope of this study and suggest areas that can be researched for wider generalization. The schooling experiences of secondary school learners in child-headed households should be examined in other circuits and provinces as this study covered only Thulamahashe circuit in Mpumalanga province.
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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Consent form**

Enquiries: Chidziva V. N

P.O BOX 1768
Dear Learner,

I, Verna Nyaradzo Chidziva, a student at the University Of South Africa hereby invite you to participate in a research to be conducted with children living in child-headed homes, where there are no adults.

Homes like yours exist throughout South Africa as well as in other African countries. I would invite you to answer a few questions on what is it like to be a learner from child-headed home. These questions that I want to ask will hopefully help educators, the government and other organizations to understand your situation so that they can be well informed.

Please understand that you are not forced to participate in this research and the choice is yours on whether you want to take part or not. I would really appreciate if you do share with me your experiences. You will not be affected in any way if you agree to take part, you can also decide to stop at any time and if you do, you will be affected in any way.

This interview will be confidential. Whatever you are going to share with me, will remain between you and me. I also ask for permission to record the interview. The choice of whether to record or not is yours. If you allow me to record the interview, I will not mention your name on the tape recorder. You are free to mention if you want the tape recorder to be switched off at any point during the interview.
The interview will take about one hour. I humbly request that you be honest and open as possible in answering the questions.

Appendix B: Declaration by participant

I ......................................................... (full names of participants) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time should I so desire.

Signature of participant ..................Date
APPENDIX C: Interview schedule for learners in child-headed homes

The schooling experiences of learners from child-headed households

1. Would you briefly tell me about yourself?

   - Family background
- Likes, dislikes, interests, hobbies

- Any information that you want me to know about yourself

2. What aspects of the experience of living in a child-headed household would you describe as challenging?

3. Does living in a child-headed household affect your attendance at school?

4. How does living in a child-headed household impact on your schooling?

5. Could you describe the circumstances that led you to live in a child-headed household?

6. Does heading a household affect your performance as a learner?

7. Describe what life is like when you do not have parents.

   - What does it mean to you?

   - The risks that you encounter if any.

APPENDIX D: Request to conduct research in Thulamahashe secondary schools

Enquiries: Chidziva V. N
Cell: 0730696244
P.O BOX 1768
Bushbuckridge, 1280
e-mail: vernachidziva@gmail.com
Date: 12 July 2012
Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SOME OF YOUR SCHOOLS: MYSELF

The above matter bears reference,

1. I, Verna Nyaradzo Chidziva, hereby request to conduct a research in some of your schools that will meet the requirements of the sampling technique that will be used in the study.

2. I am currently registered with the University of South Africa as a Master of Education (Socio-Education) student.

3. The title of my research study is: The schooling experiences of secondary school learners from child-headed households in Mpumalanga Province, RSA and my proposal has been accepted by the university.

4. The study will use a qualitative design using a phenomenological approach where data will be collected from selected learners and teachers.

5. Hoping for a favorable response to my request.

Yours Faithfully,

Chidziva Verna Nyaradzo
APPENDIX E: An example of a request letter to the principals

Enquiries: Chidziva V. N
Cell: 0730696244
e-mail: vernachidziva@gmail.com

P.O BOX 1768
Bushbuckridge, 1280
Date: 12 July 2012
Dear Sir/ Madam,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL: MYSELF

I, Verna Nyaradzo Chidziva (Student Number 46515933) student at the University of South Africa wish to make a request to conduct a research among learners in your institution. I am a Masters’ degree student doing research on the schooling experiences of learners from child-headed households.

I will take upon myself to respect the local customs and school image and also promise to give copies of all reports on request by the school.

Your 5 learners from child-headed households in grade 10 and 11 will be required to give a detailed account of their unique perceptions and experiences at school and also in their own homes.

Your class teachers of selected learners will be expected to provide attendance registers quarterly and schedules and mark sheets for analysis.

There will be no financial incentives for participating in the research but findings will be made known to your teachers. The teachers may withdraw at any time if they feel like and data collected before withdrawal will not be used any further. The data collection instruments as well as consent forms to participate are herein attached for your attention.

Yours faithfully,

Chidziva V.N.
Return consent slip

I, principal of School do consent to the above in my institution.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

APPENDIX F: Request letter to the guardian

Enquiries: Chidziva V. N
Cell: 0730696244
e-mail: vernachidziva@gmail.com

P.O BOX 1768
Bushbuckridge, 1280
Date: 12 July 2012

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
I am an educator at Mzimba Secondary School. I am presently a student at the University of South Africa doing my Masters’ degree and conducting a study on the schooling experiences of learners from child-headed homes so as to find out the challenges they face in their schooling. 20 learners have been selected and your child is one of them. I therefore ask for permission as a guardian to work with your child.

To protect the autonomy of the child, pseudonym will be used and the child is referred to as a respondent

Yours faithfully,

Mrs. V.N Chidziva

Return consent slip

I…………………………………………… guardian of…………………………………………………………………………………… do give permission to the above request.

APPENDIX G: Interview schedule for class teachers

1. Would you please describe to me the behaviour of the following learners in your class? Names will be provided.

2. Give a detailed narrative of how other teachers view the above learner(s) in your class.

3. Explain how you become aware as a class teacher that the learner(s) above live in child-headed households, also explain if you are not aware.
4. Describe the attendance of the above learner(s) in your class.

5. Would you please if the educational needs of the above learner(s) in your class are being met in terms of uniform and stationery for example?

6. May you narrate to me the challenges that these learners are facing?

7. Would you describe how you would deal with the challenges that you have described above?

responsibility to guard against any research project that might jeopardize the intended objectives. The following steps and procedures are intended to help and guide the prospective research organizations, institutions or individuals who may want to conduct educational research in Mpumalanga public schools and institutions.

2.1. Before the research starts.
Written applications to conduct research must be submitted by the researcher or representative of the research organization at least two months before the commencement of the research project. The application must be submitted to the following address:

The Head of the Department.
Private Bag x11341
NELSPRUIT
1200
Republic of South Africa
(ATTENTION: RESEARCH UNIT)
Contact: A.H. Baloyi 013 766 5476 or 072 201 4043
Email: a.baloyi@education.mpu.gov.za

Or may be delivered to:
The Head of the Department.
Building 5
Government Complex
Riverside Park
1200
Republic of South Africa

- A written approval will be issued to the research organization(s) or individual(s) before the commencement of such research project after the assessment/ analysis of the application.
- All relevant literature pertaining to the application is collected and studied and if it is considered inadequate or is deemed to contain contentious material, the researcher may be asked to make a formal presentation and appropriate amendments may be
permission from the Head of the Department.

- Extension of the period of research should be applied by the researching organization or individuals,

- The Department does not encourage research to be conducted in schools during the fourth term (October - December) as this will interfere with the preparation and the writing of the final examinations, therefore applicants should take note of this special period of the year, however permission may be granted under strict conditions.

- A copy of the research report, thesis or dissertation should be submitted together with a separate synopsis which should not exceed five pages to the research unit. The synopsis should contain the most important findings and recommendations of the research.

- The staff of the selected institution(s) will be expected to support and participate in the project within the framework of the approved terms of such research project.

Note that the Mpumalanga Department of Education has a responsibility towards learners, parents, departmental officials and institutions, therefore the right of participation in research projects should guarantee privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and respect for human dignity at all times.

3. INTERNAL RESEARCH NEEDS.

In case of internal research needs from various Directorates, the sponsor of the project must:

- Get project approval through the strategic planning process,
- Provide budget provisions for the project,
- Submit a two (2) page concept document to the research unit for coordination and implementation.
4. CONCLUSION.

The Department believes that this procedure manual will assist prospective researchers who wish to conduct research in Mpumalanga public schools. Any research which may be conducted without prior arrangements as per this manual will clearly be in violation of the Department's research policy which constitutes serious offence.

[Signature]
HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT
MOC MHLABANE

[Signature]
DATE
18/09/07.