5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 discussed the qualitative data analysis and presented the research findings of the study, based on the research objectives, and with constant comparison with previous studies.

This chapter summarises the research, presents conclusions, makes recommendations and describes the limitations of the study.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

5.2.1 Background to the research and literature study

Chapter 1 indicated the importance of the study, based on the present situation of children with disabilities. The community nurse was identified as an important health care worker to integrate children with disabilities into the community.

The role of the community nurse in integrating children with disabilities into the community has not been investigated as reflected in the literature review in chapter 2. In addition, the literature review revealed that previous research on the integration of children with disabilities focused on education and little on family and community issues. The literature review identified important factors like the attitude of professionals to integrating children with disabilities into the community, appropriate training to manage disability cases, and the availability of resources.
5.2.2 Objectives of the study

The research objectives of this study were used as a basis for the literature review and the data collection and Peplau's nursing theory served as the theoretical framework of the study. The objectives of the study were to:

- explore and describe the role of the community nurse in integrating children with disabilities into the community
- determine the competence of the community nurse to integrate children with disabilities into the community
- determine the attitudes and views of the community nurse on integrating children with disabilities into the community
- explore and describe ways in which children with disabilities can be integrated into the community
- identify barriers to the integration of children with disabilities into the community
- make recommendations for strategies to facilitate the integration of children with disabilities into the community and for future research.

5.2.3 Research design and method

The researcher intended to gain insight into what the respondents think the role of the community nurse is in integrating children with disabilities into the community. An exploratory, qualitative research design was therefore chosen as the best design for this study (see chapter 3, page 44).

A pilot study was conducted a month before the data collection process, and research questions were clarified, rephrased and rearranged, where necessary.

Qualitative data was collected from the community nurses, clinic health managers and parents of children with disabilities, using focus group discussions and interviews. The researcher tried to observe ethical principles throughout the research process.
The trustworthiness of the data and findings was established, by using the criteria of (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability, and (4) verifiability (confirmation) (Lincoln & Guba 1985 in Polit & Hungler 1999:427).

5.2.4 Data analysis

Data analysis was done to reduce, organize and give meaning to the complex qualitative data collected from the focus group discussions and interviews.

Data were transcribed and prepared in an accessible visual written presentation using the MS Word computer programme. The QSR NUD*IST computer programme was used for coding and recoding of data. Data analysis was done according to Tesch’s (1990:142) guidelines (see chapter 3, page 64 and chapter 4, page 83).

5.2.5 Summary of the findings

5.2.5.1 Specific role of the community nurse in integrating children with disabilities into the community

The study found that the role of the community nurse as a teacher, resource, counsellor, leader, technical expert and surrogate to integrate the child with a disability into the community is recognised by the nurses and parents.

However, there are constraints that should be addressed to facilitate the effective and efficient performance of these roles by the community nurse.
5.2.5.2 Competence of the community nurse to integrate children with disabilities into the community

The findings do not clearly reflect the competence of the community nurse to integrate children with disabilities into the community, or to handle disability cases in the clinics. The study therefore suggests that there is an urgent need for the community nurses to be trained on disability issues.

5.2.5.3 The attitudes and views of the community nurse on integrating children with disabilities into the community

The study established that the community nurses are positive towards integrating children with disabilities into the community, despite the barriers discussed in chapter 4. This is a positive step and the community nurses should be supported in this regard.

5.2.5.4 Barriers to the integration of children with disabilities into the community

The barriers to the integration of children with disabilities into the community that emerged in this study show that there is a major challenge for the community nurse. The families, community and health system were identified as key barriers. These barriers will definitely affect the development of the child with a disability and are violations of the rights of the child.

5.2.5.5 Addressing barriers to the integration of children with disabilities into the community

It emerged clearly in this study that the important role of the community nurse as a teacher, resource, counsellor, leader, technical expert and surrogate should be used to address the barriers to integrating children with disabilities into the community.

The confidence that the parents of children with disabilities have in the community nurse suggests that the community nurse should collaborate with the parents as part of a comprehensive team to deal with the plight of children with disabilities in the community.
5.3 CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed that there is a challenge for the community nurse to integrate children with disabilities into the community. The role of the community nurse as a teacher, resource, counsellor, leader, technical expert and surrogate should be recognised and supported by the authorities.

Furthermore, it emerged that there is a need for a teamwork approach to deal with issues of children with disabilities.

The findings identified the family as a barrier to the integration of children with disabilities into the community, and this is of concern. The study therefore suggests that the integration of a child with a disability should start at home and the parents should be supported. The unique position of the community nurse in the community (Dennill et al 1999:63) emphasises the leadership role of the community nurse in assisting the parents to collaborate with all health care workers to improve the quality of life of children with disabilities.

Important findings of this study confirm that communities need to change their attitudes and accommodate adults and children with disabilities to facilitate their full participation and acceptance.

5.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study can contribute significantly to nursing education and policy making.

5.4.1 For nursing education

The study identified the need to review the content of disability issues covered in the nursing course curricula. This should be done to determine the expected competence of the nurse after completing a course. The nursing curricula should also emphasise the importance of seeing disability from a community perspective, not a theoretical perspective.
5.4.2 For policy making

The findings of this study reinforce the importance of identifying barriers to implementing the policies and strategies developed for children with disabilities. For example, the White Paper on Integrated Disability Strategy, the Constitution, Convention on the Rights of the Child and Child Care Act.

It is important for policy makers to note that community nurses should be conversant with the available policies on disabilities. There is a need therefore to distribute these policies and orientate the health care workers to the recommendations in the policies, as a commitment of the government to integrating children and adults with disabilities into the community.

Of major importance is that the issues of children and adults with disabilities should be integrated into all other policies developed, so that they are seen as part of society.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations according to implications for service delivery and the need for further research.

5.5.1 Recommendations for the improvement of health care services for children with disabilities

- Role of the Department of Health

*Training and in-service workshops on disabilities*

With the positive approach of the Department of Health to provide free health services for persons with disabilities, it is a major challenge for the Department to ensure that quality care will be provided to the adults and children with disabilities who visit these facilities (see annexure H).
The Department of Health should collaborate with the community nurses to identify training courses and workshops that will improve the skills of community nurses in the clinics to manage adults and children with disabilities. The selection of delegates to attend these courses should also give preference to the community nurses who are the actual service providers and are in close contact with children with disabilities and their families.

In addition, the curriculum of courses for nursing should include a section on the care of persons with a disability.

**Resources**

A lack of resources will impede the provision of quality services. Transport should be made available for the community nurses to do home visits to follow up cases of disabilities. It is important to determine the circumstance of the child with a disability at home and to observe the reaction of other siblings as well. The reaction of the community during the home visits will also be noted.

Educational material on disabilities should be made available in the clinics. The provincial and district health offices should improve on the process of accessing the available material.

The community nurses should be supported to organise awareness campaigns, and financial needs should be identified and provided during these campaigns. Campaigns should also be organised in the rural areas where the community at the grass-roots level will benefit.

**Engaging the community**

In view of the principle of primary health care, the Department of Health should engage the general community in developing policies on disabilities, not only the persons with disabilities and their families. This would improve communities’ perception of adults and children with disabilities. As revealed in this study, the community will also benefit from integrating persons with disabilities into the community.
The families and communities should fully participate in raising awareness on disability issues.

**Support from the authorities**

The communication structures of community nurses and provincial and district managers should be improved. There is an outcry from the nurses for this general support to provide quality health care in the clinics.

❖ **Role of the community nurse**

The community nurse has a major role to play in the lives of children and adults with disabilities in the community. As discussed in chapter 4, the parents of children with disabilities in the Mafikeng district expressed confidence in the community nurses. This confidence and trust should not be lost, and the community nurses should maintain it by improving skills to care for persons with disabilities. The community nurse should identify the relevant training needs on disability issues.

Furthermore, to maintain the trust of parents, the community nurse should recognise her role as a teacher, resource, leader, counsellor, technical expert and surrogate.

As a leader, the community nurse should engage other health care workers, government departments, non-governmental organisations, persons with disabilities, parents, communities and stakeholders like the churches to address the plight of adults and children with disabilities.

Of major importance is for the community nurse to recognise her own attitudes to children with disabilities and to influence the attitudes of the community positively.

A major challenge for the community nurse is to identify the need to conduct research and surveys on disability issues. In South Africa there is a need to conduct research on disability and community health. This will improve the understanding of disability at the primary health care level.
5.5.2 Recommendations for further research

Based on the findings of this study, future research on the following topics is recommended:

- the training needs of health care workers to provide quality health care services for adults and children with disabilities
- to determine the competence of the nurse to manage children with disabilities after completion of present basic nursing diploma or degree courses
- available policies related to disabilities and the progress on the implementation of these policies
- the shortage of nurses and its impact on service delivery, especially for children with disabilities
- to determine whether data is collected on disability cases in the clinics
- the support that the community nurses at the clinics need from the provincial and district Department of Health authorities
- factors related to parents hiding children with disabilities (especially in the black communities)
- the available support structures and facilities for parents of children with disabilities
- parents' beliefs and attitudes to the integration of their children with disabilities into the community
- the impact of a teamwork approach to handling issues of disabilities
- to investigate whether adults and children with disabilities enjoy their constitutional rights in terms of the legal framework in South Africa.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study had two chief limitations:

- The research was undertaken in the semi-rural area of the Mafikeng district, of the North-West Province. The generalisation of this study is therefore limited, as all the information refers to the community nurses, clinic health managers and parents of children with disabilities in the Mafikeng district only.
It should be noted that with reference to tables 4.2 (page 82) and 4.3 (page 83) in chapter 4, this was not a prevalence study and therefore only limited inference can be made to the profile of disability given in this study.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Despite the above limitations, this study highlights the varied and expert role of the community nurse in integrating children with disabilities into all settings of the community. Positive social and physical environments should be created to facilitate the social integration of children with disabilities into the community.

In 1997, the then Premier of Gauteng province, Mr Tokyo Sexwale (1997:12) challenged all South Africans when he stated (see annexure H):

*All communities must ensure that those [persons] with disabilities are not isolated from the general life of the community. ... South Africans must rise to the challenge of heeding the unheard cries of society’s members who need us most.*