

**SEXUAL ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL: TEENAGERS' EXPERIENCES
AND SOCIAL WORK SUPPORT**

by

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I declare that “Sexual activities at school: Teenagers’ experiences and social work support”, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....
TSHILIDZI STANLEY MAKHITHA

.....
DATE

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ABSTRACT

This research study focuses on the sexual encounters of teenagers. Teenagers do not always have private intimate places of their own and tend to use school grounds, toilets and classrooms to engage in sexual activities. Recently, various newspapers published articles about teen pregnancy and sex on school grounds. The alarming rate of sexual activities at schools among South African teenagers became a driving force for the researcher to investigate this phenomenon. The goal was to develop in-depth understanding of the experiences of teenagers being engaged in sexual activities at school and social work support required.

A qualitative approach was employed following explorative, descriptive and contextual research designs. The study was conducted in the Gauteng province. Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data. Purposive sampling was utilised. Analysis of data was conducted according to Tesch (cited in Smit, 2002) and Guba's model (cited in Shenton, 2004) was employed for data verification.

Key concepts: Sexual activities, school, sexuality, teenagers/adolescents, sexual education, experience, social work, HIV/AIDS, sexual behaviour and media.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my two young sisters, Rakgadi 'Nonosi', Sikedi Makhitha and my late mother, Ms. Tshiwela Nomsa Makhitha.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM FORMULATION AND MOTIVATION

This section introduces the research topic, the problem statement as well as the motivation for the research.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

When two people enter into a romantic relationship, they usually seek some measure of intimacy. Based on the principles of attachment theory (fondness, caring and security behaviour seeking) it is safe to assume that most romantic couples engage in high rates of affiliative behaviour (Florsheim, 2003:163). However, for adolescents who are just beginning the process of learning about and engaging in intimate relationships, these experiences can be bittersweet because these relationships can become more demanding, attacking, jealous and neglecting. The ups and downs of these relationships may have an effect on the emotional state of most adolescents (Florsheim, 2003:163).

Adolescence is too large a segment of the human lifespan to consider it as a single unit. Certain characteristics separate early, middle and late adolescence (Martinson, 2002:10). According to Martinson (2002:10) adolescents today reach puberty three years sooner, in some communities even five years sooner than they once did and this may affect the onset of various kinds of sexual activity. The trend towards earlier maturation is perhaps best shown by statistics in the age of menarche, the first menstrual period. The age (13) of the first appearance of pubic hair is an index, but is a less reliable index of puberty.

Teenagers face a series of tasks during the adolescent phase which include, development of identity, transformation of family relationships, development of close relationships, development of sexuality, school achievement and career planning (Florsheim, 2003:3-4). According to Erikson (cited in Muuss, 1996:51) the key

developmental task of adolescents is the development of identity. The development of sexuality is another important key task for teenagers. As their bodies begin to mature in reproductive capacities their sexual desires increase (Florsheim, 2003:10). The rapid changes, maturity of sex organs and sexual characteristics such as body hair and breast development during puberty, will let adolescents wonder about the thorny issues of “what does it mean to be a woman or a man?” (Heaven & Callan, 1990:133). According to the psychosexual development theory, the biological maturation of the reproductive system in adolescents is characterised by a rapid increase in sexual tension that demands gratification. The sexual needs and fantasies become more explicitly concerned with tension release and alter with the sexual union of male and female (Muuss, 1996:32).

Most teenagers begin to experiment with sexual behaviour and gradually develop some comfort with their sexuality. Sexual behaviour often occurs in brief encounters as teens/adolescents “hook-up” with each other at parties or school gatherings (Florsheim, 2003:10). However, adolescents are more likely to pursue sexual relationships than dating or romantic relationships. Sexual relationships indisputable provide pleasure, an outlet for sexual gratification and a means to explore one’s sexuality (Furman, Brown & Feiring, 1999:188). Teenagers associate sexual activity with maturation, in that sexual relationships may allow them to feel mature and convey an impression of maturity to others, thereby they achieve a measure of social status with their peers.

Current studies indicate that teenagers become sexually active during early puberty. According to *Cape Times* (2010:11) a study conducted by LoveLife (2004) among high school learners found that 42% of 15-17 year-old pupils are having sex and 51% of children start having sex before they are 15 years old. This indicates that adolescents are participating in sexual activity in large numbers and at an increasingly young age. By age 18, the majority of adolescents are sexually active, despite the proliferation of educational campaigns advocating abstinence (Furman et

al., 1999:178). Recent research on the issue of teen sex in Cape Town, by Professor Alan Flisher (2003), head of the University of Cape Town's Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health, prompted calls for intervention programmes to start in primary school, in the light of results that showed that by age 14, nearly 24% of boys and 5.5% of girls have had sex. By age 19, the 2003 research found, the proportions went up to 72% for boys and 58% for girls (*Daily News*, 2005:11 & *Cape Times*, 2010:3).

The second South African National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey conducted by Reddy, James, Sewpaul, Koopman, Funani, Sifunda, Josie, Masuka, Kambaran and Omaidien (2008:24-32) provides contrasting results; it found that 13% of all Grade 8 to 12 teenagers say they have had sex before the age of 14 and 50% of all teenagers have had sex by the age 17 with 19% of them reporting that they have been pregnant. The risk of unplanned pregnancy and sexual transmitted diseases has significantly increased among this generation. The total breakdown of statistics in Gauteng stands at: 397 pregnant pupils at 42 schools in Ekurhuleni, 530 pregnant pupils at 56 schools in Ekurhuleni South, 483 pregnant pupils at 53 schools in Gauteng East, 111 pregnant pupils at 18 schools in Gauteng North and 433 pregnant pupils at 51 schools in Gauteng West, schools in Johannesburg Central recorded 444 pregnant pupils at 45 schools (Modise, 2011:3).

In a study done by Wood, Maepa and Jewkes (1997:11) adolescents described sex as 'playing'. In their study one girl explained that some teenagers (particularly those from poor families) had sex frequently because there were no other activities available to them: she says "it starts with the girls, because we are lost, you just do a thing, not thinking about the after-effects; it's nice to go with boys" (Wood et al., 1997:11). Reality TV shows and teen dramas often portray the 'cool kids' as the ones who are having sex. The media exerts an enormous, almost a normative influence on teenagers. It influences the way in which people and groups dress, talk, behave and think. The media in the form of movies, radio and print as well as electronic

communication mediums through the Internet and cell phones, help to connect people to one another and the world (Furman et al., 1999:179).

According to Furman et al., (1999:188) the Internet has a range of available options for sexual minority youth who want to meet same-age peers such as MixIt, Facebook, My-Space and Twitter. Teenagers who have limited access to Internet have seized the opportunities presented by these forums to develop 'pen-pal' friendships or engage in electronic courtship. Child specialists have warned that "the trend of younger children being exposed to explicit pornographic material and subsequently exploring their sexuality, is becoming commonplace due to the proliferation of cell-phones and a lack of gate-keeping measures by technologically savvy parents" (Sowetan, 2010:4).

1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION

According to Boeije (2010:22) a research statement can be seen as a preliminary guideline for the research instead of a fixed starting point that determines the entire research procedure. The research problem and research questions are generated at the start of the study based on available but limited knowledge. Identification of the problem can be viewed as the first effort by the researcher to mould the problem into a formulation form (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:99). In a qualitative proposal the problem statement develops logically from the review of the literature.

According to Yegidis and Weinbach (2002:47) various definitions suggest that a research problem ought to be stated as a declarative, descriptive statement of a condition. The **problem statement** for this research is therefore postulated as follows: **There is currently a rise in the phenomenon of teenagers who are engaged in sexual activities at school. There is also a lack of information in this regard and a need for support of teenagers who are engaging in these sexual activities at school.**

At the formulation of this research question, resulting from a literature search on research conducted on the topic under investigation, little or no current studies that have examined teenage engagement in sexual activities with a specific focus on school grounds could be found in South Africa (The researcher was assisted by the librarian at UNISA to search for literature using Ebsco host database). Most of the existing studies have paid much attention to teen pregnancy, human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), adolescent sexuality, contraception, sexual coercion among children and dating relationships (Swart: 2005, Mwashombela: 2004, Wood et al., 1997 and Skosana: 2001).

In one of the studies identified, Peltzer, Pengpid and Mashego (2008:67), indicate that Kaaya (2002) reviewed studies of sexual behaviour of school students in sub-Saharan Africa. Findings on research conducted on adolescent sexuality indicate high prevalence rates of sexual intercourse, infrequent use of condoms and other contraceptives. There is also a significant proportion of adolescents who have two or more lifetime sexual partners.

However, the phenomenon of teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school, has recently wedged much attention from the media and South Africa at large. Primary school pupils as young as the age of 10 are sexually bullied in classrooms and toilets at some schools by their peers (*The Mercury*, 2010:7). Teens film each other performing sexual activities and distribute the videos among themselves. In an interview conducted by Moaisi, Biyela, Yende, Rampedi and Van Wyk in the *City Press* (2010:11) with two grade 9 and one grade 10 teenagers from KwaZulu-Natal in Empangeni, Gauteng in the East Rand and Limpopo in Polokwane, teenagers admitted they like to watch porn to learn new styles and engage in sexual intercourse in groups while at school due to the lack of privacy at home.

In another interview with a pupil at Sitintile High in KanNyamazane near Nelspruit by Moselakgomo in the *Sowetan* (2008:5) a pupil told the paper that sex at school is a popular practice and they did not find it shocking. The current debate as reported by *City Press* (2010:4) on teens engaging in sexual activities at school is on Jules High School in Jeppestown, Johannesburg, where a 15-year-old girl, 14- and 16-year-old boys allegedly had sex during school hours in the school playground. Other related cases were reported by *Mail & Guardian* online (*Mail & Guardian*, 2010):

- **February 8 2010:** A seven-year-old girl was repeatedly raped in the school toilets by three boys (one aged nine and two aged 11) who attended the same school.
- **February 19 2010:** A girl in grade 11 at Bryanston High School in Johannesburg accused a fellow pupil of raping her. He allegedly coerced her into the toilet while she was waiting for a school play to start. He was suspended for seven days.
- **August 4 2010:** Two 12-year-old boys were accused of continually raping at least three girls at Pugishe Primary near Bushbuckridge. Parents said the sexual conduct had been happening since April this year. The rapes came to light when one boy asked another to assist him with “manpower because his wives were becoming many by the day”. Parents accused the school of trying to sweep the scandal under the carpet.¹
- **November 8 2010:** An 11-year-old girl from Katlehong was allegedly raped by a 48-year-old school caretaker at her primary school on several occasions. He would give the girl sweets and chocolates after raping her.

In South Africa the Sexual Offence Act (Act No 32) of 2007 (2007: section 15 and 16) makes it a criminal offence for children between the ages of 12 and 16 to have sex, even when they consent to it. It also makes consensual kissing, heavy petting and oral sex an offence if there is an age difference of more than two years between the children. However, during the investigation of this study, two non-profit organisations, The Teddy Bear Clinic and Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and

¹ The researcher is aware of policies and regulations of the Department of Education regarding sexual activities in schools such as National Education Policy Act (Act No 27) of 1996 and Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Sexual Violence and Harassment (2008).

Neglect supported by various human rights groups and the Justice Alliance filed an application at the North Gauteng High Court challenging provisions of section 15, 16 and 56 of this Act. According to *The Citizen* (2013:4) and *Cape Times* (2013:3), Judge Pierre Rabie of the North Gauteng High Court ruled out that these two sections of the Sexual Offence Act were invalid and inconsistent with the constitution following the application by these two organisations. It was further reported that the National Prosecuting Authority is planning to appeal the decision.

In addition to this, the current legislation pertaining to children also urges health workers, educators, parents and guardians to report any sexuality activity among teenagers, failure to report could result in prosecution (Children's Act: Act No 38 of 2005, 2006: section 110). This further implies that all sexually active South African teenagers find themselves in a vulnerable condition and children's access to health services could be negatively influenced as health professionals are mandated to report teenage consensual sexual activities.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The researcher is a social work diversion manager at The Teddy Bear Clinic for abused children. As a social worker the researcher works with cases of sexual abuse and abusive reactive children on a daily basis. The researcher specialises in the young sex offender diversion programme and has found that most of the children between the ages of six to 17 who are referred to the programme either by courts, prosecutors, schools, probation officers or police officials had committed sexual offences on school premises. The researcher was involved in the Jules High School case and is currently facilitating a diversion group work programme with both the children in question and their parents.

The aforesaid cases continue to repeat in most schools as many children continue to be referred to the diversion programme. Because of this the researcher wants to do extensive research into sexual activities on school grounds as he has experienced an

increase in these cases and could not find information and would want to know what kind of support is required by adolescents/teenagers. The findings of this study could provide the social work profession and the Department of Education with concluding guidelines and recommendations regarding teenage sexual activities at school.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A research proposal starts with a research problem. Based on the research problem, a problem statement is formulated which can consist of a research question and a research purpose statement (Boeije, 2010:24). The research question is the central question which the researcher wants to answer by doing the research project (Boeije, 2010:24). When a qualitative inquiry is used one formulates questions at onset not hypothesis. A qualitative inquiry allows one to answer questions about the nature of social phenomena under study. In short, all aspects of a phenomena will be dissected and described in an attempt of understanding how the phenomena is built up, what the relationships between the different parts are and what influences the absence or presence of certain parts (Boeije, 2010:24).

Fouché and De Vos (2005:101) state that qualitative research questions and designs are more flexible and not always predictable. This research study poses a grand tour question to be examined throughout the study in search for answers. Creswell (1994:70) describes a grand tour question as a “statement of the question being examined in the study which is in a general form”. The **grand tour questions** of this study are:

- What are the experiences of teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school?
- What social work support is required by teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school?

1.4.1 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Fouché and De Vos (2005:104) state that a goal implies the broader, more abstract conception of the end toward which effort or ambition is directed while objective denotes the more concrete, measurable and more speedily attainable conception of such an end toward which effort or ambition is directed. A goal is a dream and an objective is the steps one takes, one by one to attain the dream. **The goals of the study** are:

- To develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences of teenagers engaged in sexual activities at school.
- To develop an in-depth understanding of the social work support required by teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school.

In order to attain the aforesaid goals of the study the following **research and task objectives** are formulated. Research objectives:

- To explore and describe the experiences of teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school.
- To explore and describe the need for social work support by teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school.

In order to realise the research objectives the following **task objectives** are formulated:

- To obtain a sample of teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school.
- To conduct semi-structured interviews in order to explore the experiences of these teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school and the need for social work support.
- To sift, sort and analyse the data using Tesch's eight steps for qualitative data analysis as cited in Creswell (2003:192-193) and Smit (2002:66).
- To describe the experiences of teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school and the social work support that they require.

- To draw conclusions about experiences of teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school and make recommendations about social work support that is required.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter a brief discussion on the research methodology applied is provided, a more in-depth approach is described in Chapter Two. Research methodology refers to the research method, research design, method of data gathering and type of data analysis utilised by the researcher (Silverman, 2005:99). In social research, the most common methodologies are quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. Due to the nature of the research question stated above, the proposed study will adopt a qualitative approach. The researcher is more interested in the experiences of teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school rather than the statistical queries of this phenomenon.

1.5.1 QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Qualitative research attempts to understand the issues from the viewpoints of the participants. The researcher and the participants are practically involved in the data collection process and it also attempts to describe the social setting of the participants so that their views are not isolated from their context (Struwig & Stead, 2003:56). According to Boeije (2010:11) the purpose of the qualitative approach is to describe and understand social phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. He further stipulates that qualitative research questions are studied through flexible methods enabling contact with participants to an extent that is necessary to grasp what is going on in the field.

According to Williams (2007:67) qualitative research can be described as an effective model that occurs in a natural setting and that enables the researcher to develop a level of detail from being highly involved in the actual experiences. Different authors have described various characteristics of the qualitative research inquiry and when is

it applicable to apply this approach, for instance authors like Creswell (1994:145), Williams (2007:67-69), Struwig and Stead (2003:12) and Boeije (2010:10). According to Creswell (1994:145) the following elements characterise the qualitative approach:

- **Qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting:** The researcher collects data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. Researchers maintain face-to-face interaction over time. With this research endeavour, the researcher collected the data through the semi-structured interview which facilitated face-face interaction with the participants.
- **Qualitative researchers are seen as primary instruments for data collection and analysis:** Data are mediated through this human instrument rather than through inventories, questionnaires or machines. The researcher collected the data by conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants.
- In qualitative research, the researcher focuses on **learning the meaning that participants hold about the problem or issue.** The researcher is interested in how people make sense of their lives, experiences and their structure of the world. During this research endeavour, the researcher was mainly interested in the meaning teenagers bring to experiences of engaging in to sexual activities at school.
- **Inductive data analysis:** In qualitative research, researchers build patterns, categories and themes from the 'bottom-up' by organising data into increasingly more abstract units of information. The inductive process entails working back and forth between themes and databases until a comprehensive set of themes have been established.
- Qualitative research is **descriptive** in that a researcher is interested in process, meaning and understanding gained through words or pictures.
- Qualitative researchers are concerned **primarily with process** rather than outcomes of products.
- **Interpretive inquiry:** qualitative researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear and understand.

Creswell (1994:147) and Silverman (2005:6-8) mention that it will be applicable to use qualitative research when:

- Problems or issues need to be explored.
- Complex detailed understandings of issues are needed.
- Talking to and/or observing people directly.
- Allowing for one's story to be told, minimising power relationships between the researcher and participants.
- What people say cannot be separated from the context in which they say it.
- Rhetorical style is more flexible.

The decision to adopt the qualitative approach/paradigm for this study is motivated by the aforementioned characteristics and the fact that qualitative research concerns itself with the study of people in their natural environment and everyday behaviour. This research approach was applicable to this study in order to realise the goals of this study. The researcher needed to enhance his understanding by exploring and describing the phenomenon under investigation and the qualitative research approach afforded him the opportunity to do just that.

1.5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell (2003:3) defines a "design" in qualitative research as "the entire process of research from conceptualising a problem to writing the narrative". A research design guides the researcher in planning and implementing the study in such a manner that is more likely to achieve the intended goals. The design of a research study involves the overall approach to be followed and detailed data about how the study will be carried out with whom and where (Boeije, 2010:19). A design is a plan for conducting the research. It is implemented to attempt to find answers to the research question or test any hypotheses that were formulated. The research design serves as a plan for the later stages of research (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002:101-102).

During the planning of this study, the researcher decided on the research question to be studied, the data required to answer it, who to collect data from, ways to collect data as well as how the data will be analysed and verified. Explorative, descriptive and contextual research designs were adopted.

1.5.2.1 Exploratory research design

Exploratory research unfolds through focus group interviews, structured or semi-structured interviews with experts and a search for relevant literature. Struwig and Stead (2001:7) define exploratory research as “research into an area that has not been studied and in which a researcher wants to develop initial ideas and a more focused research question”. According to these authors, the major purpose of exploratory research is the development and clarification of ideas and formulation of questions and hypotheses for precise investigation later. Exploratory research is appropriate when problems have been identified but our understanding of them is quite limited (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002:106).

The researcher of this study chose to include exploratory design in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school. Singleton and Straits (2010:107) also mention that exploratory studies are undertaken when relatively little is known about something. Yegidis and Weinbach (2002:109) are of the opinion that the accumulation of the findings derived from exploratory research makes it possible to use descriptive designs. In this regard, this study also adopted a descriptive research strategy.

1.5.2.2 Descriptive research design

According to Struwig and Stead (2003:8), descriptive research attempts to describe something. They further explain that in contrast with exploratory research where flexibility characterises the research, descriptive studies attempt to provide a complete and accurate description of a certain situation. For the purpose of this study, descriptive strategy allowed the researcher an opportunity to look with intense

accuracy at the phenomenon of the moment to describe what the researcher sees (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006:48). In qualitative research a descriptive design describes in depth the specific details in the situation, social setting or relationship of a well-defined social phenomenon, by means of narrative descriptions.

1.5.2.3 Contextual research design

Human behaviour does not occur in a vacuum. It is necessary to provide a comprehensive description and analysis of the environment or social context of the research participants (Struwig & Stead, 2003:12). A contextual design was appropriate for this study in order to explore the environment as participants' behaviour can be linked to their environment (Struwig & Stead, 2003:12). In this regard the context in which the participants' sexual activities are exercised, is the school ground. Furthermore, contextual also implies the understanding of the experiences of the teenagers as it relates to the context of their exposure to sexual activities on the school ground.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods are the actual techniques of investigation used in order to study the socio-political world (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003:131). It is a strategy of inquiry which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to research design and data collection. Under this sub-heading, the following will be discussed:

- Population, sampling and sampling techniques.
- Methods of data collection, data analysis and data verification.

1.6.1 POPULATION, SAMPLING AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

According to Polit and Beck (2008:337) a study **population** comprises the entire aggregation of cases that a researcher is interested in. This is supported by Neuman (2000:196) who describes "population" as "an entire set of universe, of the people, objects or events of concern to a research study, from which a sample is drawn". He sometimes refers to the population as a target population. The study was conducted

through The Teddy Bear Clinic for Abused Children in the Gauteng province (schools) i.e. Johannesburg and Pretoria. The population in this study included all teenagers in Gauteng Province who were convicted of engaging in sexual activities at school. They were charged with contravention of section 15 and 16 of the Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act (Act No 32) of 2007.

The researcher only focused on participants who were already in the justice system due to the sensitive nature of this research study and ethical principles including legal obligation to report such matters that could arise during the research project. According to the Children's Act (Act No 38) of 2005 section 110 (1) and (2) any person who on reasonable grounds concludes that a child has been abused in a manner causing physical injury, sexually abused or deliberately neglected, must report that conclusion in the prescribed form to a designated child protection organisation, the provincial department of social development or a police official.

Due to time and money constraints the whole population could not be included in the study and therefore a **sample** was drawn. In this regard, Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey (2005:4) are of the opinion that even if it was possible, it is not necessary to collect data from everyone in the community in order to get validated findings. They further state that in qualitative research, only a sample (that is, a subset) of a population is selected for any given study. According to Yegidis and Weinbach (2002:181) a sample is a subset of cases selected for study from among people or objects within a defined population.

Furthermore, Polkinghorne (2005:139) states that sampling carries the connotation that those chosen are a sample of a population and the purpose of their selection is to enable findings to be applied to a population. In addition to aforementioned statements Struwig and Stead (2003:122) postulate that qualitative samples tend to be purposive rather than random. In this study, the researcher employed **purposive sampling**. Because the goal of qualitative research is to enrich the understanding of

an experience, it needs to select fertile exemplars of the experience for the study (Polkinghorne, 2005:140). Such selections are purposeful and sought out. According to Yegidis and Weinbach (2002:191) purposive sampling gives the researcher access to some unique approaches in order to analyse a problem or situation or a special perspective, experience, characteristic or condition that we wish to understand. Purposive sampling groups participants according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question.

The researcher is of the opinion that purposive sampling is therefore most successful when data review and analysis are done in conjunction with data collection. In addition, Creswell (1994:148) states that the idea of qualitative research is to purposively select information that will best answer the research question. The study sample is delimited by the nature of the presenting problem. Selection criteria are used to focus the sample. The **criteria for inclusion** in the sample for this study were as follow:

- teenagers who had sex at school, prosecuted for contravention of section 15 and 16 of the Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act (Act No 32) of 2007 and completed the diversion programme at The Teddy Bear Clinic;
- willingness to participate (teenagers who give their voluntary and informed consent to participate);
- parental consent for teenagers under age i.e. children below 18-years-old; and
- teenagers between the ages of 14–18 who are conversant in English, Sepedi or Setswana or isiZulu.

According to Mack et al. (2005:4) purposive sample sizes are often determined on the basis of theoretical saturation (the point in data collection when new data no longer bring additional insight to the research question). Yegidis and Weinbach (2002:182) refer to sample size as the number of cases in the sample. The sample size is not finalised before the study commences and may change as the study progresses (Struwig & Stead, 2003:122).

1.6.2 DATA COLLECTION

During this section the following sub-sections are discussed:

1.6.2.1 Preparation for data collection

The researcher started the process of data collection by making contact with the participants in the group therapy programme. Since the participants were clients of the Teddy Bear Clinic, the researcher advertised the study to the participants during the therapeutic group process and allowed participants to come to his office out of their free will. This was done so that participants can be requested to be part of the study. The researcher explained the criteria for inclusion and indicated that participation in the study is voluntary and that their privileges/rights will not be jeopardised.

Those who agreed to participate in the study were prepared by having the contents of the preamble and the consent form explained to them (see Appendix A). When participants indicated that they fully understood the contents of the consent letter, they were requested to sign the form/letter (see Appendix B). Parents or guardians were also requested to sign on behalf of their children. A follow-up appointment was scheduled for the actual research interview at a date and time most convenient for the participants.

1.6.2.2 Pilot study

According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2005:155) the pilot study is a small study conducted prior to a large piece of research in order to determine whether the methodology, sampling, instruments and analysis are adequate and appropriate. The pilot study allows the researcher to change the research questions, if the participants do not understand the questions during the pre-test of the study or if the questions do not answer the research question (Knight, 2002:50-94). Knight (2002:50-94) has identified three important considerations regarding the pilot study: whether the

participants are able to answer the questions in a reasonable time, identify possible difficulties with questions and ensure that the chosen data analysis will be adequate.

The pilot study afforded the researcher an opportunity to orientate himself to the research project and identify any difficulties with the method or materials. The researcher conducted the pilot study first with two of the participants (who were later included in the final sample) at The Teddy Bear Clinic before the actual research study took place. This was done in order to ensure that the proposed study is feasible.

1.6.2.3 Methods of data collection

There are numerous methods to collect data and these methods will depend on the purpose and objectives of the study. In qualitative research, data is collected through interviews, focus groups interviews, observation and unobtrusive measures (Struwig & Stead, 2003:98). According to Hancock (2002:9) qualitative approaches to data collection usually involves direct interaction with individuals on a one-to-one basis or a group setting. He further states that in qualitative research data is collected from a smaller amount of people. The benefits of using these approaches include richness of data and deeper insight into the phenomena being studied. Polkinghorne (2005:137) states that researchers who use qualitative methods gather data which serve as evidence for their distilled description. Qualitative methods are typically more flexible, they allow greater spontaneity and adoption of the interaction between the researcher and participants.

Qualitative researchers ask mostly open-ended questions that are not necessarily worded in exactly the same way with each participant. With open-ended questions, participants are free to respond in their own words and these responses tend to be more complex than simply “yes or no” (Mack et al., 2005:4). Boeije (2010:61) states that in qualitative research the researcher is the main instrument of the interview. He further defines an interview as “a form of conversation in which one person

(interviewer) restrict oneself to posing questions concerning behaviours, ideas, attitude and experiences with regard to social phenomena, to one or more others (participants or interviewees) who mainly limit themselves to providing answers to these questions”.

The interview seeks descriptions of the experiences itself without the participants' interpretation or theoretical explanation. According to Struwig and Stead (2003:98), there are three common types of interviews in qualitative research namely, standardised interviews, un-standardised interviews and semi-standardised interviews also widely known as semi-structured interviews. For the purpose of this study, data were collected through **semi-structured interviews** with the aid of the **interview guide**. In general, researchers, use semi-structured interviews in order to gain a detailed understanding of a participant's belief or perceptions or accounts of a particular topic (Greeff, 2005:296). Greeff further defines semi-structured interviews as “those interviews organised around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth”. Semi-structured interviews involve a series of open-ended questions. Hancock (2002:9) states that the open-ended nature of the question defines the topic under investigation but provides opportunities for both the interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail.

Open-ended questions assisted the researcher as he could use cues or prompts to encourage participants to consider the question further where brief responses were provided. Singleton and Straits (2010:368) state that interview guides consist of an outline of topics in some logical order or they contain specific questions, arranged thematically. The interview generally progresses from questions about concrete situations to more abstract and interpretative questions that probe a participant's experience and interpretation of events. Hancock (2002:9) further states that semi-structured interviews provide freedom for the researcher to probe the participants to elaborate on the original response or follow a line of inquiry introduced by the participants. The interviews conducted during this study were audio recorded word-

for-word and field notes were taken during the interview. The following **request and questions** were used as a guide to interviewing the participants to elaborate on the topic under investigation:

Questions for obtaining data of a biographical nature:

1. Gender of participants: a) Male
 b) Female
2. Please indicate your age in complete years:
3. Indicate your sexual preference: a) Homosexual
 b) Heterosexual
 c) Bisexual
4. Who informed you about sex?

Request: Tell me about teenage sexual activities at school.

Questions:

- What kind of sexual activities are there at school?
- What are your views about teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school?

Request: Tell me about your experience regarding your exposure to sexual activities at school.

Questions:

- How did you get involved?
- What kind of sexual activities are/did you engage in?
- How has this affected you? If negatively, how did you deal with this?
- What are your needs for support?
- How would you like to be supported by social workers specifically?

The researcher was aware not to expose children to accept responsibility to inform him about other children that may be involved in sexual activities at schools. The questions as indicated above were solely focused on the child being interviewed.

Interviewing skills used by the researcher to aid the interviewing process

To keep focus on non-theoretical description of the experiences, the researcher remained open to the presence of new and unexpected information in the description and did not shape the questions as a test of ready-made categories or schemes of interpretation. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2005:104) becoming an insider allows a deeper insight into the research problem, since the researcher enjoys the confidence of the participants and shares their experiences without disturbing their behaviour. In this way the phenomena under investigation can be studied as it arises and additional insight can be gained. The researcher adopted the following interview techniques and tips as stipulated by Greeff (2005:288):

- Participants did 90% of talking.
- Asked clear and brief questions.
- One question at a time.
- The use of open-ended questions.
- Asked experiences/behaviour questions before opinion/feelings.
- Sequence questions: Funnel questions from general to specific, from broad to narrow.
- Encouraged a free rein but maintained control.

1.7 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing, emerging and iterative process (Smit, 2002:66). According to Smit (2002:66) before one begins with an analysis, data are transcribed, meaning that texts from interviews, observational notes or memos are typed into word processing documents. To analyse, literally means to take apart words, sentences and paragraphs. Alassutari (cited in Smit, 2002:66) refer to data analysis in qualitative research as “reasoning and argumentation that is not based simply on statistical relation between variables by which certain objects or observation units are described”. Data analysis methods enable researchers to organise and bring meaning to large amounts of data (Struwig & Stead, 2003:169).

According to Smit (2002:68) various authors have described these analysis process including Tesch (1990) and Silverman (1997, 2000). Smit (2002:66) indicates that Tesch has identified some principles of data analysis appropriate for most types of qualitative research analysis. These principles/steps will be employed during data analysis in this research study. Various authors including Creswell (1994:70, 2003:192-193) and Smit (2002:66) have found the following steps by Tesch to be applicable for qualitative analysis and the researcher applied these steps to aid him in the process of data analysis. The steps are:

- Get a sense of the whole by reading all the transcriptions of the interviews carefully, jotting down ideas as they come to mind in connection with each topic.
- Select one interview and peruse it again, asking what it is about, bearing in mind its underlying meaning. Write thoughts in the margins.
- Make a list of all the topics from all the interviews, clustering together similar topics. Arrange these topics into major themes, unique themes and leftover topics.
- Abbreviate the topics as codes, which must be written next to the relative segment of the text. Check if new categories or themes emerge.
- Change the topics into descriptive categories. Reduce the categories by clustering together similar topics.
- Decide on the final abbreviations for each category and place these codes in alphabetic order.
- Assemble the related data material of each category in one place.
- Record the existing data if necessary and conduct a preliminary analysis.

According to Smit (2002:68) “in essence, any research is an exercise in selecting processes and the researcher needs to realise that the analysis is ultimately concerned with human situations and social phenomena”.

1.8 DATA VERIFICATION

De Vos (2005:345) states that Marshall and Rossman observe that all research must respond to canons that stand as criteria against which the trustworthiness of the project can be evaluated. This author further explains that Lincoln and Guba (1985) present canons which can be viewed as a classic contribution to the methodology of qualitative research. Shenton (2004:63-75) states that with Guba's model researchers seek to satisfy four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. The following four aspects were followed:

- a) **Credibility/true-value:** Shenton (2004:64) states that Lincoln and Guba argue that ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. The author further states that Lincoln and Guba (1985:80) argue that true-value is obtained from the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by the participants of the study. The following measures were employed by the researcher to promote confidence in the research findings related to the phenomena under scrutiny:
 - i) *Triangulation of data methods and data sources:* This may involve the use of different methods, especially observation, focus groups and individual interviews which form the major data collection methods in qualitative research (Shenton, 2004:64). For the purpose of this study, the researcher employed the in-depth semi-structured interviews for data collection.
 - ii) *Tactics to help ensure honesty in participants when contributing data:* Each person who was approached was given the opportunity to refuse to participate in the study. This was done in order to ensure that the data collection sessions involved only those who were genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely (Shenton, 2004:66). Participants were encouraged to be frank from the outset of each session, with the researcher aiming to establish a rapport in the opening moment.
 - iii) *Iterative questioning:* Specific ploys may be incorporated to uncover deliberate lies. These might include the use of probes to elicit detailed data and iterative questioning, in which the researcher returns to matters previously raised by the

participant and extracts relating data through rephrased questions. Where contradictions emerge, falsehoods can be detected and the researcher may decide to discard the suspect data (Shenton, 2004:67).

- iv) *Peer scrutiny of the research project:* Opportunities for scrutiny of the project by colleagues within and outside The Teddy Bear Clinic such as Dr. Amelia Kleijn, Dr. Shaheda Omar, Ms. Sheri Errington, peers and academics were welcomed as well as any feedback offered to the researcher at presentations (e.g. conferences, workshops) that were made over the duration of the project.
 - v) *Reflective commentary:* Shenton (2004:68) states that researchers seek to evaluate the project as it develops. Reflective commentary was used to record the researcher's initial impressions of each data collection session, patterns appearing to emerge in the data collection and theories generated.
 - vi) *The background, qualification and experience of the researcher:* Shenton (2004:68) states that, the credibility of the researcher is important in qualitative research as it is the person who is the major instrument of data collection and analysis. The researcher is a social worker by profession. The researcher has been working for four years and was exposed in the fields of child abuse, young people in conflict with the law with specific focus on young sex offenders.
- b) **Transferability/applicability:** This criteria provides sufficient detail of the context of the field work for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he/her is familiar with and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting (Shenton, 2004:63).
- i) *Dense description:* Dense or complete background information regarding the context and the sampling methods was given so that other researchers can assess the transferability of the findings.
- c) **Dependability/consistency:** A study is dependable when similar results would be obtained if the study was to be done again with the same people or in a similar situation (Shenton, 2004:71). Dependability can be achieved by:

- i) *Research design and its implementation*: describing what was planned and executed on strategic level.
- ii) *Operational detail of data gathering*: addressing the minutiae of what was done in the field.
- iii) *Reflective approach of the project*: evaluating the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken.

The researcher took these steps by writing a detailed proposal, describing in detail how the data was collected (Chapter Two) and by reflecting on the effectiveness of the research process (Chapter Four).

- d) **Confirmability/neutrality**: The concept of confirmability is the qualitative researcher's concern to objectivity (Shenton, 2004:72). The author further states that steps must be taken in order to ensure as far as possible that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. The role of triangulation for promoting such confirmability was emphasised in this study.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Extracted from Yegidis and Weinbach (2002:25) "the term ethics derived from the Greek word ethos (which is closest to the English word character), refers to principles within a society that reflect what society views as right or wrong behaviour. In the context of research, ethical issues generally revolve around two related questions: (a) Whose rights should take priority over those of other? (b) Who should benefits or suffer from the actions of the research?" This is comparative to Boeije's (2010:44) suggestion that research in general is a human practice in which social values and ethical principles apply and moral dilemmas occur.

Gravetter and Ferzano (2003:39) are of the opinion that research ethics concerns the responsibility of researchers to be honest and respectful of all individuals who may be affected by this research study or reports of the study results. Strydom (2005:57) defines ethics as "a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or

group, in subsequently widely accepted and which offers rules and behaviour expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistance and students". Ethical issues are present in any kind of research.

The research process creates tension between the aims of the research to make generalisation for the good of others and the rights of participants to maintain privacy. Ethics pertains to doing good and avoiding harm (Halai, 2006:6). In this research endeavour, the researcher gave consideration to the following ethical principles:

1.9.1 INFORMED CONSENT

According to Mack et al. (2005:9) informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a particular research study so that they can decide in a conscious, deliberate way whether they want to participate. It is also an important tool in ensuring respect for people during research. The involved participants in this study were informed of the nature and purpose of the study, its risks and benefits, and had to give consent to participate without coercion. Due to the nature of the participants (teenagers) in this study the researcher obtained consent from both the children and their parents or guardians for those who could give consent legally. These were learners who are engaged in sexual activities at schools.

The researcher informed the prospective participants about the ethical obligation to report sexual activities where minor children are involved. The sample of this study was restricted to those children in the justice system and who received services at the Teddy Bear Clinic; therefore the researcher did not need consent from schools and state departments to conduct the study. In order to enable the prospective participants and their guardians to make a decision whether or not to participate, the researcher:

- Gave clarification of the aim of the study and procedure to be employed.
- Offered an account of any probable risks and discomfort to the participants.

- Described benefits that could be reasonably expected.
- Gave an exposure to any changeable procedure that might be advantageous to participants.
- Answered any questions concerning the procedure to be followed.

Informed consent forms (Appendix B) were handed to participants after a detailed explanation of the study, its aims and their willingness to voluntarily participate in the study (Halai, 2006:5).

1.9.2 ANONYMITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

The researcher is a social worker by profession, as a social worker one need not to be reminded of the importance of safeguarding the privacy and identity of one's clients (Yegidis and Weinbach, 2002:40). The principle of confidentiality often governs how social workers handle data about their clients. According to Gravetter and Ferzano (2003:71) confidentiality assures that the information obtained from the participants will be kept secret and private. Participants must be protected from embarrassment or emotional stress that results from public exposure. These authors state that the basic process of confidentiality involves ensuring that participants' records are kept anonymous, that is not referring to participants and measurements obtained from participants by their names. For this study, confidentiality was maintained by two strategies as stated by Gravetter and Ferzano (2003:72):

- No names or other identification appeared on data records.
- A code system was used to keep track of which participants names go with which set of data.

The following elements of management of information outlined by Holloway and Wheeler (1998:45-46) which are discussed by Alpaslan (2010:5) were applied in conjunction with anonymity/confidentiality:

- Tapes, notes and transcripts of recordings – important tools for the qualitative researcher – were kept secure at all times. It was locked away in a cabinet that only the researcher had access to.
- To ensure anonymity, names of participants were not written on tapes, notes and transcripts, but rather pseudonyms or numbers were allocated to them to hide their identities. Lists containing the real names and pseudonyms/numbers allocated to the participants were not stored near the tapes, notes or transcripts of the recordings.
- Names were not disclosed to other people who had access to the data e.g. the supervisor, independent coder or editor. Participants' identities were disguised at all times.
- Tape/video recordings and transcripts of the recordings were erased or destroyed on completion of the research.

1.9.3 DEBRIEFING OF PARTICIPANTS

Strydom (2005:66) states that debriefing sessions during which subjects get the opportunity, after the study to work through their experiences and its aftermath, are one possible way in which the researcher can assist subjects and minimise harm. According to Boeije (2010:48) researchers should be aware that there are many topics that participants may not want to talk about because of their sensitive nature. The researcher encouraged the participants to utilise the opportunity for debriefing, should the need arise.

1.10 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Under this sub-heading key concept central to this study will be defined:

- **Experiences:** Experiences can be defined as “apprehension of an object, thought or emotion through the senses or mind (i.e. active participation in events or activities, leading to the accumulation of knowledge or skill)” (The Free Dictionary, 2011: s.v. “experiences”). In this study experiences will refer to knowledge acquired by being physical involved in sexual acts at school.

- **School:** An institution for the instruction of children or people under college age (The Free Dictionary, 2011: s.v. “school”). For the purpose of this study under college age or children will be teenagers’ and school will be defined as secondary or high school.
- **Sex:** According to Devenish, Funnel and Greathead (1992:104), sex is a physical act of intercourse and can be seen as celebrating one’s sexuality. Heaven and Callan (1990:133) regard sex as a biological fact, depending on the genitalia with which the individual is born or perhaps the XX or XY chromosomes located in every cell of the body. For the purpose of this study sex will therefore be defined as a physical act of intercourse or sexual penetration.
- **Sexual activity:** Sexual activity is defined as “including a continuum of behaviours motivated by sexual desire and oriented toward sexual pleasure, even if these activities do not culminate in sexual release” (Furman et al, 1999:178). In this study this will refer to activities associated with sexual intercourse, kissing and touching inappropriately.
- **Social Work:** Nugroho defines (2011:27), following an international definition of social work review, social work as “a helping profession for promoting social change, social investment, empowerment and problem-solving in human relationship and environment at the individual, family, group, community and society levels to enhance welfare. Social work intervention is based on theories of human behaviour and social environment, human rights and social justice principles, as well as the social culture of Indonesian society and the dynamics of the local-national-global levels”.
- **Social worker:** The social worker in the 21st century is a confident and competent professional committed to working with and alongside people who use social work services, their advocates and other professionals in order to help them achieve the best possible outcomes in their lives (21st Century Social Work, n.d.). “This means a person registered under section 17. Any person registered in terms of this section or who is deemed to have been registered as a social worker, may

use the title social worker” (Social service professions Act (Act 110) of 1978 (1979: section 7).

- **Support needs:** Support is “the act, state or operation of supporting, upholding, or sustaining” and a need is “a lack of something wanted or deemed necessary” (The Free Dictionary, 2011: s.v. “support” & s.v. “needs”). For the purpose of this study support will refer to meeting the emotional needs of teenagers.
- **Teenager:** Unless specifically defined by researchers, the terms teens, teenagers, adolescents and youth are often used interchangeably. The researcher will use the term “teenager” to refer to young people who would typically be students in middle school or high school. These words will be used interchangeably throughout the study. For the purpose of this research study a teenager will be defined as a person between the ages of 13 and 18 years (Louw, Van Eden & Louw, 2001:385).

1.11 DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The findings of the study are presented in the form of a dissertation. The findings will be made available in the University of South Africa Library. Findings of this research will also be disseminated in a form of a report to those who assisted with the research. An article will also be prepared and submitted for review and possible publication in a professional journal.

1.12 CHAPTER OUTLINE/STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH REPORT

The research report comprises of four chapters and the focus of each chapter is indicated as follows:

Chapter One: The researcher outlines the scope of study and the qualitative research approach. It includes an introduction and general orientation to the research report with focus on problem formulation, problem statement, rationale for study, research questions, goals and objectives, qualitative research approach and design, ethical considerations, limitations of the study, clarification of key concepts and the content plan of the research report.

Chapter Two: This chapter describes the research procedures. The research approach employed is discussed, namely the qualitative approach. The role of the researcher in the study is also discussed, that is, the background and experiences of the researcher as it impact on the research process.

Chapter Three: In this chapter research findings are discussed and compared with existing literature related to the topic.

Chapter Four: Presents a summary of the research report and outline overall conclusions and recommendations. Suggestions for further research are also discussed.

1.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter serves as a general orientation of the study. Main contents described in this chapter include the background and motivation of the study, the research problem and question to be answered through this study, and the goals and objectives to be achieved. Furthermore, the chapter also describes the proposed research methodology and defines the key concepts relevant to this study. Chapter Two reviews the methodology employed in this study and how it was implemented.

CHAPTER TWO

APPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study aims to develop an in-depth understanding of teenagers' experiences of sexual activities at school and their needs for social work support. Chapter One bestowed a general overview of the research problem that the study seeks to address and provided a brief introduction to the methodology that would be employed. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research strategy and the empirical techniques applied in detail. Therefore the chapter describes the research design and methodology including the qualitative approach, the selection of the sample, data collection, data analysis and the pilot study in more depth.

Aspects concerning the data verification/trustworthiness and limitation of the research study are discussed in more detail. In short, the researcher, in this chapter, describes what was done to answer the research question, how it was done, justifies the research design, and explains how the results were analysed.

2.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is defined by Leedy and Ormrod (2001:14) as "the general approach which the researcher takes in carrying out the research project". A research methodology references the procedural rules for the evaluation of research claims and validation of the knowledge gathered, while research design functions as the research blueprint (Creswell, 2003:153). A methodology does not simply frame a study but it identifies the research tools and strategies (i.e. resources) that will be employed and relates their use to specified aims. Strydom (2002:255) postulates that the purpose is to develop the confidence of the reader in the methods used and to spell out the context and purpose for which the collection of data has taken place.

A methodology specifies a number of steps to be taken in a particular sequence (Bless et al., 2006:17). The steps or procedures are determined by the aims to be achieved. Research methodology has to do with the logic of interpreting results and analysing findings. Simply put, a study’s research methodology consists of the actions that were taken in a study and the reasons why those actions were taken. The nature of the participants who take part in the data gathering process, the data production, analysis and verification techniques and the steps that have been taken to ensure that all ethical issues have been dealt with, are all important parts of research methodology. Additionally, Silverman (2005:98) defines methodology as “choices made about cases to study, methods of data gathering, forms of data analysis etc., in planning and executing a research study”. He further mentions that methodology defines how one will go about studying any phenomena.

2.2.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

In social research, the most common methodologies are quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. The distinctions between the three approaches are set out as follows:

TABLE 2.1 DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE QUANTITATIVE, QUALITATIVE AND MIXED METHOD RESEARCH APPROACHES (BASED ON CRESWELL, 2009:19)

	Quantitative approach	Qualitative approach	Mixed method approach
Assumptions and philosophical approaches used	A scientific, post positivistic and experimental approach. Perform surveys and experiments.	A constructive, advocatory, participatory approach. Doing case study, a description, a	A pragmatic approach, simultaneous, consecutive or transformative research.

		phenomenology, ethnography or grounded theory.	
Methods used	Numerical data, closed questions, predetermined method.	Open questions, text and visual data, any information as it emerges.	Using both numeric data, open and closed questions, both a predefined and a channelled approach, as well as both qualitative and quantitative data analyses.
Practices used by the researcher	Test and verify theories and explanations, identify variables to study, propose hypotheses. Use standards for validity and reliability of data. Get information from numerical data to collect, through observation, statistics and impartiality.	Researcher positions him/herself, obtains information by involving participants, focuses on a single concept or phenomenon, brings forth personal values and opinions of participants, gives interpretation to it, evaluates the accuracy of findings, considers the context and	Gather both qualitative and quantitative information. Develop a rationale (reason) to integrate mixed data in various stages of research

		situation of participants	
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According to Hancock (2002:2) qualitative research is concerned with finding the answers to questions which begin with: why?; how?; in what way? Quantitative research, on the other hand, is more concerned with questions about: how much? ;how many?; how often?; to what extent? Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998:15) argue that the mixed method is for research in which different approaches are applied at any or all of a number of stages through the research. Additionally, Creswell (2003:47) has noted that a multi-method methodology is one in which the researcher collects, analyses, and integrates both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in multiple studies in a sustained programme of inquiry. Due to the nature of the research question in this study, the researcher adopted a qualitative approach.

Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as “real world setting (where) the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2001:39). Qualitative research, broadly defined, means “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:17) that is, the kind of research that produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the “phenomenon of interest unfold naturally” (Patton, 2001:39). Unlike quantitative researchers who seek causal determination, prediction, and generalisation of findings, qualitative researchers seek instead illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations (Golafshani, 2003:600).

This approach is based on a distinct methodological tradition of enquiry that explores a social or a human problem (Creswell 2003:15). It is more appropriate to explore the nature of a problem, issue or phenomenon without quantifying it. The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people

experience a given research issue (Williams, 2007:65). The researcher employed the qualitative approach in order to explore experiences of teenagers engaged in sexual activities at school rather than statistical queries of this phenomenon. The researcher anticipated the type of data needed to respond to the research question of this study (textural data).

Based on this assessment and nature of this research study, the researcher selected the qualitative approach as the research questions required textural data (Williams, 2007:65). Furthermore, Mack et al. (2005:1) postulate that the qualitative approach provides information about the “human” side of an issue, that is, the often contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals. The qualitative approach also acknowledges that people have different socially constructed realities and may thus have different interpretations of the same issues or circumstances, allowing for varied experiences and opinions to be expressed through the research (Hancock, 2002:9).

According to Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2000:93) qualitative researchers focus their research on exploring, examining, and describing people and their natural environments. The participants had freedom and natural development of action and representation were therefore captured. The participants had a more open-ended way of sharing their experiences and demonstrating actions. Qualitative research therefore describes and seeks understanding as stated by Henning, Van Rensburg and Smith (2004:3-5). Furthermore, Williams (2007:67) postulates that qualitative research is also described as an unfolding model that occurs in a natural setting that enables the researcher to develop a level of detail from high involvement in the actual experiences. One identifier of a qualitative research is the social phenomenon being investigated from the participants’ viewpoint (Williams, 2007:67-68). The following discussion describes how the qualitative approach was applied including its characteristics as explained by Williams (2007:67-69), Babbie and Mouton (2001:270) and Boeije (2010:10):

- Qualitative research can be described as an effective model that occurs in a natural setting which enables the researcher to develop a level of detail from being highly involved in the actual experiences (Golafshani, 2003:600). In this study the natural setting of the participants was the school context, the researcher conducted the interviews at the Teddy Bear Clinic.
- Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behaviour and interviewing participants. In this regard, qualitative researchers are seen as **primary instruments for data collection and analysis**. Data are mediated through this human instrument rather than through inventories, questionnaires or machines. The researcher collected the data by conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants. The researcher was the primary instrument in data collection and conducted all the interviews himself (Patton, 2001:14). That is, the credibility (trustworthiness) of a qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher.
- In qualitative research, the researcher keeps focus on **learning the meaning that participants hold about the problem or issue**. The researcher is interested in how people make sense of their lives, experiences and their structure of the world. The focus of this research study was on participants' experiences of sexual activities at school and their needs for social work support. The researcher listened to their stories and interpretations of the situations. The researcher was mainly interested in the meaning teenagers bring to experiences of engaging in sexual activities at school.
- **Inductive data analysis:** In qualitative research, researchers build patterns, categories and themes from the "bottom-up" by organising data into increasingly more abstract units of information. The inductive process entails working back and forth between themes and database until the establishment of a comprehensive set of themes. The information gathered by the researcher during data collection of the study was reduced to a summary report.

- Qualitative research **focuses on descriptions**. Based on the exploration of the teenagers' needs for social work support, the researcher described their needs to contribute to a better understanding of the social context of this group.

The research study employed a qualitative research approach which was the most appropriate to explore and describe teenagers' experiences of sexual activities at school and their needs for social work support. The exploratory nature of the research question was well suited to the qualitative approach and the assumptions/ characteristics associated with a qualitative approach. The goals of this research study were best accomplished by the use of a qualitative research design approach.

This method allowed the participants in this study to give much 'richer' answers to questions that the researcher asked, and gave valuable insights in the study. Experiences and relationships are an emotionally laden phenomena and can best be understood within the context of a narrative and when the researcher is able to observe the responses of the participant (Creswell, 1994:147). It also allowed the researcher to focus on intangibles like emotions, opinions, and subjective understandings.

2.2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design serves as a plan for the later stages of the research (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002:101-102). Therefore, the research design refers to the total plan to be followed in order to realise the goals of the study i.e. answering the research question. Thus, being distinctive and specific, the research design selected should be the one which is best suited to answer the research question. The overall plan refers to methods, research design, methods for data collection, population and sample, and methods for data analysis (Boeije, 2010:19). A research design focuses on the end product, formulates a research problem as a point of departure and focuses on the logic of research. In planning for this study, the researcher had decided on the

research question to be studied, data required to answer it, who to collect data from, methods to collect data as well as how the data will be analysed and verified.

A qualitative research design is defined as explorative, descriptive and contextual in nature (Mouton & Marais, 1996:107). According to Brink (1999:100) a research design is a set of logical steps taken by the researcher to elicit a response to the research questions and to control variance. The purpose of the research design is therefore to achieve greater control of the study and to improve the validity of the study in examining the research problem. Furthermore, the research design must be appropriate to the purpose of the study given realistic constraints and effective in reducing threats to validity.

2.2.2.1 Explorative design

One of the characteristics of a qualitative research design is that it is explorative. According to Brink and Wood (1998:308-309) the broad purpose of exploratory research is the exploration of a relatively unknown research area in order to gain new insight into the phenomenon being studied. For the purpose of breaking into new grounds and generating exciting insight into experiences of teenagers' sexual activities at school this research study adopted the explorative design. As already discussed in Chapter One, exploratory research unfold through focus group interviews, structured or semi-structured interviews with experts and a search for relevant literature (Struwig & Stead, 2003:7). The researcher therefore employed in-depth semi-structured individual interviews to explore the participants' experiences of sexual activities at school and their needs for social work support.

Furthermore, this study explored the possibilities for further studies regarding the concerned group, as the literature and previous studies (as discussed in Chapter One) indicated a limited focus on the experiences of teenagers who are engaged in sexual activities at school premises. According to Grinnel (1998:220) it is sensible to use the exploratory design when the area under investigation is not well developed

and no sound theories have been put forward. As mentioned earlier, there is a lack in the literature with regards to the experiences of young people who engage in sexual activities at school premises in spite of the prevalence of the problem. The researcher chose the exploratory design because this particular study area is not well developed and therefore no sound theories have yet been put forward.

2.2.2.2 Descriptive design

The “descriptive research design” is defined as involving an in-depth description of a specific individual, event or group (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:80-81). In contrast to exploratory research, descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of the situation, social setting, or relationships, and focuses on the “how” and “why” questions (Struwig & Stead, 2003:8). In qualitative research it is important for researchers to describe what they observe during fieldwork. By way of themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interview transcripts, a descriptive approach was used to give accurate description of the participants’ experiences of sexual activities at school and their needs for social work support as the researcher interviewed 10 participants.

The study was designed to be an exploration/description of the participants’ views of their own experience. Thus, an appreciation for the participants’ ability to construct their own reality was of key importance. Furthermore, such description involved the collection of qualitative data by means of semi-structured interviews with the participants, which was transcribed verbatim (Neuman, 2003:30). Additionally, the advantage of the descriptive design within the present study was that the description of the participants’ perceptions of their needs for support, together with the literature review, enabled the researcher understand the issue of adolescent sexual behaviour more comprehensively.

2.2.2.3 Contextual design

The purpose of contextual research is to describe and understand events within the immediate, concrete, natural context in which the situation under observation occurs (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:272). The contextual design was also appropriate for this study in order to explore the environment as participants' behaviour can be linked to their environment (Struwig & Stead, 2003:12). In this study the findings are understood within the context of the teenagers who are engaged in sexual activities within the school environment at school premises.

2.3 RESEARCH METHODS

The concept "research method" refers to forms of data collection, analysis and interpretation that researchers propose for the study (Creswell, 2009:15). Included within this concept is also the aspects of population, sampling and sampling techniques. These aspects will be presented in the discussion to follow:

2.3.1 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

At an early stage in the planning of this investigation decisions were made concerning the study population; that is, concerning the population of individual (teenagers/ adolescents) to be investigated. The concept "population" refers to the totality of the target group from which a sample must be drawn (Struwig & Stead, 2003:98). Singleton and Straits (2010:155) describe defining a population as a two-step process. First the researcher must clearly identify the target population, which is the population to which the researcher would like to generalise his/her results. To define the target population, the researcher must specify the criteria for determining which cases are included in the population and which cases are excluded. The researcher must make the target population operational. This involves the second step of the definition: constructing a sample.

Furthermore, to define a population, the researcher needs to specify a set of variables or characteristics. According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel & Schurink

(2000:190) the research population is the term that sets boundaries on the study units; it refers to individuals who possess specific characteristics. The population in this study included all teenagers in Gauteng Province who were convicted of engaging in sexual activities at school. They were charged with contravention of section 15 and 16 of the Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act (Act No 32) of 2007.

The charges are based on Section 15 (1) (a) of the Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act (Act No 32) of 2007 which reads as follows: “a person who commits an act of sexual penetration with a child is, despite the consent of the child to the commission of such an act, guilty of the offence of having committed an act of sexual penetration with a child”. These teenagers were interviewed in order to explore the experience of and subsequent reflections on teenage sexual activities at school. This study was conducted through The Teddy Bear Clinic for Abused Children within the Regions of the Gauteng Province Department of Education schools (i.e. North Rand, East Rand, West Rand and South Rand) among school going children. Due to time and money constraints the whole population could not be included in the study and therefore a sample was drawn.

A sample is a subset of the population that is taken as a representative of the entire population (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2002:181). The sample taken from the population should be representative of the population from which it was drawn. By selecting a sample, the researcher was able to obtain a reasonably accurate understanding of the aspects being investigated (sexual activities at school: teenagers experience and social work support) in this study without having to gather information from the entire population. In qualitative research the way the sample is designed and sample size chosen, depends on the aims of the researcher (Kielmann, Cataldo & Seeley, 2011:19). As discussed in the previous chapter, the methods are less structured; hence the data generated will differ from individual to individual.

The process through which the sample is taken is known as “sampling”. “Sampling” can be defined as the process of selecting elements, which are the basic units from which data and information would be collected to represent the entire population (Polit & Beck 2008:339). This can be done by means of two methods, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Mack et al., 2005:6-8) as illustrated in the table below.

TABLE 2.2 DIFFERENTIATING PROBABILITY SAMPLING AND NON-PROBABILITY SAMPLING (BASED ON STRYDOM, 2005:198-204; BLESS ET AL., 2006:105-106)

Probability sampling	Non-probability sampling
It is representative of all. Each element of the population has a chance to be drawn.	Include all sampling methods in which known units have a probability of chance to be drawn. Might exclude other participants as it may be purposive.
E.g. Random sampling; systematic sampling; stratified sampling; cluster sampling.	E.g. Convenience/casual sampling; quota sampling; snowball sampling; purposive sampling.

Due to the sensitivity of the research topic, a non-probability convenience sampling approach was used. That is, the participants who contributed to the data in this research study were selected by implementing the purposive sampling methods. The researcher advertised the study to the participants during the group therapy programme, those who were available and willing to participate came to his office out of their own free will (Polit & Beck, 2008:341). In order to get rich data, a purposeful sampling technique was used to select the participants for the face-to-face interviews.

According to Patton (2002:45) **purposeful sampling** is a non-random method of sampling where the researcher selects “information-rich” cases for an in-depth study.

It is the most common sampling strategy in qualitative research and seeks cases which are rich in information that can be studied in great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. Patton (2002:45) postulates the benefits of purposeful sampling as “any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experience and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon”. With purposeful sampling the idea is to select the most productive sample in order to answer the research question by developing a framework of variables to guide the selection (refer under here to criteria for inclusion) (Kielmann et al., 2011:21).

This technique was employed in order to group participants according to preselected criteria relevant to the research question of this study (Mack et al., 2005:5). A purposive sample was chosen with the knowledge that it is not representative of the general population; rather it attempts to represent a specific portion of the population (teenagers/adolescents). The participants in this study were selected on the basis of the required specific characteristics or qualities and those who did not meet the criteria were not considered. This sampling method was suitable as the researcher was able to gain specialised insight from selected individuals (teenagers/adolescents) that is , the purposive technique enabled the researcher to use his own judgment about who would be most suitable to answer the research questions (Babbie, 2004:183).

The purposive sampling technique was further utilised as the researcher specifically sought typical and divergent data from teenagers of different schools, exploring their experiences and needs for social work support. The individuals, who acted as participants, were chosen according to a criteria derived from the research objectives. There were several criteria which the participants in the study had to meet. The criteria for inclusion in the sample for this study were as follow:

- teenagers who had sex at school, prosecuted for contravention of section 15 and 16 of the Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act (Act No 32) of 2007 and completed the diversion program at The Teddy Bear Clinic;
- willingness to participate (teenagers who give their voluntary and informed consent to participate);
- parental consent for teenagers under age i.e. children below 18-years-old.
- teenagers between the ages of 14–18 who are conversant in English, Sepedi or Setswana or isiZulu.

In addition qualitative sampling requires identification of appropriate participants being those who can best inform the study.

Sample size is not important, rather the establishment of observable patterns in the data is (Bless et al., 2006:107-108). Marshall (1996:523) observes that “an appropriate sample size for qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question”. As a social worker working with young sex offenders, the researcher is familiar with the knowledge and experience levels of the members of the sample and was confident that they could provide the required information from their experiences (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1999:95). The most important aspect in qualitative research is that sampling continues until themes emerge and patterns recur and there is a point of saturation. According to Strauss and Corbin (cited by Mason, 2010) data saturation occurs when data reach the point where the process becomes “counter-productive” and that new data discovered does not necessarily add anything to the overall story, model, theory or framework.

Within the context of the qualitative nature of this research study, the sample size could not be determined beforehand, but it was determined by data saturation when the researcher noted themes in data being repeated. Initially the researcher interviewed six participants, data was not saturated and therefore four more participants were included in the study until themes emerged and data saturation was

reached. That is, in-depth interviews were held with 10 teenagers, aged 14–18 years who were in the diversion programme for young sex offenders at The Teddy Bear Clinic for abused children. Since in-depth information was collected, the researcher only needed a limited number of participants.

Based on the sample recruited for this study it became clear that the experiences of sexual activities at school were almost shared by all participants. Data were saturated as evidenced by the repetition of themes during analysis and the coding process. In this regard Creswell (1998:118) comments that the purposeful selection of participants represents a key decision point in qualitative studies and the researcher needs clear criteria and rationales for decisions.

2.3.2 DATA COLLECTION

In this section the researcher discusses various aspects of data collection and methods employed to collect data. These aspects includes: the pilot study, preparation for data collection and the semi-structured interview.

2.3.2.1 Preparation for data collection

Permission to undertake the study was granted by The Teddy Bear Clinic (see Appendix C). The proposal of this study was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at UNISA and authorisation was given to conduct the study. The researcher started the process of data collection by making contact with the participants during the diversion group therapy programme. The participants were clients of The Teddy Bear Clinic; the researcher advertised the study to them during the therapeutic group process and invited those who were interested in participating to come to his office.

Some of the participants had already completed the diversion programme and as a result the researcher had to contact them telephonically and scheduled an initial appointment for explaining the purpose of the study. Telephonic conversations were

strictly limited to invitation to the study and no further information was given over the phone. During the first meeting with the participants (individually) the researcher explained the purpose of the study, criteria for inclusion and indicated that participation in the study is voluntary and that their privileges/rights will not be jeopardised.

Although the researcher is an employee at The Teddy Bear Clinic, none of the participants were his clients at the time of the interviews/study. Those who agreed to participate in the study were prepared by having the contents of the preamble and the consent form (see Appendix A and B) explained to them. When participants indicated that they fully understood the contents of the consent letter, they were requested to sign the form/letter together with their parents or guardians. It was further explained to the participants that they had been chosen for this research study as they were viewed as the experts regarding teenagers sexual activities at school. The researcher elaborated that their input would make a valuable contribution to the social work profession in developing an understanding of teenagers' sexual activities at school and intervention to offer social work support.

A follow-up appointment was scheduled for the actual research interview at a date and time most convenient for them. The researcher was responsible for fulfilling the following roles, tasks and obligations before, during, and after the interview. This was applicable to interviews during the preparation phase, pilot study and phase of data collection (Mack et al., 2005:32-33):

- Recruit participants according to the recruitment strategy outlined in the work plan.
- Set up recording equipment (two recordings were set for back-up purpose, should one fail to record) and the physical space where interviews will take place.
- Become knowledgeable about the research topic, including anticipating and being prepared to answer any questions participants may have about it.

- Be reliable. This is done to get participants to take the interview seriously by demonstrating the researcher's own commitment included e.g. arriving on time, equipped with the recording equipment, interview guide, and notebooks.
- Obtain informed consent from each participant before the interview, although this was done during the recruitment phase the researcher constantly obtained consent before each interview.
- Address all questions or topics listed in the interview guide.
- Ask follow-up questions (some of which were scripted in the interview guide) in order to elicit participants' complete knowledge and experience related to the research topic.
- Probe participants for elaboration of their responses, with the aim of learning all they can share about the research topic.

2.3.2.2 Pilot study

In the designing phase of the interviewing process, the researcher decided to conduct a pilot study. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:152) advise that a pilot study should be done to ensure that the researcher is able to answer the research question. A pilot study is used to refine both the research design and the field procedures. The purpose of the pilot study was to:

- eliminate some ambiguous items;
- establish if there were problems in administering the interview questions;
- test data collection instructions;
- establish the feasibility of the study;
- anticipate and amend any logical and procedural difficulties regarding the study; and
- allow preliminary data analysis to establish whether there would be difficulties in the main data analysis and to ensure that the data collected will answer the research question (David & Sutton, 2004:177, Pratt & Loizos, 2003:59 and Cardwell, 1999:176).

With the aforementioned purposes of a pilot study in mind, the researcher conducted two preliminary interviews with two teenagers/participants who complied with the criteria for inclusion in this study. This helped to confirm the belief that the research questions provided the necessary quality of information for this research. The interviews were transcribed and analysed. The interviews were adjusted and the following two questions were added in the original interview schedule:

- How did you feel after engaging in sexual activities while at school?
- What was your reaction and attitude towards the whole thing?

2.3.2.3 Methods of data collection

The purpose of data gathering in qualitative research is to provide evidence for the experience it is investigating (Polkinghorne, 2005:137). The evidence is in the form of accounts people have given of the experience. According to Williams (2007:65) the researcher should first identify the type and nature of the required data and then select those collection methods which are best suited to the collection of the identified data types. Many factors were involved in the consideration of appropriate research methods for data collection and instrumentation for this research study. The factors included the need for data from the participants as experts based upon their experiences of engagement in sexual activities at school, access to the specific targeted population, and varied perspectives from diverse participants such as male and female. The need for direct access to the research population and a focused orientation consistent with the needs of young people/participants were also important considerations in selecting the research method.

Creswell (2009:185-188) indicates that multiple data with qualitative research can be raised in the form of the following four categories:

- Observation, where participants in a natural environment is observed, for example with an ethnographic research design.

- Interviewing face-to-face, by telephone, or through focus groups, where six to eight participants are asked to respond to a few unstructured, semi-structured and/or general open-ended questions that aim to explore their views and opinions.
- Documents such as newspapers, minutes, reports, personal journals, letters and e-mail may be used.
- Audio and visual images, photographs, art, objects or sound may be used.

In this research study semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the participants (to be discussed in-depth later together with the interview guide). The construction of a research instrument or tool for data collection is the most important aspect of a research project because anything the researcher say by way of findings or conclusions is based upon the type of information collected, and the data collected is entirely dependent upon the questions that were asked (Kumar, 2005:34).

2.3.2.4. Semi-structured interviews

The rationale behind choosing in-depth/semi-structured interviews was clear. Firstly, and as pointed out by Mack et al., (2005:29-49), in-depth interviews allow the researcher to crosscheck the study. Secondly as pointed out by Hancock (2002:9) the benefits of using semi-structured interviews include richness of data and deeper insight into the phenomena researched. Lastly, and as Kielmann et al. (2011:24-31) emphasise, these interviews lead to the generation of insightful stories, rather than statistical information and permit a better understanding of the participants' experiences. The semi-structured interviews are centered around the research questions given in Chapter One, with probing questions included as needed.

According to Mack et al. (2005:2) in-depth/semi-structured interviews are optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics such as the one in this study are being explored. These type of interviews are an effective qualitative method for getting people to talk about their personal feelings, opinions and experiences. Interviews were structured

according to an interview guide, developed by the researcher with the assistance of the study leader, which outlined themes to be covered during the interview. The interview guide and probing allowed the researcher to ask specific questions about the participants' experiences surrounding teenagers' sexual activities at school and their perceptions of needs for social work support (Anne-Sofie, 2000:44). An interview guide provided structure for the interviews, but did not limit the participants' responses.

The designed interview guide covered the main content areas in which information was required (refer to Chapter One paragraph 1.6.2.3 for interview questions). The time it took to conduct the interviews ranged from 32 to 95 minutes, with the average time for the interviews being around 63 minutes. This differences in times spent with the participants were related to the amount of discussion that occurred around the topics of interest. The researcher checked if the participants were comfortable and ready to talk at the beginning of each interview. The researcher outlined the issues to be discussed and showed the participants the interview schedule. The researcher made use of interviewing techniques such as probing and linking in order to develop the in-depth detailed required (Mouton, 2001:106).

Focusing on face-to-face interviews, open-ended questions during the interviews allowed the participants to draw on their own frame of reference in order to answer and encourage spontaneous participation. A face-to-face interview was conducted with each participant. An open-ended question such as: "What are your views about teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school?" was used to obtain information from teenagers on teenage sexual activities at school (Mack et al., 2005:29). Interviews were conducted by the researcher in a private room at The Teddy Bear Clinic offices in Parktown Johannesburg. Two interviews were deserted because the participants became too emotional and asked to stop the interview. The participants were followed up by the researcher and did not require any specific psychological intervention. However, the researcher experienced challenges during the data

collection process such as the termination of the two participants before the interview could be completed because they felt that they could not discuss their sexual experiences with the researcher.

The interviews carried out for this study made it possible to explore other themes and further enriched data were gathered. Gentle encouraging sounds such as 'mm', 'oh' or 'really' as well as head nods helped to get the conversation rolling, as did occasional prompts like 'Tell me more about that...' or 'What happened next?' (Wilson & Powell, 2001:51). The researcher gained insight into the participants' experiences by being attentive to the causal explanations provided by the participants. What they experienced and believed and by actively probing them about the connections and relationships they saw between events such as having sex at the school premises, opinions and beliefs also gave insight into their experiences. Rather, than seeking general opinions, the researcher's focus during the interviews was on specific situations and action sequences (teenagers' experiences of sexual activities at school).

During all the interviews tape recordings were made with the permission of the participants. This enabled the researcher and the participants to focus on the discussion rather than concentrating on both the discussion and taking notes. Tape recording ensured that the whole interview was captured and it provided complete data for analysis so cues that were missed the first time could be recognised when listening to the recording (Hancock, 2002:14). The interview guides encouraged the researcher to be consistent in the data collection process. Because of this the data collection process was more systematic and comprehensive while providing sufficient flexibility to explore concepts as fully as necessary.

Documenting the interview process allows future research to replicate the process (Creswell, 2009:185-189). Based on this, enough in-depth data from individuals is needed for the researcher to be able to capture variations in participants'

perspectives and experiences that related to the research question. The researcher gathered in-depth data from the participants based on their experiences in order to answer the research questions which focused on teenagers' sexual activities at school and their needs for social work support (Kielmann et al., 2011:19). The researcher wanted to hear what the teenagers had to say about their sexual behaviour while at school, as well as how they described their sexual activities, to learn about the impact/consequences of teenagers' sexual acts at school.

2.4 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of data in a research project involves summarising the mass of data collected and presenting the results in a way that communicates the most important features (Hancock, 2002:16). In qualitative research, data collection and data analysis are partially integrated (Creswell, 1994:154). In this regard Smit (2002:66) maintains that qualitative analysis takes place throughout the data collection process. As such the researcher will reflect continuously on impressions, relationships and connections during the data collection process. The search for similarities, differences, categories, themes, concepts and ideas forms part of the continuous process. To analyse data literally means to break into bits and pieces, or to break down the data (Smit, 2002:66). In other words, when using qualitative analysis as a means to explain or make sense of the inquiry, we do not use as evidence the frequencies or the quantities with which something occurs, but rather elicit meaning from the data, in a systematic, comprehensive and rigorous manner.

During data collection 2/10 interviews included a mixture of Sepedi, Setswana and isiZulu although the interviews were conducted in English. All the audiotapes were then transcribed and translated, where necessary, into English by the researcher. Transcription and translation was further reviewed in order to ensure that the correct reflection of the data was presented in the participants' voices. The researcher did not make use of any commercial qualitative data analysis software and coding of data was done using MS Word and Excel as these programmes were seen to be sufficient

for the organisation of the data. Both by coding and analysing data the researcher used his personal knowledge and experiences as tools to make sense of the material. Therefore, some of these tools are the researcher's unique impressions, which might remain intangible and undocumented (Anne-Sofie, 2000:44).

In Chapter Three, the participants' verbatim responses are used to verify, support and justify themes, sub-themes and categories during the discussion of findings. The data acquired from the ten semi-structured interviews was analysed by the researcher and an independent coder through the framework of data analysis for qualitative research by Tesch (in Creswell, 1994:70, 2003:192-193 and Smit, 2002:66). Through Tesch's method the data was interpreted in the basic sense of reflecting on the data until a better understanding of what is meant, was achieved:

- After the interviews had been transcribed, an overall impression was obtained by reading through all the transcripts. Ideas, about possible categories, were jotted in the margin as they came to mind.
- An in-depth transcript, namely, interview ten was chosen as it had rich information. Thoughts and ideas that came to mind were jotted down in the right margin of the transcript. The list was reduced to groups of similar topics, which were coded using colour highlights.
- Similar topics were clustered together. A list of the topics was returned to the data abbreviated as codes. The codes were written next to the appropriate segments of the text.
- The researcher abbreviated the topics as codes, which were written next to the relative segment of the text. The researcher then checked if new categories or themes emerged.
- The most descriptive wording to be found was turned into categories. Related topics were grouped together in order to reduce the number of categories.
- Interrelationships between categories were identified and a final decision was taken on the abbreviation for each category.

- Then the researcher used MS Word and Excel to place data pertaining to each code in one category.
- A recoding was performed in order to make sure that the coding system made sense. For example, the category 'Kissing and touching' under the sub-theme 'Types of sexual activities at school' was coded KT/TSA, but after thorough thought the coding was changed to 'KT/TSAS'.

In practical terms, once the audio interview recordings were transcribed into text, the reduction and analysis began. In essence, the researcher read the transcriptions while listening again and edited where necessary. To ensure consistency in the study, the researcher supplied the independent coder with:

- The research proposal.
- A clean set of transcribed interviews.

The independent coder holds a masters degree in research and is well experienced as she is a research manager in her field and therefore she was capable of doing an independent analysis. Consensus discussions regarding the identified themes, sub-themes and categories that emerged were held by the researcher and the independent coder, as well as the researcher and the study supervisor. The independent coder was in agreement with the researcher that data saturation had been achieved, thus confirming the sample size. This process was also seen as improving the credibility and trustworthiness of the empirical findings and results of the study as the researcher had a secondary key person to confirm data saturation. After agreement had been reached on the major and underlying themes, the results were presented in Chapter Three of this research study.

To sum up, the core of qualitative analysis is a twofold task – firstly to select a bit of data and secondly to assign it to a category, a process called coding (Dey, 1993:57). In essence, any research is an exercise in selection processes, and the researcher

needs to realise that the analysis is ultimately concerned with human situations and social processes (Smit, 2002:68).

2.5 METHOD OF DATA VERIFICATION

The question of accuracy is of paramount importance in any research (Rubin & Babbie, 2007:92). Every research methodology has strengths and weaknesses and no single approach can ever fully capture a topic of study. Data verification assists the qualitative researcher to establish the reliability of the study and thus to increase and support the findings and conclusions. In qualitative research, the various approaches used to improve the quality of a study are placed broadly under the heading of 'trustworthiness'. The researcher used Guba's model of trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004:63-75, Moss, 2004:359-374 and Rolfe, 2004: 305-309), for the purpose of data verification in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings. This model is well developed and used extensively in qualitative research situations.

Qualitative research demands theoretical sophistication and methodological rigour (Silverman, 2005:209). Guba's model is considered, favoured and forms the focus of this research for the data verification method. According to Shenton (2004:63) with Guba's model researchers seek to satisfy four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. The table below illustrates Guba's model as described by Shenton (2004:63):

TABLE 2.3 GUBA'S MODEL OF TRUSTWORTHINESS (BASED ON SHENTON, 2004: 63)

Criterion	Qualitative	Quantitative
True-value	Credibility	Internal validity
Applicability	Transferability	External validity
Consistency	Dependability	Reliability
Neutrality	Confirmability	Objectivity

As indicated in Table 2.3, Guba (cited in Shenton 2004:63) proposes four criteria which he believes should be considered by qualitative researchers in their pursuit of a trustworthy study which correspond to the criteria employed by the positivist researchers (quantitative). Guba's model for ensuring trustworthiness of qualitative data as described by Rolfe (2004:305-309) and Shenton (2004:63-75) was applied for data verification during this study. The following criteria were considered:

a) Credibility/true-value

True-value establishes how confident the researcher is with the truth of the findings based on the research design, informants and the context. Truth-value was obtained by discovering accurate descriptions of the phenomena as they were lived and experienced by the participants of the study (Shenton, 2004:64). The emphasis of this study was to explore and describe participants' experiences, therefore the truth-value of the study was of utmost importance. The following measures were employed by the researcher in order to promote confidence in the research findings related to the phenomena under scrutiny:

i) *Triangulation of data methods and data sources*

According to Guba (cited in Krefting, 1991:219) triangulation is the comparison of multiple perspectives. According to Shenton (2004:64) this may involve the use of different methods, especially observation, focus groups and individual interviews which form the major data collection methods in qualitative research. In this study, triangulation was performed by gathering data with the use of individual interviews (semi-structured interviews) by using participants that have had different experiences and perspectives of the subject. The researcher allowed sufficient time for the participants to respond and verbalise their experiences during the interviews (Richter & Mlambo 2005:63).

Categories which emerged from the initial interviews were discussed with the participants during the follow-up session to ensure that the information obtained was representative of what they had meant during their initial responses. Furthermore, the

researcher examined documents such as magazines and newspapers which were recommended by the participants during the interviews as teenagers' sexual activities at school was well documented in the media recently. The use of these magazines and newspapers ensured that different perspectives on the same issues were gathered.

ii) Tactics to help ensure honesty in participants when contributing data

All the participants were given the opportunity to refuse to participate in the study so as to ensure that the data collection sessions involved only those who were genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely (Shenton, 2004:66). Participants were encouraged to be frank from the outset of each session, with the researcher aiming to establish a rapport in the opening moment.

The independent status of the researcher should also be emphasised. Participants were allowed to contribute ideas and talk about their experiences without fear of losing credibility in the eyes of managers of the organisation. It was made clear to participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point, and they would not be required to disclose an explanation to the researcher (Shenton, 2004:67).

iii) Iterative questioning

According to Shenton (2004:64) iterative questioning includes the use of probes to elicit detailed data and iterative questioning, in which the researcher returns to matters previously raised by an informant and extracts related data through rephrased questions. In both cases, where contradictions emerge, falsehoods can be detected and the researcher may decide to discard the suspect data. An alternative approach and one that provides greater transparency lies in drawing attention, within the final research report, to the discrepancies and offering possible explanations. The researcher probed the participants by reflecting on the previous matters raised and no falsehoods were detected.

iv) Peer scrutiny of the research project

This refers to the discussion of the research process and findings with impartial researchers who have experience in qualitative studies (Krefting, 1991:219). The researcher had constant discussions with three colleagues from The Teddy Bear Clinic, who hold doctorate qualifications and have extensive qualitative research experience, peers in academics through UNISA's research workshops and the researcher's study supervisor. The fresh perspective provided by these individuals allowed them to challenge assumptions made by the researcher, whose closeness to the project might have influenced his ability to view it with real detachment (Shenton, 2004:67).

v) Reflective commentary

Reflective commentary is used to record the researcher's initial impressions of each data collection session, patterns emerging during the data collection process and the theories generated. Shenton (2004:68) indicates that commentary plays a key role in what Guba and Lincoln term "progressive subjectivity" or the monitoring of the researcher's own developing construction, which the authors consider critical in establishing credibility.

Reflective commentary forms an important aspect in this research study as the close relationship between the researcher and the participants (client-worker relationship) could have led to the researcher not being able to interpret the data accurately (Krefting, 1991:218). For the purpose of this and as advised by the study supervisor the researcher kept a field journal where he recorded his behaviour, observations, experiences and reflections on thoughts, feelings, ideas and hypotheses generated by the data collected to date.

vi) Prolonged and varied field experience

According to Patton (as cited in Shenton, 2004:68) the credibility of the researcher is especially important in qualitative research as it is the person who is the major instrument of data collection and analysis. Maykut and Morehouse (as cited in Shenton, 2004:68) recommend to include any personal and professional information

relevant to the phenomenon under study, and Patton (as cited in Shenton, 2004:68) adds that arrangements by which the investigator is funded should also be addressed.

The researcher is a social worker by profession. The researcher has been working for four years and was exposed to the fields of child abuse, young people in conflict with the law with specific focus on young sex offenders and has been exposed to high profile cases of children charged for having sex at school premises. Furthermore, the researcher also participated in a national television programme discussion about teenagers' sexual activities (with specific focus on young sex offenders) such as the E-news channel and the BBC Focus on Africa.

b) Transferability/applicability

This criterion refers to the extent to which the findings from the data can be transferred to other settings (Shenton, 2004:63). It is in a sense, similar to the concept of generalisability in quantitative research (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2005:346). If a study is generalisable it means that its results can be applied across a wide range of environments. Similarly, transferability implies that the findings of a particular study can be transferred to populations and circumstances other than those of the study itself. To achieve this, a comprehensive description of the research design and methodology accompanied by a literature check were used to maintain clarity. In addition to this, purposeful sampling methods were employed in this study to ensure the study participants are representative examples of the population being studied (Mack et al., 2005:5).

i) *Dense description*

It is important that dense or complete background information regarding the context and the sampling methods be given so that other researchers can assess the transferability of the findings (Krefting, 1991:216). The method of data collection and analysis are discussed in detail in this chapter and the demographic details of the participants are discussed and described in Chapter Three.

c) Dependability/consistency

Through the use of this criterion in research we assess whether or not similar results would be obtained if the study were done again with the same people or in a similar situation, in order to prove consistency (Shenton, 2004:71). As indicated above, the researcher kept a journal where personal notes about the research process were jotted down. The interview transcripts were submitted for coding to an independent coder who holds a PhD degree in research, followed by consensus discussions between the researcher and the independent coder to ensure data coding agreement and to compare similarities and differences in the coding. Discussions about the emerged themes of the study were also held with the study supervisor. To enable readers to develop an understanding of the methods and their effectiveness, the researcher described the following in full context as stipulated by Shenton (2004):

i) Research design and its implementation

A description of what was planned and executed on strategic level was provided.

ii) Operational detail of data gathering

Details of what was done in the field were addressed. This was performed in this study by describing each action taken during the research and by providing documentary evidence of the data received in the form of complete transcripts of the individual interviews.

iii) Reflective approach of the project

The effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken was evaluated. The researcher is therefore of the opinion that should the study be repeated with the same participants, the findings could yield almost the same results as this study but it would also depend on the period that would have elapsed between the current study and another.

d) Confirmability/neutrality

This refers to the degree to which findings are a function solely of the participants and the conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations and perspectives

(Guba in Krefting, 1991:216). In simple terms it is a measure of how well the inquiry's findings are supported by the data collected. The concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigator's comparable concern to objectivity (Shenton, 2004:72). In this study the researcher adopted the following strategy to ensure neutrality:

i) Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the researcher analysing him/herself in the context of the research (Aamodt cited in Krefting, 1991:218). It refers to the assessment of the influence of the researcher's own background, perceptions and interests on the qualitative research process. The rationale to do the study was also influenced by the researcher's background of working with young people in conflict with the law and desire to specialise in sexual offences. To aid fellow researchers in assessing the credibility and confirmability of this study, each statement made about the participants' experiences were supported by quotations from the data transcripts.

These quotations are intended to give readers an easily accessible snapshot of the data as it relates to the results of the study. In this way confirmability was enhanced because the readers will be able to see why the researcher has drawn particular conclusions, and where in the text the evidence can be found.

2.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are many ethical issues in relation to participants of a research activity. Whenever one conducts research on people, the well-being of research participants must be one's top priority (Mack et al., 2005:9). The research question is always of secondary importance. This means that if a choice must be made between doing harm to a participant and doing harm to the research, it is the research that is sacrificed. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:101) ethical implication should be carefully considered when human beings are the focus of investigation. Strydom (2005:68) values ethics in research as a measurement of scientific standard, and

asserts that ethical practice ensures that society is not misled. This study presented challenges related to ethical issues.

The researcher was obligated to report any sexual activities among the participants which was not reported (this was however not a case as participants' were already charged and their matters were diverted to a diversion programme). Sexuality (sexual intercourse) is a sensitive topic and the researcher aimed to obtain factual information regarding the topic from the participants without outside influence. The researcher also adhered to the Code of Ethics (SACSSP: 2005) as a social worker registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP).

The Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa and the Research section at The Teddy Bear Clinic granted approval for this study. The study followed the generally established principles regarding ethics of social research. These principles include written voluntary and informed consent by selected individuals, and the principles of anonymity and confidentiality (Grinnell, 1998:79-89). These principles are discussed in more detail in the following sections:

2.6.1 INFORMED CONSENT

Researchers may recruit minors, but in most cases they must obtain informed consent from the parents or guardians, as well as from the potential participant (Mack et al., 2005:9). Informed consent implies that participants are made adequately aware of the type of information the researcher wants from them, why the information is being sought, what purpose it will be put to, how they are expected to participate in the study, and how it will directly or indirectly affect them. It was important that participants gave consent to this study voluntarily without pressure of any kind.

The benefit of participation was explained and informed consent was obtained in writing from both the participants and their parent or guardian (refer to Appendix B). Additionally, Leedy and Ormrod (2005:101) postulate that participants should be

informed regarding the purpose and nature of the research and that they should have a choice of either participating or not. Participants were free to terminate the interviews at any stage without any consequences.

Participation in this study was voluntary and therefore participants were given accurate and complete information to enable them to make an informed decision. As this was a very sensitive research study, the researcher ensured that all aspects of social research ethics as discussed in Chapter One were pursued during the research process. The informed consent forms also assured participants of the parameters of confidentiality of the information supplied by them.

2.6.2 ANONYMITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Certain types of information can be regarded as sensitive or confidential (especially the phenomena under investigation in this study) by some people and thus an invasion to their privacy, asking for such information may upset or embarrass the participants (Alston & Bowles, 2003:21-22). Confidentiality implies that the information given to the researcher will not be divulged to others, except in reporting results as agreed, and also that information will not be used for any purpose other than the research (Alston & Bowles, 2003:21-22). Confidentiality was ensured by protecting all data gathered and by not making the data available to outsiders (Holloway & Wheeler, 1998:45-46). The researcher undertook to delete the audiotapes as soon as the data analysis or when the study was completed.

The researcher had to conduct a follow-up session for a second interview with participants after realising that the data was not saturated, as a result anonymity was not possible because the participants' names had to be recorded for follow-up interviews, but they were not disclosed to anyone and not even the researcher could identify any participants afterwards. The names of the participants were not written on the tapes, notes and transcripts, but numbers were allocated to them to hide their

identities. A list containing the real names and numbers allocated to the participants was not stored near the tapes, notes or transcripts of the recordings.

Due to the nature of the study and legal implications the participants deserved to know what can remain confidential and what may need to be reported. This aspect was discussed with the participants and they showed an understanding of the seriousness of the matter. Cameron (2005:601) admit that “sometimes you can’t offer total confidentiality” as the issue of abuse, self-harm and other issues may mean the matter needs to be reported and that most people working as professionals are under a mandated obligation to report child neglect and abuse.

The information that was provided to the researcher was treated as confidential and only the researcher was aware of the identity of the participants. In addition to this, confidentiality was enhanced through treating participants with respect and handling the participants’ opinions confidentially. The study was conducted with children and was aligned with the child protection legislation and the child protection policies of The Teddy Bear Clinic by ensuring that no harm is done to the participants/children. The researcher treated all participants involved in the study in a professional acceptable manner, with respect, consideration and courtesy. Two interviews were stopped because the participants were emotionally upset, but no debriefing was necessary. None of the participants indicated and showed the need for further therapy before/after the interviews.

2.7 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Evidence about human experience has inherent limitations compared to data about human behaviour. Because experience is not directly observable, data about it depends on the participants’ ability to reflectively discern aspects of their own experience (Polkinghorne, 2005:138). This study attempted to explore teenagers’ experiences of sexual activities at school and therefore the researcher relied on data provided by the participants in order to draw conclusions and make

recommendations. The findings of this study must be considered in light of several limitations. Participants were reluctant to answer questions asked by unknown interviewers about things they consider private.

First, the sample was one of convenience with only ten participants. This study was conducted at a specific research site in the Gauteng province with the schools being in a metropolitan region and therefore, generalisation of the findings to the wider population of teenagers who engage in sexual activities in schools cannot be drawn, but the findings may be transferable to similar communities in South Africa. The limitations of this study also include that females were reluctant to participate and only one female out of the ten participants participated. The researcher also did not focus on race or culture as a demographical characteristic of participants.

Additionally the population of the study only included teenagers who were charged for sexual offences and only teenagers who completed the diversion programme at The Teddy Bear Clinic were included in the sample. Teenagers who were not charged for sexual offences may experience engagement in sexual activities at school differently. The participants selected went through the diversion programme which could also have influenced the way they see their sexual activities, and findings may be different with teenagers who did not go through the programme. A limitation of the qualitative research study is that the possibility of researcher bias existing, as the study was processed and analysed by the researcher who is also a social worker who worked on some of those cases prior to the research study (the participants were not clients of the researcher during the study as they had completed the programme beforehand). It is also possible that the participants might have shared selective information in order to present themselves in a positive manner.

Finally, a major limitation of the research lies in the literature found for the study. Although there is ample literature on teenage sexuality, there was insufficient literature available on teenagers engaging in sexual activities at school. This was also

confirmed by an UNISA librarian, who was assisting the researcher with the literature search. As a result, the researcher relied on media articles such as newspapers and magazines to substantiate the findings. The implication of the insufficient literature is that not all sub-themes identified during the data analysis process could be verified through literature control.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter was intended as a detailed explanation of the research approach, research design and research methodology including techniques of sampling, the data collection method and the method implemented to analyse the data. The strategies followed to ensure data verification and ethical practice were described, and the limitations experienced during the implementation of the research methodology were outlined. Trustworthiness relies on the notion that the methodology of this study is open to inspection by other researchers who will be able to judge for themselves whether the approach of this study has been successful. The following chapter presents the findings of the study with direct reference to the data itself. The final chapter involves a discussion of the study's findings.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher will present findings emerging from the process of data analysis and verification of the findings by means of literature control. Data obtained from the participants was compared with relevant literature. The purpose of a literature control in qualitative research is to compare and contrast the findings of the study with existing theories and previous research reported in the relevant literature (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2002:269). Furthermore Creswell (1994:20) states that in qualitative research, literature should be used inductively. In other words, the research findings must be compared and contrasted with the established literature.

Literature was used sparingly in the initial stage of the research study to ensure that there would be no contamination of study by prior knowledge. This ensures faithfulness to an inductive design in which literature does not guide and direct the research process. Literature control was therefore used as a verification tool and enabled the researcher to verify the major themes with relevant literature. Data verification was also addressed through the use of the independent coder.

The following format will be used to discuss the research findings: the biographical data of the research participants will be presented and discussed, followed by the themes, sub-themes and categories that emerged from this study as identified by the researcher and independent coder. Findings will be discussed in a narrative format and supported by relevant quotations from participants' transcribed interviews, followed by reference to relevant literature.

3.2 DEMOGRAPHICAL DATA

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten participants. All participants were engaged in sexual activities at school and were part of the diversion programme at The Teddy Bear Clinic for abused children. These are teenagers who have been charged with contravention of section 15 and 16 of the Sexual Offence and Related Matters Act (Act No 32) of 2007.

TABLE 3.1: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Participants	Age	Gender	Grade	Sexual preference
1	18	Male	12	Heterosexual
2	15	male	9	Heterosexual
3	18	male	Special school	Heterosexual
4	15	female	10	Heterosexual
5	17	male	11	Heterosexual
6	14	male	8	Heterosexual
7	17	male	11	Heterosexual
8	18	male	Special school	Heterosexual
9	17	male	10	Heterosexual
10	15	male	9	Heterosexual

The participants in this study were high school teenagers from grade 8–12 with two participants attending special schools for children with learning disability. All participants were learners from high schools in Gauteng. The criteria for inclusion for this study included both genders as the researcher hoped to gain a broader understanding of the experiences of teenage sexual activities at school through interviews with both genders. However, the researcher was able to include only one

female participant in this study as female participants were reluctant to participate in the study.

The age of participants ranged from 14–18 years old with the youngest participant being 14 years old. One 15-year-old participant was female. Only one participant was 14 years old, while there were three 15 years old, three 17 years old and three 18 years old participants. The participants in this study were busy with the developmental tasks of the adolescent phase. According to Fonseca and Greydanus (2007:277) adolescence is a critical period of psychological, physical growth and pubertal development. A key component to the healthy development of adolescents is how they proceed with the stages of adolescent sexuality. Peer relationships play a major role in adolescents’ emotional separation from parents and emerging individuality. Peer and social influences may expose adolescents to values that differ significantly from their family’s values.

3.3 DISCUSSION OF THEMES, SUB-THEMES AND CATEGORIES

Seven themes followed by sub-themes and categories resulted from the process of data analysis and consensus discussions between the researcher, independent coder and the research study supervisor. The table below is intended to provide a summary of themes generated by the researcher, study supervisor and independent coder. The table is organised according to themes that were guided by the researcher’s interview questions.

TABLE 3.2: SUMMARY OF THEMES, SUB-THEMES AND CATEGORIES

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
1. Sources of participants’ information about sex	1.1 The Media	
	1.2 The school	
	1.3 Talk among peers	
	1.4 Exposure by adults	

	and past exposure	
2. Participants' description of sexual activities at school	2.1 Types of sexual activities at school	2.1.1 Kissing and touching
		2.1.2 Sexual penetration
	2.2 Places where sexual activities take place at school	2.2.1 Top-field
		2.2.2 Toilets
		2.2.2 Classrooms
	2.3 Periods during which sexual activities take place at school	2.3.1 Before school
		2.3.2 During class time
		2.3.2 During break/after school
	2.4 Planning	
3. Factors influencing participants' sexual activities	3.1 Substance use	
	3.2 Peer pressure	3.2.1 Influence by sexual experienced peers
	3.3 Curiosity and experimenting	
	3.4 Girls dressing provocatively	
	3.5 The media	3.5.1 Pornography and social networks
4 Participants'	4.1 Perceived as wrong	

perceptions of teenagers' sexual activities		
	4.2 Lack of knowledge	
	4.3 Teenagers are too young	
5 Feelings expressed by the participants after engaging in sexual activities at school.	5.1 The participants felt ashamed, bad and embarrassed after having sex at school	
	5.2 The participants felt sad following exposure of their sexual acts at school in the media	
	5.3 The participants felt disappointed in themselves and their families	
	5.4 The participants felt scared and shocked after having sex at school	
6 Consequences of the participants' sexual activities at school	6.1 Sexually transmitted diseases	
	6.2 Arrest	
	6.3 Expulsion from school	
	6.4 Lack of concentration at school	
7 Participants' perceptions of their	7.1 Need for support and acceptance	7.1.1 Support from parents and

needs		educators
		7.1.2 Social work support
	7.2 Need for more awareness and education	
	7.3 Need for extra mural activities at school	

In the remainder of this chapter, each of these themes with their accompanying sub-themes and categories will be presented and discussed by providing excerpts from the interviews and verified against existing literature.

3.3.1 THEME 1: SOURCES OF PARTICIPANTS' INFORMATION ABOUT SEX

The first indentified theme in this study is “sources of participants’ information about sex”. This theme is divided into four sub-themes which reflect the various sources of participants’ information about sex, that is, media, school, talk among peers, exposure by adults having sex and past exposure. The issue of young people receiving information regarding sex and sexuality has long been debated with specific focus on from where and whom they should get this information.

It is important for the readers to understand and differentiate the participants’ initial sources of information about sex and the subsequent influential factors of participants’ sexual activities in this study as the information and themes will overlap to relate back to the larger content owing to the contextual nature of this study. The narrative which led to the surfacing of this theme with its inherent sub-themes was elicited by asking participants about their general sources of information about sex. The participants reported exposure to information about sex from many individuals and places, most commonly the following:

3.3.1.1 Sub-theme: The Media

Some of the information provided in this sub-theme will overlap with that in the sub-theme of media as a factor influencing participants' sexual activities as they relate to each other. A source of information frequently used by the participants was media. The data from the interviews showed that 9/10 participants regarded media as their initial source of information about sex. These included responses indicating that participants learn about sex from television, magazines, Internet, cell phones, newspapers and radio. The participants indicated that they easily access information on the Internet via cell phones. The data indicated that 3/10 participants did not access the Internet on their cell phones but frequently used computers at home or from an Internet cafe within their communities. Television and magazines were the most frequently mentioned media sources of information about sex. However, most of the participants indicated that television was the main source of teenagers' information about sex.

The participants mentioned that they were more likely to be attracted to programmes with sexual content which in turn served as information about sex and influenced their sexual behaviour. Although it is hard to establish clear lines of influences and sources of information, participants informed the researcher that they watched many sexy films, videos, cell phone video clips and television. These ranged from explicit pornography to those that might be regarded as 'soft porn'. Media as an influence of participants' sexual behaviour will be discussed further under the relevant theme.

From the interviews conducted it became clear that the participants were defaulting to entertainment media for sexual information because they were not getting this information in other places freely and anonymously as they would in the media. Other participants indicated that they rarely received information about sex from their parents due to a lack of communication. The participants frequently mentioned that media was their initial source of information. The following quotations from the interviews attest to this:

"I could say you know, media. I could say media, because now in your televisions these days, everywhere in streets you find pornographic disc, you find pornographic movies, videos that you download through the Internet and what not."

"The information about sex mostly is in the magazines, newspapers, TV like CD's. Mostly teenagers they like to buy those naughty CD's and anyway..."

"Mostly television, radio, school, not very often from our parents but usually the other three sources are the one that we get it from."

"I see the TV and magazines. Some children have sex videos on their cell phone."

"On TV, I learnt by watching DVD's of sex or on my phone and I also did it outside."

Literature confirms that most of young people receive information about sex from the media. The National Survey of South African Youth (2001:11) found that the majority of youth say they get a lot or some of their information about sex from television (72%) or magazines (67%). According to Strasburger (2005:272) the media represent a powerful source of information for teens about sex, particularly because schools and parents are not always eager to tackle the subject adequately. However, sexuality in the media not only includes suggestive behaviour but information about sex roles, family life, physical attractiveness, friendship, parent-child communication, pregnancies and child bearing (Swisher, 1994:33).

American media have arguably become the leading sex educator in the United States (Strasburger, 2005:269). By the time they reach adolescence, today's children have viewed a kaleidoscopic array of sex and sexuality on television, in movies, and on the Internet, casual sex, promiscuity, alternative sex and pornography (Strasburger, 2005:269). In South Africa, the situation has turned to be the same, more and more

young people are relying on media for sex information at a very young age (The National South African Youth Survey, 2001:11).

Mass media campaigns in South Africa have played a seminal role in improving knowledge about sexual behaviour in particular about HIV/AIDS. Three multi-media campaigns, namely LoveLife, Soul City and Khomanani have reached high levels of coverage among young people. In a study conducted by LoveLife (2011:21) most of young people indicated that they were primarily receiving information about sex and sexuality from the media and that parents and family are playing a lesser role in educating them about these topics. Furthermore, *City Press* (2010:10) reported that teenagers are exposed to sexual materials on TV, DVD's and their own cell phones and mentioned that they will continue watching these to learn new sexual styles. As one may deduce from the above, the participants and literature are in agreement that young people derived their information about sexual mores and behaviours from media especially the print out of pornographic DVD's, TV and magazines.

3.3.1.2 Sub-theme: The school

The second identified sub-theme under the aforementioned theme is the school. According to Kirby (2002:27-33) schools are the one institution in our society regularly attended by most young people. Participants informed that the school is their secondary source of information about sex through education. All responses in which participants explained that they learned about sex at school indicated that it was in Life Orientation or Natural Science lessons. Schools and teachers, while providing a significant proportion of teenagers with information about sex, are always perceived as credible sources by young people. Young people received sex education from schools as part of their curriculum and awareness about sexually transmitted diseases such HIV/AIDS.

Data from the current study shows that sex education at schools starts from primary level between the ages of 6–13 years. The participants reported that they were taught

about sex, its consequences and dangers at school in Life Science from an early age while still at primary school. They all supported sex education and indicated that it taught them a lot of things about sex including human physiology. The following statements, extracted from the semi-structured interviews with participants, substantiate this:

“Firstly I would say, information that I got about sex I got it from school. Whereby at school we got taught about sex in our Life Orientation class. Our teachers will teach us about sex, different sexes or gender and production of kids, having sex, when and how to do it like safely.”

“At school the teachers teach us about sex in Life Orientation and where we discuss consequences of having sex. We also learn about the after-effects like contracting diseases, AIDS and impregnating your girlfriend. In grade 8 also learnt about sex.”

“They (teachers) tell us sex is not a good thing, like they guiding us not to do it but they teaching how it’s done in a way of like making a baby, the cells. At school in Natural Science they teach you things like that so you learn about sex from a young grade like grade 5. Let me say grade 5 till the higher grade.”

“Well! Truly speaking everything about sex it starts from primary school. You got taught in Life Orientation. First of all when it comes to Life Orientation you learn a lot. You firstly learn about sex itself and then you learn about disadvantages of sex and at some point you learn about advantages of sex.”

From the aforementioned statements, it seems that even in the context of a rather open conversation about sex with pupils through Life Orientation, there was no emphasis on the feelings, experiences and pleasure of sexual intercourse. Other research studies found that sex education classes in public schools have done an adequate job teaching about major sexual transmitted diseases (STD’s) and birth

control methods, but they are largely academic and are poor at dealing with emotional and spiritual aspects of sex and the effects of having multiple partners. As a result, students know the process of sex but they are left to figure out what it is (Maturo, 2003:1-4). The predicament is that material taught in schools' life skills courses generally have little impact on adolescents' immediate lives. It does not have much impact on the behaviour, thinking, emotions and motivation of the adolescents to delay sexual acts.

According to Green (1998:67) in England and Wales, the provision of school sex education has been identified as a means of addressing the high teenage pregnancy rates. A systematic evaluation of school-based sex/HIV education programmes in South Africa was undertaken by Mukoma and Flisher (2008:18). Although not directly focused on teenage pregnancy, life skills programmes introduced in schools in response to the explosion of the HIV-epidemic in the 1990s have the potential to influence the trajectory of teenage pregnancy. Life skills programmes were introduced in schools in order to increase learners' knowledge of HIV, improve their skills for engaging in healthy relationships by improving communication and the decision-making ability and to shift attitudes about people living with HIV and AIDS. In order to protect the children, it was decided to include family and sexuality education in the curriculum and to make available expert educational services for schools, as well as to train teachers for this purpose (Naidoo, 2006:10).

In a study by Jones, Biddlecom, Hebert and Milne (2010:10) all but one of the students exposed to the comprehensive sex education programme at school could recall receiving information about contraception at school. Most commonly, these teens related they had received information about condoms and birth control. Sex education is not just about sex, it includes other sensitive issues like sexual health, sexual reproduction, sexuality and other issues that parents often feel uncomfortable to discuss with their children (Cassell & Wilson, 1989:96). Furthermore, virtually all youth attend schools for years before they initiate sexual risk taking behaviour and

the majorities are enrolled at the time they initiate intercourse (Kirby, 2002:27-33). Different research papers found that by the time children learn about sexuality at school, they already had this information from other sources and did not pay attention to sexual education at school (Skosana, 2001:40, Swart; 2005:48 and Wood et. al., 1997).

3.3.1.3 Sub-theme: Talk among peers

The participants maintained that friends are one of the foremost sources of information about sex. The participants described their conversations with peers as their sources of sex information. During the data collection process the researcher observed that discussions and information-sharing about sexual matters was common among the participants and they did not see anything wrong with it. Conversation started with small talk and slowly gained momentum into main topics of discussion about sex. Most of these conversations were held at schools during break times or after school by groups of boys and girls.

In other instances peers played a major influence in this area especially to participants who were easily influenced or vulnerable to peer pressure. This was evident at pupils who were attending school for children with special needs. Teenagers obtain information about sex from their friends, which may serve as a guide to decision making about sex. The following statements by participants attest to this:

“Currently at school we also discuss about sexual activities as boys and girls during the breaks and free periods. That’s normal and we don’t see anything wrong. We talk about John (penis) and Margret (vagina).”

“It was with friends. Like in a friendly group, we started talking about it...you know...peoples girlfriends and then slowing but surely you get to the point where you start talking about, actually trying to ya have sex.”

“Beside Life Orientation! Children talk like teenagers they talk a lot. Like I said there some people that can sit down with you and “sommer” tell you that it’s nice and all of that...”

“Yes (teenagers discuss sexual activities), among each other, girls and boys.”

These statements are confirmed by staff reporters of *City Press* (2010:10) in their article “Generation s(ex)-and loving it” where most teens mentioned that sex was a major topic of discussion among their friends. They continued to mention that “sex is a big deal” whether you have it or not. The paper further reported that teens indicated that the topical issues lately at school are how many styles and positions you have experienced with and how often you have sex. Rwenge (cited in Djamba, 2004:13) reported that approximately three out of five young people said they had discussed one or more sexual topics with their schoolmates or friends.

According to Stromquist (2007:24) observers of adolescent interactions find that boys’ peer talk constantly uses sexuality to establish hierarchies. In Skosana’s (2001:40) research utterances made by participants confirm talk among peers to be one of the adolescents’ sources of information about sex. In Skosana’s (2001:40) research one participant related: “When you discuss sex with your friends, the discussion is free and open. There is nobody who says: why do you ask this question”. During the data collection process the researcher noted that participants’ topics were more likely to focus on male and female roles, and sexual behaviours, particularly sexual intercourse.

Perception about friends’ behaviour serves as a source of efficacy expectations that influences both behavioural intentions and outcome expectation. This sentiment is echoed by Crockett, Raffaelli and Moilanen (2003:378) who note that same-sex peers are a major source of information about sex and peers provide settings where sex can occur. According to Florsheim (2003:92) many researchers have increasingly

acknowledged that a key component of many adolescent romantic experiences is the process of discussing their crushes, dates and break-ups with their peers.

3.3.1.4 Sub-theme: Exposure by adults and past exposure

Two participants (male and female) reported that they were sexually abused at a very young age and related this abuse/exposure to sources of information about sex which subsequently influenced their sexual behaviour. The male participant reported that he thought engaging in sexual acts was the right thing as his uncle did this (sexual abuse) to him while the female participant informed that being sexually abused was a traumatic event for her and she wanted to source out the pain, so she engaged in sexual activities. As noted in the utterance by the girl participant during the interview, she was raped by her uncle's best friend, became sexually wild and was charged for sexual misconduct at school. She stated that she did not have support from her family during the period of rape. The following quotes are evidence hereof:

"I was raped by a guy who is my uncle's friend. I know him very well so I guess that was the traumatising case for all this to happen (sex at school) because after that I went crazy. During that I didn't get any support from anyone because everybody was hurt and dealing with their own emotions and didn't care about how I felt."

"I was exposed by my uncle. My uncle was sexually abusing young children; boys and he also abused me. I got into these because I thought it was the right things to do".

Literature indicates that one of the significant risk factors for early sexual experimentation is associated with a history of sexual trauma/abuse (Lindner, 2010:37-38). There have been several studies which indicate that a large percentage of child sex offenders have been sexually abused prior to them committing a sexual offence. Adolescents who have a history of sexual trauma during childhood or adolescence may try to cope during their adolescent years by being sexual proactive.

This coping mechanism is negative; however victims of sexual abuse may try to control future sexual encounters by initiating sexual contact. A study by Abbott and Dalla (2008:631) found that younger age of intercourse initiation was associated with a great likelihood of having involuntary or unwanted sex.

Again literature postulates that girls with a history of sexual trauma are at a great risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system, particularly if they do not have home-environments that allow them the opportunity to heal from their trauma (Pasko, 2010:1099-1128). According to *The Mercury* (2010:7) many children had become desensitised to sex as they had been exposed to exploitative circumstances and had themselves become abusers.

3.3.2 THEME 2: PARTICIPANTS' DESCRIPTION OF SEXUAL ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL

The second theme identified is participants' description of sexual activities at school. Under this theme the researcher describes participants' sexual activities at school with focus on the following five sub-themes: types of sexual activities at school, places where sexual activities take place at school, times/periods when sexual activities happen, who is involved and how sexual activities are planned at school. Under these sub-themes various categories emerged which will also be discussed under this theme. The following sub-themes and categories describe participants' sexual activities at school:

3.3.2.1 Sub-theme: Types of sexual activities at school

Under this sub-theme two categories which emerged during the data collection process are discussed, namely: kissing and touching, and penetration or sexual intercourse. The participants mentioned that they had experienced several sexual practices that include penetrative and non-penetrative practices. The participants in this research study highlighted that sexual activities at school ranged from engaging in less intimate sexual activities to intimate sexual activities. For an example one

participant said: “when a guy and girl holds hands”, “sit next to each other”, “kiss on the cheek” and “having sex without using condoms”.

Furthermore, another participant said: “there are heaps of different types of sexual activities among teenagers”. Generally, activities such as kissing, touching, rubbing, mutual masturbation, penetration (vaginal or anal) and stroking are more popular practices among teenagers. Most of the participants indicated that they were engaged in sexual intercourse or sex with penetration. The following categories illustrate the types of sexual activities participants engage in at school.

- Kissing and touching

Two participants in this study reported that they were engaged in a lot of kissing and touching at school. The participants reported that they were engaged in all kinds of sexual activities while at school namely: sex, kissing and touching. Some sexual practices such as kissing and touching were more popular and not hidden. Participants confirmed during the interviews that they were more likely to engage in kissing and touching in public, that is in classes and in front of their educators. The educators were reported to be annoyed about the teenagers’ sexual behaviour at school especially kissing and touching. The researcher noted during the data collection process that school personnel were aware of participants’ sexual acts as it happened in their presence but they did not bother to intervene. Participants indicated that teenagers are also young, vulnerable and have a lack of knowledge about their sexuality. The following quotes from the interview data substantiate these statements:

“But kissing happens even on the school premises whereby the teacher is just at the corner and those people are just kissing there and the teachers don’t care about it anymore because they are so frustrated, they are tired of running after kids who don’t listen so they just let them be.”

“However, kissing and touching are more popular as one can do that anytime anywhere at school. Whereby now, if I’m kissing and touching, it’s something that they can do in front of other school members or classmates but the sexual ones they just do them where people can’t see them.”

“I was involved in a lot of kissing and touching because now I had a girlfriend at school that I dated. Ok, we were too vulnerable by that time because we were still young exposed to such things as sexualities because now we would talk about sex with our classmates.”

The literature reviewed substantiates and supports the statements made by the participants. According to Abraham, Tru-love, Time pass and Bhai Behen (2000:131) kissing and petting (touching) in Mumbai was a common form of adolescent sexual expression and experimentation and an entry point that lead to sexual intercourse. In a study done by Royer, Keller and Heidrich (2009:395-408) of young adolescents’ perceptions of romantic relationships and sexual activity, findings indicate that adolescents’ sexual practices included kissing, French kissing, touching on top and under clothes and sexual intercourse.

- Sexual penetration/sexual intercourse

The participants reported that they engaged in all high-risk sexual behaviours including sex with penetration without condoms, oral sex, kissing and touching. Most of them were engaged in consensual sex with their girlfriends/boyfriends or someone they knew or a schoolmate. The participants engaged in sexual penetration/intercourse while at school and were aware of the possible consequences such as becoming pregnant or contacting sexual transmitted diseases. The majority of the participants indicated that they were engaged in penetration (sexual intercourse).

The most common type of sexual practice reported during the interviews was penetrative vaginal sex. Other forms such as oral sex and masturbation were

reported to be rare in some schools. All the participants in this study were sexually active, with an average age of first intercourse in the early onset-teens (13 years). As indicated in the aforementioned category, kissing and touching were practiced in public but sex was considered private. Although the participants indicated that sex was a private activity it was mostly practiced in open areas (top-field) at school where everyone could see them.

Of all the participants 6/10 had sex at the top-field or back of the top-field on the school premises. The top field is a wide open space which is used for school sports activities (this will be discussed in detail under the theme of places where sexual activities take place at school). Data collected during this study also indicated that before sex with penetration, there is an intact phase which involves kisses, touching and caresses. It became clear during the interviews with the participants that sexual activity in teens is not limited to sex with penetration; it also includes kisses, heavy petting and touching. The following statements by the participants substantiate the aforementioned findings:

“Then we get to the back field, start feeling and touching and we feel like agh....we wasting time. So I asked him where is this gonna happen like here and he is like ya why not. We didn’t really go naked, I was wearing a skirt so I just decided to take off my underwear and we did it (sex). We probably have been there for like 15 minutes then we decided to stop and I asked him why and he said what if you get pregnant. I said no I won’t get pregnant but we stopped. The guy I slept with denied impregnating me and said we didn’t stay long and I said 15 minutes is long enough to make a baby. He said no its not I didn’t ejaculate into you and we started arguing and there was a fight.”

“We engaged in all types of sexual activities from touching, kissing and sex.”

“You find straight, some of them they do have sex like seriously sex. Some of them it’s just kissing and touching.”

“It was straight sex, it was nothing more. It was just sex at top-field.”

“When it comes to the sex thing they know where and when to do everything.”

Literature confirms the participants’ utterances. In Kazaura and Masatu’s (2009:2) research all sexually active adolescents reported that they have engaged in vaginal sex (penetration). According to Pelletier and Guilbert (n.d) in the 50’s, the majority of women and men had sex with penetration before having their first French kiss.

However, into this contemporary century the evolution of teens’ sexual interactions is more progressive. The sexual activities teenagers engage in generally evolve according to a practice sequence. They often start an emotional relationship with a partner, followed by kisses and hugs which leads to the first sexual relation with penetration. Teenagers are often not aware of this sequence. Literature further indicates that young people engage in a spectrum of sexual behaviours ranging from fantasy and self-stimulation to various forms of intercourse (Crockett, Raffaelli & Moilanen, 2003:372).

The researcher noted a lack in academic literature on adolescent/teenagers’ sexual acts at school, however teen sex at school is well documented in the media. Various local newspapers have run articles on the high rate of “teen sex at school” among schoolchildren after it was reported that two teenage boys, 14 and 16 had sex with a 15-year-old girl at Jules High School during school hours. For example, in an article in the *Sowetan* by Moselakgomo, (2008:5) a pupil told the paper that sex at school is a popular practice and they did not find it shocking. “Who doesn’t know about sex in this days and age?” she asked. The article further reported that a pupil at Sitintile High School in KaNyamazane captured and distributed a video showing three girls in

school uniform and three boys with their pants and panties down engaging in sex, including oral sex.

Sexual activity is common among adolescents in the United States. Nearly one-half (46%) of all high school students reported they have had sexual intercourse (Royer et al., 2009:395-408). According to the study conducted by LoveLife (2001:9-19) many children in South Africa have sex for the first time when they are between the ages of 14 and 15. Current studies indicate that teenagers become sexually active in early puberty. During this time the teenager is faced with various challenges such as the onset of menstruation for girls and wet dreams for boys (Richter & Mlambo, 2005:62, Pelletier & Guilbert, n.d.). A study conducted by Omar (2010:24) has shown the ever-decreasing age of perpetrators of sex offenders. The alarming results from the study revealed that perpetrators committed their first sexual offence between the ages of six and 12.

3.3.2.2 Sub-theme: Places where sexual activities take place at school

The participants described the school premises as convenient places for them to engage in sexual acts as both girls and boys are present at school. All the participants indicated where sexual activities took place on the school premises. This included responses indicating that sexual activities were taking place at top-field, toilets, in the classrooms and near classrooms. Some participants considered sexual intercourse (penetration) as a private matter which can only be performed in private locations such as toilets, empty classes and top-field while others did not care who saw them and used open top-field.

During the data collection process the researcher learned that sexual activities at school were considered a play and competition among young people. Some of the participants mentioned that they had sex to prove to their peers that they were not gays or lesbians. As a result of peer pressure, any opportunity (time) they got at school was used to have sex. *“Mostly these activities happen at top soccer field,*

class, toilets and parks, everywhere at school whenever we get an opportunity or chance,” said one participant during the interview. The following three categories which emerged from this theme are discussed in detail:

- Top-field

All the participants indicated that sexual activities were happening almost everywhere on the school premises. Most of the participants mentioned that the top-field was the most used place by teenagers to engage in sexual activities as it is hardly supervised. The top-field is a wide open area at school where sports such as soccer, cricket and rugby take place. Of all the participants, 6/10, had sex at the top-field or back of the top-field on the school premises. Participants used this field for all anti-social behaviours such as drinking, taking drugs and having sex.

One girl had consensual sexual intercourse with two participants at the same time while other learners were watching and taking videos on their cell phones. The participants further mentioned that they had sex almost every time and anywhere at the school premises provided that they had the opportunity to do so. They had sex in full view of the CCTV cameras, 7/10 participants reported that they also experienced group sex while others were filming the acts. Some indicated that they later distributed the videos of themselves performing sexual intercourse while in school uniform to websites/social networks in which they are paid by the host of these sites. The following statements made by the participants confirm this:

“...there’re actually three fields at my school. There is a bottom-field, top-field and the back-field. So the back-field is where everything goes down smoking, drinking, sex, everything.”

“Because we rarely go to the top-field during break times, we don’t go there for breaks. We don’t enter top-field because learners destroy the grass as they don’t have proper gear to play on the top-field. Because most of us we don’t go there, when

you want to have sex you go there as it is behind and no one can see you or see what is happening there.”

“Ok one of my friends went to the gate with that girl and then me and my friends we went to go to jump in another side. When we jumped we were at school in the top-field... Then after my friend finished having sex with her he called me and said the girl wants me, so I went and had sex with her. Others were watching and taking videos which are later posted on websites and they get paid sometimes.”

“We had sex at top-field behind the trees and flowers, actually anywhere at school when we get the opportunity whether there are cameras on not. There is also this new thing of having sex in groups especially at the house party. At school I only did it once with four of my friends at the top-field.”

Due to the lack of academic literature on this theme, the researcher consulted media articles. According to the *Cape Times* (2010:11) Isaacs, principal of South Peninsula High in Diep River, said teachers often spotted pupils holding hands or kissing on school grounds and that was immediately stopped before it “got out of hand”. *Sowetan* (2011:7) reported: “At least 10 Grade 8 pupils stood by and filmed on cell phones their classmates having sex in the school grounds in November last year”. The articles by these two papers confirm that teenagers are engaging in sexual activities at school grounds (top-field).

The participants mentioned that although the top-field is an open space where they could be spotted at a distance, they still preferred it because of the lack of supervision compared to other places such as toilets and classrooms. In the *Cape Times* (2010:3) Jones reported that many experts were not surprised that children had been caught having sex on school grounds as there was often no other places available to them. It is therefore natural that they will use the school grounds.

- Toilets

The participants mentioned that sexual activities were also taking place in the toilets and backyard of the school. The toilets were seen as a private place and educators would not enter while they occupied the toilets. They indicated that they used the excuse of right to privacy while in the toilet and therefore educators had limited power to supervise such an area. Educators were more likely to supervise gents' toilets as they suspect anti-social behaviour especially smoking and gambling. The participants therefore had sex in the ladies toilets as there is lack of supervision. The following quotes serve to highlight this point:

“Some of them (sexual activities) happen in the back of the school, some happens in the toilets because now these days a teacher can't go in children's toilets because they say it's their own privacy. So now if you enter at the toilet as a teacher, you find me closing the door and you knock and I say I'm busy, that's my privacy. I know that if I'm in the toilet that's my privacy. Whatever I do it's my privacy.”

“At schools in ladies toilets teachers don't normally go there, they always go to the guy's toilets because they know that guys smoke, they gamble in toilets. Because now they go to guys' toilets because they know that they will always find something there. So now they (teenagers) better off doing it in the girls toilets because if we in classes, if we are in the classes there is no walking around, you can just go out of your class and I just go out of my class and we enter the toilets. We know exactly that by this time the period will be ending and by that time we will be finished.”

“Mostly at school during break it's kissing behind the toilets, classes and storerooms. It happens especially at high schools. We have sex in the toilets, classes and in the storerooms. There are some of the storerooms which are not locked and the kids go there, its sex and kissing”.

- Classrooms

According to the participants young people spend more time at school during the week than they do at home. During the data collection process the researcher identified that sexual activities were happening almost everywhere on the school premises whenever the participants had an opportunity. Sexual activities happen in classes due to a lack of supervision by educators. The participants reported that in many instances they were left in their classes with nothing to do and educators would be sitting in their offices most of the time while they are supposed to be in class. The participants stated that they use, empty classrooms, classrooms in use and storerooms to engage in sex. The following quotes support this observation:

“Some of the teachers are attending other classes. Lets me say at school there is first and second floor, maybe other teachers are attending first floor and you’re in your class, anywhere there are empty classes. Sometimes we go into those classes (to have sex). Some of the teachers are in the staffroom sitting but they are supposed to be supervising their classes.”

“We have sex in the toilets, classes and in the storerooms. There are some of the storerooms which are not locked and the kids go there to have sex.”

“At home there is no privacy and the parents can be strict. The school is where we spend most of our time and sometimes we come from different areas. In my case, she wanted to have sex at that moment and I couldn’t go anywhere, so I had to look for a private spot and there was an empty class, so we went there and had sex”.

In 2010, the *Sowetan* reported that two boys aged 12, from Pugishe Primary School in Shangaan Hill, allegedly raped a girl in class (*Sowetan*, 2010:4). One boy who had been asked to provide manpower to assist to overpower the girls spilled the beans by telling the teachers about the sex activities in the classroom. In conclusion the researcher examined other research papers and found that they provide different

settings for teenage sexual activities. According to The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2002:15-45), two-thirds (68%) of 16- to 18-year-olds who reported a first sexual experience in 2000 said that they first had sexual intercourse in their family home, their partner's family home or a friend's house. This paper mentioned that teens' first sexual experience is most likely to occur in a male teen's family home. The participants in this study provide a different view to the aforementioned statements.

3.3.2.3 Sub-theme: Periods during which sexual activities take place at school

During the interviews with the participants the researcher became aware that sexual activities at school were happening during specific periods/time. The participants indicated various periods when these sexual activities happen at school. These varied from morning before class, during classes, breaks and after school in any of the school premises or in their school-bus transport on their way home. The identified periods were then regarded as categories of the aforementioned sub-theme.

- Before school

During the data collection process the researcher identified that sexual activities were also taking place before school. All the participants attributed that their sexual acts which took place during this period were due to a lack of activities at school in the morning and supervision by educators. They indicated that sexual activities were happening before school or before school periods start on the school premises. During this period participants were more likely to use the toilets to engage in sexual acts (specifically sexual intercourse/penetration) as most of the educators and other learners would be in the assembly or classes. The following statements from the transcripts attest to this:

“In the morning when learners pretend like they are going to school they get in the schoolyard but don't go to the classes they go to toilets (to engage in sexual acts). During those times the teachers are teaching in the classes and no one in the toilets.”

“In February also I was engaged in sexual activities. I remember it was in the morning when a girl I use to call “Shorty” came and greet me.”

“...or in the morning before we go to classes. Sometimes it happens before the teachers and other learners.”

Recently, to date of this study, the media coverage on teen sexual activities at school revealed that more and more young people were engaged in sexual intercourse at school premises during school hours. The aforementioned statements are confirmed by Matlala (Sowetan, 2011:2) “Sex before school shock”, the article reads. In this article more than 60% of female pupils at the Mavalni Secondary School in Giyani, Limpopo, were reported to be waking up from their boyfriends homes and prepared themselves before going to school. The paper further reported that 57 pupils at this school were pregnant in one month with the youngest girl being 13-year-old.

- During class time

The participants indicated that sexual activities also happened during class periods when educators are in classes or staffrooms. Through the interviews the researcher discovered that sexual acts were happening during class time in classrooms in the presence of educators and other learners under the desks. Female learners would give male learners a ‘blow job’ oral sex while educators were teaching in class especially during the Life Orientation course (educators would not be aware of this). The participants informed that sometimes they would ask to be excused as if they are going to the toilet during class time and the girl or boy would also ask to be excused and follow, then they would go to the toilets or empty classes to have sex.

The participants further indicated that if they were in separate classes they communicated via SMS’s, MixIt or WhatsApp and excused themselves from the class, then meet anywhere on the school premises to have sex or other sexual

activities. Although learners were not permitted to carry their cell phones, they smuggled them in. This was confirmed by the following quotes:

“Sometimes we have sex in classes in the presence of other children and teachers. I once got a blow job from my girlfriend in class during the period. We shared a table and she just went under while the teacher was busy but because I sit at the corner others did not see us.”

“When it’s due to different classes, I will say you know there is these social networks that, MixIt or WhatsApp. Well because now at schools we use phones, technology. I know that if you are in the other class and I’m in this class, I could just send you a text message and just say, you know what, let’s meet at this certain place.”

“When we are in the classes there is no walking around, you can just go out of your class and I just go out of my class and we enter the toilets. We know exactly that by this time the period will be ending and by that time we will be finished (having sex).”

“The teachers are in class, that’s the whole aim. We wait for the teachers to be in class, when we see that the teachers are in class I will ask to be excused as my way to go to the toilet with the girl and do those sexual activities.”

- During break/after school

Instead of having lunch or relaxing during breaks these participants used this time period as an opportunity to have sex quickly anywhere on the school premises before the bell rings. The participants indicated that if they missed the break period there was still an opportunity to engage in sexual activities after school while they waited for their transport. Some participants indicated that they had kissing and touching in between classes or breaks. They informed the researcher that sex was more likely to be after school and during exam times when they finished writing exams early.

“Ok the touching and whatever usually we do it everywhere in between classes, during break or after school but when it comes to sex is mostly after school when everybody is gone and that’s when everything happens.”

“This happens more often after school or exam times. The exam times you know you come early 8 o’clock you write 10 o’clock you are finish and the teachers take the papers to their staffroom and it will be school out. Its early, at home they are expecting you at 2 o’clock, so you doing that (sex) at that time while the teachers are in the staffroom marking papers. So it happens a lot during the exams times.”

“So now if we decide that, we know that our transport normally comes at 3 o’clock and I’m writing at 9 o’clock 9:30 I’m already finish writing that whole time from 9:30 to 3 o’clock I must have something to do. So now if I have been led to do whatever I want to do that’s where it leads me.”

“They will probably be on the other side and maybe its break or after school. Obviously after school everyone goes home and they will meet on the back side. You never know what might occur there.”

Sexual activities at schools are becoming popular practice and teens are not shocked about this behaviour (*The Mercury*, 2010:7, *Cape Times*, 2010:3, *Sowetan*, 2008:4). *Cape Times* (2010:3) quoted Wasserman as follows: “... sex at schools was happening all the time, children of school-going age were having sex and were starting to have sex at an increasingly younger age”.

3.3.2.4 Sub-theme: Planning

The participants mentioned that sexual activities were planned during school hours although some happened spontaneously. One participants said *“I had sex during school hours because I could not wait for after school and anyway the girl was been fetched by her father always after school and we could not have an opportunity to*

meet as she does not stay in the same area with me. Any opportunity you get while at school you grab and use it". The participants' sexual activities were planned during school hours especially early morning during the assembly or class before educators arrived for class periods. As indicated above some planned their sexual activities during class time in the presence of educators via social networks.

Few participants indicated that planning was also done on the way to school due to geographical boundaries, and then sexual acts had to happen at school. In many occasions sexual activities happened spontaneously because teenagers would be thinking of the same thing or when girls approached boys. Boys felt that they cannot say no to sex because their peers would see them as gays or tease them.

"Sometimes you plan. You can call the girl from class and the girl will know where you are standing and she will come then you can plan. Sometimes you go to school and you see her and you two are thinking of the same thing because sometimes you think of naughty things then you do it. Sometimes you plan, sometimes you don't it just happens. We plan it outside the school but do it at school. We plan because we don't stay in the same area but school together and most of the time we meet at school."

"Ya! Some of the times you plan, some of the time it's just happens eventually. But now when it's planned, I could tell you as a girl that you know what? At this period you know that this teacher doesn't teach I will just ask to be excused then you ask to be excused. You go to the toilet and I will find you there."

"Ok, I start, Ok, as a guy like talking to you now, I start tickling you. Ok it's gonna start as something like playing a game, ok we start touching, ok we stop a little bit. And then we go somewhere where it's private where no one can see us we start kissing and it leads us to having sex."

“The girl was my girlfriend. She came to me and said lets have sex because she knows me and I know her. After that we went to the field and had sex. I didn’t have any pressure, it was a decision I took myself.”

One participant mentioned that once teenagers plan to do something no one will stand in their way or distract their plans and felt that the school should not be blamed for their sexual behaviour. He reported that they would do anything to continue with their plans irrespective of any disturbance or interference either by one of their own, educators or cleaners at school. He said: *“We don’t have to put the blame on the school because; when teenagers plan their own thing it’s very hard to disorganise what they have planned. It’s very rare to find teacher trying to disorganise what teenagers have planned”*.

Researchers in other disciplines often view teen sexual activity as spontaneous and irrational, so that teen pregnancies are considered “mistakes” (Levine, 2000:1). According to Moore, et al. (1995) (cited in Levine, 2000:16) there is abundant evidence that sex is irrational, in the sense that it is often not planned, but impulsive. This is especially true for first sexual experience. Furthermore, the participants and literature are in agreement that teen sexual activity can be spontaneous and irrational.

3.3.3 THEME 3: FACTORS INFLUENCING PARTICIPANTS’ SEXUAL ACTIVITIES

One of the questions that arose during the interviews were “why do teens have sex?” According to the participants there are multiple reasons why a teenager would have sex. The researcher also asked the participants their ideas on the percentage of the age group (13–18) that were sexually active. One participant thought about 50%, another thought about 80%, while the rest thought it was about 75-90%. Data from this research study reflected on the predisposing factors of participants’ sexual activities, as a result the third identified theme focused on factors influencing participants’ sexual activities. This theme is divided into the following sub-themes:

substance use, peer pressure, curiosity and experience, girls dressing provocatively and the media. Young people go through the adolescence phase developmentally.

This is a natural part of growing up. Both girls and boys develop their sexuality during this period. The increase of the height, strength and sex appeal is usually welcomed by both sexes (Royer et al., 2009:396 and Darlon, 2007:169). This phase is often characterised by patterns of thinking in which immediate needs tend to take priority over long-term implications and by the initiation of behaviours that may be perpetuated over a lifetime. Many adolescents want to have a certain image and will take drastic measures to obtain it.

During adolescence romantic relationships and expected developmental occurrences are normal (Royer et al., 2009:396). The participants were exposed to sex in the media, experimented and experienced sex after using substances, were vulnerable to peer pressure and male participants' sexual behaviour were also stimulated by girls dressing provocatively.

3.3.3.1 Sub-theme: Substance use

The participants believed that the use of substances influenced their sexual behaviour and boosted their self-esteem when engaging in sexual activities at school premises especially in open spaces where everyone can see them. Most of the participants described using alcohol and dagga prior to their sexual encounter while at school. They had access to go out of the school premises in order to buy alcohol, either by jumping the school fence or bribing the security guard during school hours particularly during school events such as graduations or matric farewells. It became clear during the interviews that the participants faced heavy peer pressure and decisions involving alcohol, drugs and sexual activity, decisions that often had to be made simultaneously.

It is not uncommon to hear the claim that young people are risk-takers who live only for the moment (Aggleton, Ball & Mane, 2006:1). Television and news often portray young people as sexually irresponsible and prone to alcohol and substance abuse. Alcohol and dagga featured prominently in the participants' discussions of sexual intercourse with most of the participants indicating that the intake of large amounts of alcohol and smoking dagga were a determining factor in their risk-taking sexual behaviour. This relates to the perception among young people that substance use increases their desire for sex (Rhodes, 2007:207). The following quotes are provided in order to support of these statements:

“So we went to, the day before we were drinking (alcohol) me and my friends. So on that day I went to school, but then when times goes on, there was a girl who was coming to my friend and tell my friend that can you please take me half way to the bottle store? And my friend said what are you going to buy there? And the girl said I’m going to buy (alcohol) for my girls at school. All of us we went to the bottle store. Then from the bottle store we went to school. Oh! Bottle store they buy two straight and they went to school. So me and my friends we were busy smoking dagga while smoking, some other girl came to my friend, that girl was drunk and when she came to my friend she said can we please go distance from your friends for privacy. Then after my friend finished having sex with her he called me and said the girl wants me, so I went and had sex with her.”

“Its drugs because most of the time when they smoke they become high, they don’t think and just do what makes them happy during that time. Drugs boost your confidence to approach girls or do things without thinking.”

“At school usually, most high schools have a lot of parties and during those parties or just during normal school day children get drunk, smoke drugs. A lot of things happen at schools especially high schools that you happen to even engage into sexual activity at school when drunk.”

As one may deduce from the above statements, substance use leads to impaired judgment that can make one susceptible to problematic behaviour including risky sexual behaviour (Kim & Kim, 2007:182). According to Turk and Jacobs (1995:97) the availability of alcohol and drugs among adolescents put them at a higher risk of making bad sexual decisions while under the influence. The authors write that much sexual activity among teens does occur when they have been drinking and using drugs and their inhibitions are relaxed. Focusing on substance use and high risky sexual behaviour among teenagers, the second South African Youth Risk Behaviour Survey found that one in eight South African high school students begins drinking alcohol before the age of 13, and nearly one quarter of students in grades 8 through to grade 11 have engaged in sexual acts while under the influence of alcohol (Reddy et al., 2008:60-61).

Adolescent problem behaviour theory (Allen, 2003:16) has long recognised that precocious sexual activity in adolescence tends not to occur in isolation, but rather to co-occur with higher levels of delinquency and substance use/abuse. This approach and the developmental risk theory in general, suggests that it may make less sense to view single problem behaviours in isolation than to see them as part of a unified syndrome in which an underlying risk basis may be manifested in many different forms. Previous research has shown that young people are more likely to engage in high risk behaviour when under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

A study conducted by Palen, Smith, Caldwell, Mathews and Vergnani (2009:1872) with high school students in Cape Town, demonstrated that lifetime use of alcohol or marijuana was associated with higher odds of lifetime sexual intercourse. In addition to this information Aggleton et al., (2006:120) postulate that drinking alcohol, experiencing its intoxication and partaking in sexual acts are fairly universal phenomena among young people all over the world. The Alan Guttmacher Institute (1994:24) in its report, *Sex and America's Teenagers*, stated that young teenagers

who use alcohol, tobacco and marijuana on a regular basis are more likely to have sex.

The participants also informed the researcher that they were more likely to initiate substance use as their first risk behaviour before moving on to sexual intercourse at a later time point on the day of engaging into sexual acts at school. Male participants reported that alcohol consumption reduced girls' capacity to refuse sex and they sometimes drugged them. They also mentioned that they came to school already drunk and while intoxicated they felt an intense physiological excitement to have sex when they see girls at school:

“Sometimes they drug you (girls) with ‘Silver bullet’ in your drink so that they can have sex with girls or boys. For example, last Friday when school was closing some learners including me we brought alcohol to school and we know that after drinking the girls will be drunk then we can have sex with them.”

“Sometimes children come from their homes or where they stay already drugged by what they smoke or what they drink. Obviously when they come, influenced by those drugs they had in their bodies when they start looking at girls their minds just start rolling to having sex they think about it more often when they are drunk.”

“I was smoking dagga with her in the top field and when we finish we started kissing.”

Excessive consumption of alcohol among under-aged girls have been singled out as the biggest cause of sexual violence cases reported to the police. Newspaper articles quote Basic Education Official Dumisani Tshabalala saying “Our learners come to school drunk, we need to talk about such situations which lead to sexual violence” (Sowetan 2012:4). The data presented above can be further substantiated by teens' sexual activities at school which have been reported in the media.

The second statement quoted from the interviews with the participants is confirmed by the *Sowetan* (2011:1). The paper writes that three boys from Madiba Combined School and Mandisa Shiceka Secondary in Kagiso were caught sipping ciders on their way to their first day at school. Furthermore, the paper quoted Monnakgotla saying: "... pupils used their pocket money, which was sometimes too much, to buy alcohol and drugs such as dagga because they are easily available to them". Recently, the *Sowetan*, (2010:4) reported that a group of 13-year-old girls were caught sipping vodka and watching a pornographic video on a cell phone allegedly of one of the girls having sex with her boyfriend. The girls smuggled in a mixture of condensed milk and vodka in their water bottles. The literature study and participants' utterances show a strong association between substance use and risky sexual behaviour.

Nationwide, among students who are currently sexually active, one-fourth reported that they had used alcohol or drugs during their last sexual intercourse. Other research indicates the misuse of alcohol often results in an earlier onset of sexual activity. In fact, one survey of teens (ages 13 to 18) found 17% of those who had an intimate one-on-one encounter with someone of the opposite sex admitted doing something sexual under the influence of drugs or alcohol that they would not have done if they had not been under that influence (Erickson, 1998:7).

3.3.3.2 Sub-theme: Peer pressure

Peer pressure was also identified as a factor that influences participants' sexual behaviour. It is normal that teens will form groups and generate certain value systems, styles of dressing and ethical codes (Skosana, 2001:40). The data collected during this study indicates that peers were presumed to exert a major social influence on teenagers/adolescents' sexual behaviour and most of the participants engaged in sexual activities in order to impress their peers, to fit or gain social status among peers.

They engaged in sexual acts because they wanted to be cool like their friends, gain popularity and did not want to be labeled as gays/lesbians. Girls were reported to be competing for boyfriends because the boys gave them pocket money. The participants mentioned that they have a fear of rejection from peer groups if they were sexually inexperienced. The sexually experienced peers usually rejected the inexperienced ones. Teenagers were often influenced by others to engage in behaviours they would otherwise not engage in. According to the participants peer influences for boys sturdily encouraged sexual intercourse while for girls it encouraged dating relationships.

Other factors regarding the peer pressure context which were identified during the interviews included easy communication with friends of opposite sex, large number of close friends, easy way of making new friendship and spending a lot of time with friends during and after school. Participants strongly associated friends' sexual experience with the initiation of intercourse. These can be implicitly reflected in peer behaviour which a teenager may use as a model for his/her own behaviour or they can be activity proselytised through discussing, questioning or teasing. The following extracts indicate the influences of peers on participants' sexual activities:

"I would say there is a lot of pressure at school because if you find out that you have friends and then in your group, let say your 5 and 4 of them are not virgins and you are the only one who is a virgin. Now you listen to them while they talking saying yo, that girl we did this, this and that. You feel left out that you are the only one who is not doing that so in order to join the pack, you want to do what the pack does."

"It's probably because, you know, Ok. First of all its peer pressure number one and number two it's because if you hadn't experience anything (sex) and you have friends around you that have experienced (sex), even if you don't talk to them about you having experience or anything but when a girl can "sommer" approach you obviously you feel/want to do it because you know that your friends had done it before and you

haven't done anything yet. So you want to do it for yourself just to fit in (group). I'm a man, sex makes you feel like a man."

"Just that most of us we have sex because we influence each other. Some of my friends have children and they influence others to have children. Even the girls they compete to have boyfriends because they know that we give them pocket money."

"I had friends and I thought they were cool because during breaks they will kiss and after school, walk with their girlfriends and I did not have a girlfriend. At that time I was only thinking that if I could date this girl I would be cool like my friends and other girls will want to date me too."

"That's the most things, your friends know and when you do it you think you are cool and want to impress them. You do it because you want people to feel your presence at school and be praised as the clever one. Like ya you are the man."

It became apparent from the data gathered during the interviews that by the time children reaches adolescence the peer group has become the most important influence in the child's life. The abovementioned statements are confirmed by Eaton, Flisher and Aaro (2003:149-165). They indicate that both boys and girls experience considerable same-sex peer pressure to be sexually active. For boys, the pressure has to do with proving manliness and having many sexual partners wins a young man status and admiration while for girls the pressure often comes from sexually experienced peers who exclude inexperienced girls from the group discussions because they are still "children" (Wood et al., 1997:9).

According to Royer et al. (2009:395) adolescents engage in sexual activities to gain attention/popularity among their peers and to show maturity. Florsheim (2003:196) mentions that adolescents reported that peer pressure is one of the strongest motivations for engaging in sexual behaviour and peer group rejection or acceptance

of sexual intercourse is very much related to an adolescent's decision to abstain or transition to sexual intercourse.

- Influences by sexually experienced peers

Participants whose sexual behaviour was more likely to be influenced by sexually experienced peers mentioned that they were made to believe that their peers were sexually active and that there was nothing wrong with having sex and had fear of rejection by peer groups if they were not sexually active. The participants felt that they were outcasts from the group if they were not doing what their peers are doing. Although only one female participated in the study, the researcher noted from all the participants' utterances that girls often feel pressure from friends to maintain multiple sexual partnerships as a means to gain peer group respect. The following quotes indicate how sexually experienced peers influence participants' sexual behaviour:

“Because in my case I had a friend of mine who actually was like no let's do this (sex), you have to do this because this is like, its cool and I have done it before, she said. She said she has done it before and she is like nothing is gonna happen, they are not going to catch us. So I guess most of the time is peer pressure.”

“I was pressured. There are groups in schools, other are drinking (alcohol) while others are having sex. I was in one of the groups and felt out if I wasn't doing (sex) what they were doing.”

“At school you have friends around you and still when you are at home you have friends around you too. So at school it's probably people who talk a lot. There are some people that have not experience anything (sex) but just to make themselves fit in (peer groups) they would say ya....I have done that before and I have done that just to make you probably feel left out or something. And at home there are some people like that too. They will tell you I have done that (sex), I have done this it could be a good thing if you do it too, it could be a good thing if you try it. They make you

feel good or something. That's the kind of things that's make children to engage into sex."

The utterances made by the participants during the interviews are confirmed by Sieving, Eisenberg, Pettingell and Skay (2006:13). In Sieving's et al. (2006:13) research findings indicate that young, sexually experienced adolescents are more likely than their sexually inexperienced counterparts to report that their friends are also sexually experienced. Whereas there is some evidence of the influence of peers on teenage pregnancy in South Africa, much of the literature on peer influence centres around contraceptive use and sexual behaviour. In a study on the risk factors related to teenage pregnancy in Cape Town, Jewkes, Vundule, Maforah and Jordaan (2001:45) reported that sex often happened because most adolescents perceived that people of their age were sexually active. Similar findings were reported among adolescent girls in KwaZulu-Natal.

The participants' utterances are further echoed by Wyatt, Newcomb and Riederle (1993:36) who write that most teenagers who are already sexually active tend to have a peer reference group that is similarly active or at least condones sexual behavior. Sexual status (i.e. sexual active and non-sexual active) of friends has been found to influence the behaviour of adolescents (Leigh & Andrews, 2002:4). These authors continue to mention that same-sex friends may influence the perceived acceptability of sexual behaviour, and sexually experienced friends may serve as role models. In addition, an individual's close circle of friends may influence sexual debut more than a single best friend does, possibly because an immediate network of friends is more stable over time than a specific best friendship.

3.3.3.3 Sub-theme: Curiosity and experimenting

Under this sub-theme the participants indicated that the information about sex which they received from various sources (media, school and friends) stimulated their curiosity, which in turn influenced their sexual behaviour. As discussed under the

previous themes, much of what the participants knew about sexuality was learned from the media. The participants mentioned that the way in which sexuality is portrayed in the media and taught at school increases the likelihood of curiosity and wanting to experience and experiment.

Loewenstein (1994:75) states that "... curiosity poses an irregularity for rational decision-making about behaviour that assumes that the value of information stems solely from its ability to promote goals more basic than the satisfaction of curiosity". A teenager would definitely want to experiment and experience the information he/she has heard about sex. The following statements are evidence of this:

"As teenagers our mind is based on what we see, like if I could see adults or other teenagers having sex or kissing that becomes something I would want to do sometime or let me say I'm watching the movie."

"Now, ok, let's say for instances it's a period for Life Orientation, Ok they will teach us about sex and this and that. Remember in our classes we only do theory, that's all we do, so now us as students when we go out there we want to do these practically and see whether what our teachers were teaching us it's true. But I guess all that knowledge is the thing that makes us want to explore sex and everything like that."

"She came and told me that, she asked if I'm still a virgin or not. I told her I'm. Then me been a teenager wanting to know more, she asked if it would be fine to break my virginity with her. Then since I wanted to know more and experience everything I agreed."

"Well! Wanting to know more, that's the kind of thing that makes them to engage into sex. Wanting to experience something you never felt before, some people will tell you its nice, is very nice and all of that. So that's why people (teenagers) wanna experience it for themselves."

An important part of adolescence is thinking about and wanting to experiment with aspects of their sexuality (Fonseca & Greydanus, 2007:275-292). According to Pelletier and Guilbert (n.d.) younger teens engage in sexual acts out of curiosity, to satisfy erotic urges because their friends do it, because they feel that having sexual contacts proves that they are popular and desirable, to prove they really love their partners or because having sexual contact draw them to an adult status.

Two participants' responses explained how sex education received at school through Life Orientation stimulates adolescents' curiosity and leads to sexual behavior:

"I guess it comes from school ... they say all things like sex is bad for you when you are at that age because you can get pregnant, you can have STI, you can get a STD. Some teachers tell you that sex is actually a nice thing to do but it comes with a lot of responsibility and bad consequences. I guess once you are informed about it then you get curious about it. Especially in Life Science because then they tell you the feeling, the texture, how you do this, how you get to this point and everything like that. The curiosity comes from the knowledge that you have, I guess if we did know so much about sex then we would want to go and experience or have sex."

"I don't think there are any other influences that would make a teenager want to do anything (sex) without not hearing it or not probably talking about it with friends. Because first of all everything you hear is everything you want to experience. Let's say you are at school and you are doing a practical or may be you are doing civil. Obviously when they tell you about civil you would say its fine ok, I know but when it comes to practical stuff like working with the tool and all of that you obviously want to experience it too. When they tell you that it's kind of boring but when you do it yourself its kind of nice."

The data provided by the participants indicate that sexual education at schools increases the likelihood of teenagers to engage in sexual activities. They claim that it

is not effective and comprehensive. The evaluation studies such as systematic assessment of sex education by Kirby (2001b:207) shows that although sex education programmes in schools have been around for many years, most programmes are not as effective as hoped. The Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS found that sex education does not encourage early sexual activity and can delay commencement of sexual intercourse leading to more responsible behaviour (United Nation, 2001:51).

When teens are approximately 12–13 years of age, they begin to show a general interest in sexual topics. Their sexual curiosity is often expressed by affection for remote and desirable people, such as teen idols, rock band members and movie stars (Oswalt, n.d.). Youth may try to satisfy their curiosity by reading information about sex and viewing images with a sexual content. Some youth may attempt to satisfy their curiosity by peeping i.e., to secretly observe people when they are naked such as when they are bathing or changing clothes (Oswalt, n.d.). The utterances made by the participants provide a diverse view from this.

3.3.3.4 Sub-theme: Girls dressing provocatively

This sub-theme focuses on the participants' discussions of how girls' provocative dressing at school influenced their sexual behavior. All male participants mentioned that girls dressing in miniskirt uniforms, sometimes without panties to school, influenced them to engage in sexual activities. They also indicated that girls seduced them by kissing and showing their thighs. The researcher also discovered during the interviews that girls without underwear had a specific area at school where they purposefully sat during breaks, opened their legs while boys were on the other side to show them their private parts (this was purposely organised by both girls and boys). However, the idea of having sex was initiated by both girls and boys.

The participants also compared the historical uniforms at school with current century miniskirt uniforms. They felt that girls' uniforms were out of hand and schools should

do something about it. On other occasions girls would bend in front of boys pretending to pick up something (pen) in order to get their attention or seduced them by showing that they were not wearing underwear. It was also reported that girls sat with their legs wide open in classes and played along boys' side to get their attention. The utterances made by the participants attest to this:

“Sometimes girls seduce boys by kissing and touching them and wearing miniskirts. Some wear short skirts without panties and when they are sitting in class they open their legs. The school must not let girls wear short skirts and during school hours children should be monitored always.”

“The uniforms of these days you find them (girls) wearing miniskirts. At first, a girl would wear a skirt that reaches their knees or they will wear the trousers. Now at schools they just wear miniskirts with their stockings and you find they are just running around there or playing whatever they are playing just to grab the attention from boys. They will be jumping high and down so that guys could see their panties or see them that they are not wearing anything, so that stimulates boys more because us as guys we like sitting as guys watching girls.”

“They (girls) come to schools wearing short things. They pass in front of you pretends to have dropped a pen bending and showing you that I'm not wearing a panty underneath and a guy will be like: that's nice. They call each other and go to a private place pretend they are studying but they will be doing it. The boys also come with the idea of having sex.”

The participants reported that teens' standard for appropriate attire have changed so much that some girls did not even realise their clothing might be considered inappropriate at school. When showing bra straps, body hugging tank tops, skirts and shorts that barely skim the tops of thighs, teens claimed to be following modern

fashion. Wearing a miniskirt also made sex to be quick as the girls do not have to undress entirely:

“We didn’t really go naked, I was wearing a skirt so I just decided to take off my underwear and we did it.”

“It’s a skirt, like we see them in videos, she is not wearing a panty but then she does not take off the skirt, she holds it when having sex, like in my case.”

Literature confirms that the manner in which girls dress are provocative. According to Caron (2006:3-7) school girls in Quebec dressed in provocative clothing when going to school, as a result several school boards in Quebec reformed their dress codes and introduced new school uniforms. The problem, more often associated with girls’ dress and sexuality, is taken so seriously that schools have adopted concrete initiatives for containment. The author further explains that there are two types of sexy girls: those who want to show off their bodies and those who innocently enjoy fashion. The first are looking to be provocative and parents must be vigilant, the second are not aware of what they are doing and they must be taught about the sexual meaning of clothes.

According to Rasicot (2012) too many teen girls, as well as pre-teen girls are dressing too sexy and provocatively for their age. When it comes to teenagers, looking good is driven by what is fashionable. High school girls dress usually in order to attract boys and they try to fit or impress each other in groups. At some schools, the pressure to wear the right brands can be intense, leading to exclusion for those who cannot afford or do not wear certain clothes. Adolescents are bombarded with sexual imagery and innuendo’s on TV, in magazines and shopping malls. Saturated by these images, some teens have adopted styles that seem more suitable for the red-light district than the school-going district (Rasicot, 2012).

3.3.3.5 Sub-theme: The Media

This sub-theme outlines how media influences sexual attitudes and beliefs, and describes how adolescents use the media and the sexual content which is exposed to them. The participants regarded the media as a source of information about sex and as an influential factor of their sexual activities. Participants indicated that various forms of media such as television, magazine, Internet and social networks influenced their sexual behaviour. The data of this study supported the view that watching shows with sexual content may influence teen sexual behaviour. According to the participants sex is often presented as a casual activity without risk or consequences.

All the participants indicated that shows with sexual content mostly on television influenced their sexual behaviour and they were more likely to mimic the behaviour when they saw the opposite sex at school. The participants also indicated a lack of parental supervision around media exposure and communication about sexuality. Most of the participants indicated that they watched late night shows on TV when their parents were asleep. They reported that the media has both a negative and positive impact on their behaviour; it influences and educates them about sexuality. They indicated that since sex was portrayed in the media they viewed it as a social acceptable behaviour and therefore they could also engage in sex. At worst, explicit sex advertisement programmes were seen as suggesting that sexual activity was a normative behaviour to naïve adolescents who might not have otherwise considered it. The following excerpts from the interviews attest to this:

“For me I say it’s (media) a negative effect because now every young person can see it. I mean age restriction is there, there is no parent who will follow his/her child all over when he is watching TV to just check up on him what is he watching on TV. They will tell me now don’t watch these. But if they are sleeping and I ‘m watching TV and there is sexual activity taking place in the picture that I’m watching, obviously it influences me already.”

“The things that influence us a lot are things that happen on the TV, the movies, late night sleeps. So these things happens on the TV and you like Ok, they are doing it that means it’s cool and you think it’s a good idea. If you don’t know and there is no one telling you that it’s not a good idea you will be thinking ok, if these people can do it I might as well do it.”

“One of the things that push us as teenagers is what we see from the media, movies that we watch because they bring a lot of influences. It stays in our mind and if we see the opposite sex we feel that we can do what we see in media.”

According to The National Survey of South African Youth (2001:11), South African youth almost universally watch television and listen to the radio. This survey found that there has been a phenomenal growth in television viewership among young South Africans with 95% reporting that they watch television. In addition to this information, studies done by RAND Corporation (2002) which examined the impact of TV sex on teenagers’ sexual beliefs and activities, show that watching shows with sexual content may influence teen sexual behaviour. It is estimated that by the time today’s children and adolescents reach age 70, they will have spent 7 to 10 years of their lives watching only television (Strasburger, 2005:272). Moore and Rosenthal (2006:72) attest further and write that adolescents spend nearly eight hours per day interacting with the media, mostly television, videos, movies and the Internet. Young people may be multi-tasking with a variety of media all at once such as TV, computer, cell phone while doing their homework.

Adolescents who have high levels of exposure to television programmes that contain sexual content are twice as likely to be engaged into sexual activities as compared to their peers who watch fewer shows containing this content (Kaiser Family Foundation & South African Broadcasting Cooperation, 2007:45). According to two scholars who reviewed a number of studies, research implies that teens who watch sexual content on television are more likely to engage in sex; teens who watch a lot of television tend

to have negative attitudes about being a virgin; and teens who see sexual content as being more real are more impacted by the sexual content (Hart, 2002:6). Rich (2010:23) postulates that sexual content is more explicit in movies than on TV, in part because the motion picture rating system offers the potential for segmenting the audience into those who are deemed mature enough for adult oriented content.

- **Pornography and social networks**

The participants' access to pornography, either by choice or accident indicated that the access of pornography is alarmingly easy. They mentioned that pornographic materials were available on the streets and public illegal stores in their communities. Young people interacted via social networks, invited and chatted with others on a daily basis. Some posted nude pictures of themselves to the public or friends and were also exposed to adults who remained anonymous or used false identities. They also had access to pornography on their cell phones. They found pornographic materials such as DVD/CD's on the streets and downloaded it from the Internet or bought a newspaper. Three participants' statements indicate that they can relate to this:

“Ya. I would say they (TV, cell phone, newspaper, magazines and social networks) are playing the same role because now if these things become easier for us as young children to get hold of them now they are playing the same role, because now if I walk through the street I see pornographic DVD's obviously my mind wants me to go look at it.”

“At schools you just take your phone with. We are not allowed to come with a phone to school but sometimes I will hide my phone, during break time I go to my friends and we start watching video's (pornographic materials). After we watch the video's our minds already are in that state, we want to do what we saw in that video.”

“I could say media, because now on TV these days, everywhere in the streets you find pornographic discs, you find pornographic movies, videos that you download through the Internet and what not.”

“It can depend because it gets posted by an elder person trying to influence the younger ones. We as young people we have our own decisions, on pornographic and all of that, on the media, but at some stage you ... would like to know more about everything, so you would want to see the pornographic material.”

Addictions to pornography are becoming common and more normalised amongst teenagers. Access is easier due to the Internet with programmes called ‘mousetrapping’ where porn sites lock your computer and every time you close a window, another shows up to trap a user on the porn sites (Maturo, 2003:2). Online chatrooms also provides the opportunity for teens to engage in conversations with mostly older men that prey on them. The Internet also grants teens with unlimited access to information on sex as well as a supply of people eager to talk about sex with them. The Internet has made sexually explicit materials more accessible to youth than ever before (Greenberg, Brown & Burkel-Rothfuss, 1993:48). There are so many websites/social networks which young people can use to interact with one another such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and MySpace etc. Teens may feel secure because they can remain anonymous or use a false identity while searching for information about sex on the Internet (Furman et al., 1999:188).

The trend of younger children being exposed to explicit pornographic material and subsequently exploring their sexuality is becoming commonplace due to the proliferation of cell phones and the lack of gate-keeping measures by technologically unsavvy parents (Sowetan, 2010:4). According to Rich (2010:19) the public has been concerned about portrayals of sex and violence in entertainment media, from the earliest days of the motion picture through the rapid proliferation of television (TV) into American homes to the explosion of media technologies at the turn of the millennium.

The study by Strasburger and Wilson (2002:27) on children, adolescents and the media reported that there is too much sex in the media. According to this study, 90% of American parents felt that movies and TV contributed to teens having sex. In addition to this information, in South Africa, a study by Wood et al. (1997:11) on adolescent sex and contraceptive experiences reported that nurses perceived that sexual initiation among adolescents was occurring at a much younger age than in previous generations and blamed TV. Nurses reported that teenagers see pictures of people making love (sex) and they want to experiment.

The participants and literature reviewed are in agreement on the factors influencing teenagers' sexual behaviour. In assessing the data provided by the participants it is evident that young people engage into various sexual activities due to various predisposing factors and wanting to experiment and experience the feelings which go along with sexual acts. Literature also indicates that many factors influence teens' decisions to have sex or to remain abstinent including: parents, peers, media, alcohol and drugs and a history of sexual abuse (Darlon, 2007:178 and Abbott & Dalla, 2008:634). A substantial body of knowledge exists focusing exclusively on the correlation between what children see and hear in the media and how they behave (Turk & Jacobs, 1995:19).

3.3.4 THEME 4: PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEENAGERS' SEXUAL ACTIVITIES

Under this theme the researcher describes participants' attitudes, perceptions and level of knowledge about teenagers' sexual activities. Teenage sexual activities pose significant social and health problems to teens such as unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and emotional stress (Erickson, 1998:3). The researcher has learned from the participants' feedback that despite continuing education and efforts to inform adolescents of the health risks and consequences of sexual activity, many of them continue to engage in high risk sexual behaviour.

The participants expressed a variety of views regarding teenage sexual activities in general with specific focus on sexual acts which takes place on school premises. Sexual activity among teenagers was perceived as common practice at school. Their responses showed that they are aware of their sexual behaviour and all of them felt that it was unacceptable and wrong for young people to engage into sexual acts especially at school. The following sub-themes are discussed in detail and are substantiated by the participants' statements:

3.3.4.1 Sub-theme: Perceived as wrong

The participants' perception of teenagers' sexual activities in this study also drew attention to the participants' beliefs about teen sexuality. Some of the participants believed that engaging in sexual behaviour, especially sex, was a way of acting like grown-ups and it made them feel like real men/women. However, during the interviews with the participants there was a great variety of opinions about sexual activities which included having sex to fit in peer groups, gain status among friends or proving masculinity/femininity and it was strongly emphasised that this is wrong behaviour, teenagers should not be doing it (sex) especially at schools as these institutions are regarded as a learning environment. The participants also stated that young people tend to engage in high risk sexual acts although they are aware that it is wrong and do not consider the after-effects. These perceptions are reflected in the following quotes:

"My own views? Firstly it's very wrong, that is one thing that can never change. It is very, very wrong. They (teenagers) turn out to do things without thinking about the disadvantages and will just take the regrets later."

"I think it's wrong. It is wrong especially when teenagers are the one who is doing it at school. We as young people are too forward about these things and we know it's wrong."

“I think it’s wrong because they are still teenagers. So it’s wrong but even though I say it’s wrong or things like that, it’s the same because they will still do it.”

The researcher did a literature search regarding teenagers’ perceptions of their sexual behaviour (perceived as wrong) and was unable to find concrete relevant information for this theme regarding the literature studied. Most of the studies covered teenagers’ perceptions of teen pregnancy and contraceptives (Richter & Mlambo, 2005 and Wood et al., 1997). In these studies teenagers perceived teen pregnancy as unintended and sex as playing. In Wood et al., (1997:11) teenagers mentioned that they engaged in sex without thinking about the after-effects and felt that it is nice to be with boys.

From the interviews conducted, one participant viewed sex as a play. The utterance made by the participants in Wood et al., (1997:11) confirms the following statement:

“They are playing at school. They do it live. They have sex at school. They have it.”

The participants also felt that one should be emotionally matured enough to handle the consequences of engaging in sexual acts. Throughout the interviews, participants often attributed the high prevalence of their sexual behaviour to the effect of media and felt that it was problematic. A female participant ascribed teenage sexual activities at school premises with a lack of respect.

“I can say it’s the worst thing a child can do at school because anything can happen. I guess it is a lack of respect for people who use the school premises to have sex. It is a lack of respect for yourself, school premises and for people who are working there.”

3.3.4.2 Sub-theme: Lack of knowledge

The participants mentioned that they have information about sexuality, however some of them described a lack of quality sex education as a missing concept in their

education curriculum. The participants mentioned that they received a substantial amount of information/knowledge about the functioning of their bodies and sexuality in Life Orientation at school but less on handling sexual emotions, managing relationships and resisting peer pressure to engage in sexual behaviour. However, the participants agreed that the information is given to them with good intention but attributed their sexual behaviour to the degree of receiving and utilising this information.

They stated that regardless of the information that teenagers have about sexuality and the consequences they will still engage in sex because they are 'harder' and 'corrupt'. The participants held the perception that teenagers have a lack of adequate information about sexuality. The participants indicated that their sexual behaviour was often the consequence of a combination of ignorance and lack of knowledge. The following statements by the participants attest to this:

"I guess when you are a teenager you don't know much about anything, so when I was told that when you want to have sex your responsibility is to go and test with that person whether they have some sort of STD, STI, HIV or anything like that and as a teenager you find that unnecessary like aagh please."

"I guess at that time when you are there it's like ok, you know what you're doing but you just do it anywhere. You know that this could cause a lot of problems for me but you just do it. You're like aagh I will see that later, I will get to that later because when you're a teenager I guess you don't think most of the time, you just do things."

"Because teenagers are not taught enough about sex and its consequences and they often don't see anything wrong. I did not know and was not aware that having pornographic material as a teenager is a crime and that one can be prosecuted for that until I joined the diversion programme."

“I also think that others have a lack of knowledge and information about sex...”

Richter and Mlambo (2005:65-66) provide a similar view to the participants' statements and write that teenagers have poor knowledge of human physiology and are easily misled by their partners. Ignorance among teenagers, the development of an urge to experiment and feelings of rebellion associated with adolescence has an impact on teenage sexual activity/behaviour (Richter & Mlambo, 2005:67). Ignorance also leads to myths such as the belief that sex without a condom is more enjoyable. Ignorance of any subject is usually one of the foremost reasons for the problems associated with that subject. Sex is no different. Participants associated teenage sexual behaviour with individual characteristics such as the level of knowledge, maturity, skills and age at first intercourse.

The participants' responses and the literature studied are in agreement that many teenagers become sexually active at a younger age, but points out that a lack of knowledge and guidance, particularly from parents, leave them open to influence and pressure. According to Dias (2007:201-205) the lack of information about sex and relationships leaves adolescents vulnerable and ill equipped to make the decisions they are faced with. Young people need accurate information about sex and sexuality in order to negotiate sexual relationships safely and responsibly. The participants stated that if they were exposed to more accurate information about sex then they would have known how to respond to some of their situations. The participants also stated that teenagers are not taught enough about sex and its consequences and they just do things without thinking.

3.3.4.3 Sub-theme: Teenagers are too young

A perception among all the participants was that they were too young to be engaged in sexual acts at their age (up to 18). All the participants mentioned that sex is for married people and one needs to be mature enough when practicing these acts as there are responsibilities and consequences. The data collected from this study also

indicates that most of the participants are not yet ready to deal with the emotions that go along with sexual intercourse. They mentioned that it is unacceptable for young people to engage in sexual activities especially at school.

“Sex is for married people not children. Teenagers are too young experience it.”

“From my side, teenagers’ engaging into sexual activities is something that I see as under picking. It is unacceptable at all because for a person to engage into such activities you must be well stabled and mature enough to stand the results that will come after the actions because you don’t know what will happen at that time as a teenager. If you are staying with your parents and it happens that you get pregnant, how would you be able to support your child?”

“...teenagers themselves they are very young to experience the kind of sex that takes place at school.”

Morgan and Huebner (2009:350) attest to the aforementioned utterances and write: “Teens are also younger, on average, when they have sex for the first time, more teens have sex now than in the 1970s”. These authors state that many young people began having sexual intercourse at increasingly younger ages during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. During the late 1990s and 2000s, the percentages of adolescents having sex, without the use of condoms or other forms of contraception increased rapidly, causing teen pregnancy and birth rates to increase significantly.

Being a social worker and working with young sex offenders and victims of sexual offences, the researcher has noted that sexual maturation and sexual activity initiation are occurring much younger as younger and younger children are being referred to the diversion programmes (6–17 years old). According to a growing body of research, children these days lose their virginity at a very young age, mostly during teenage years, as they begin having sexual intercourse at this young age (Alan Guttmacher

Institute, 2002). Experts say that with the average age of puberty going down to 9–10 years for girls and 10–11 years for boys, the average age for losing virginity too is going down (Jovic-Vranes & Vranes, 2007:177). Young people are reaching puberty (menarche and spermarche) at a very early and younger age and access to contraception has greatly increased, and society's values about sex before marriage even pregnancy and childbearing before marriage have changed considerably (Kirby, 2007:27).

3.3.5 THEME 5: FEELINGS EXPRESSED BY THE PARTICIPANTS AFTER ENGAGING IN SEXUAL ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL

Due to the nature and sensitivity of the phenomena under investigation “Sexual activities at school: teenagers' experiences and social work support”, the participants were reluctant to voice their personal experiences and feelings. However, they were able to express a variety of feelings and emotions as well as consequences of engaging in sexual activities at school. Researchers tend to consider physical after-effects of teenagers' sexual acts such as acquiring a sexually transmitted disease or becoming pregnant but fail to consider the emotional impact of sex. The emotional effects are important and worthy of consideration. During the interviews the participants were requested to narrate their feelings subsequent to their sexual encounters while at school. Various responses by the participants described feelings of being ashamed, happy, embarrassed, angry, sad, bad, stupid, scared, regretful, disappointed and being used.

According to Fonseca and Greydanus (2007:275-292) over a century ago Freud pointed out that despite a rich vocabulary of many related words, there are only four basic human emotions: fear, anger, sadness and joy. The emotional consequences of our decisions may involve any of these feelings. The feelings expressed by the participants were indicative how well they coped after their sexual experiences at school. The emotional feelings experienced by the participants are therefore discussed under the following sub-themes:

3.3.5.1 Sub-theme: The participants experienced feelings of shame, bad and embarrassment after having sex at school

The participants shared feelings of being ashamed coupled with embarrassment as well as being scared and feeling bad about what they did. As indicated in the previous themes, when some had sex, others captured these acts on their cell phones or video cameras. As a result when participants viewed the videos of themselves having sex while others were watching and taking videos, they felt exposed and embarrassed. The following statements by the participants indicate that they felt ashamed, bad, embarrassed, blamed themselves and felt that they could have been more responsible:

“I feel ashamed about what I did because I know I was not supposed to do this.”

“Each and every time I saw what I did (sex at school) on the news I was scared, angry, and ashamed and didn’t want to go out. It was like is not me, I felt bad. When I saw a video I felt embarrassed and exposed.”

“I felt ashamed and embarrassed when other learners knew about what I did (sex at school). I feel bad about the whole thing and blamed myself for not been responsible enough.”

“I felt embarrassed because I knew that I did something and started regretting what happened.”

While the physical consequences of early sexual involvement can pose serious risks (consequences to be discussed later) the emotional toll of sexual involvement cannot be overlooked (Erickson, 1998:4). The Alan Guttmacher Institute (1994:88) writes, “Having sex can engender a sense of shame or guilt, push a couple apart, raise unrealistic expectations of further commitment and marriage or be a form of abuse”. The not yet mature, adolescent mind after indulging in risky behaviour can be

overcome with feelings of guilt, shame and low self-esteem (The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1994:88). For many teens, having sex leaves emotional scars. Participants become emotional when discussing their sexual experiences at school. These emotions need to be addressed in order for them to make sense of their sexuality, learn from experience and move on to a positive growth.

WebMD cited in Schreiner (2010) reports that many sexually active teens admit that they have felt used post-sex and felt bad about themselves for giving in to the sexual temptation. In addition to this, The Heritage Foundation cited in Schreiner (2010) also reports that, when compared with their virginal counterparts, sexually active teens were less likely to report feelings of happiness and more likely to exhibit signs of depression. One participant indicated that he was happy to have sex with the girl while at school because it was for the first time for him to experience the feeling. He said: *"I was kind of happy when I was having sex with her because it was my first time. I felt that everybody knows what I did and my friends in the group thought that I'm the man..."*

3.3.5.2 Sub-theme: The participants felt sad following exposure of their sexual acts at school in the media

Some of the incidents of sexual activities at school in which participants were involved, were also reported in the media (TV, radio and newspapers) and this affected them as they heard about it almost every day and everywhere they went to. The participants indicated that they felt sad about what they did (having sex at school) particularly when they heard about it in the media and when other pupils talked about it at school.

"I felt a bit sad because it came out of the newspaper and some children knew about it and they were busy talking about it. I didn't like what they were saying because there were some of them who were not even there and they didn't know nothing but

they were just talking. I feel sorry about what I did because now I know that I did something wrong and I want to forget and move on with my life.”

“I felt very sad. It affected me because other learners were talking about it and everybody knows what happened in that school. It was all over the news and everywhere I go people were talking about the (name of school removed for confidentiality) ... children.”

“I felt sad because almost everyone would have seen or saw that things on the newspapers and when I saw the video I was disappointed in myself but at that time I was not thinking about the video, I was thinking about what is going to happen after.”

3.3.5.3 Sub-theme: The participants felt disappointed in themselves and their families. Further feelings and emotions experienced by the participants included disappointment. The participants mentioned that they felt disappointed in themselves and their families. Some participants had mixed feelings about what they did and mentioned that it was a mistake never to be repeated again. For the majority of people, intimate relationships bring along many emotional consequences, positive and negative. The participants verbalised the disappointments of their sexual behaviour while at school in following manner:

“I was disappointed because I’m the only son at home and my mother trusted me well. She felt that my son couldn’t do that but anyway my mom told me that is something I did which I say is a mistake so my mom said if it’s a mistake it mustn’t happen again. I must learn from my mistakes.”

“I was disappointed in myself because my family is well known around my wood (community) and is a family known for greatness. Instead of showing the kind of family and background of where I come from, I’m changing everything. I call it a mistake because it was something that was planned but if I had a chance to

apologies to my parents I would use it. What I did was really uncalled for. Right now I'm attending (court) cases where my mom never thought I would be."

"Well I was disappointed in myself because this kind of thing was never expected of me. I'm known for greatness, good achievement and progressing well but since the whole situation I don't think my parents even trust me enough now. I can't go to sleepovers anymore because they don't trust me ..."

Adolescents may appear grown-up (due to rapid physical maturity), but in many ways they lack adult-level emotional and mental maturity (Steinberg, 2008:14). The main concern with teens becoming sexually active is their immature emotional and intellectual capacities.

3.3.5.4 Sub-theme: The participants expressed feelings of being scared and shocked after having sex at school

The participants experienced a variety of negative feelings that had an impact on their sexual experiences at school. The participants mentioned that they were scared and shocked after having sex at school because they were not aware of what the consequences could be. They were more concerned about being suspended from school and tend to overlook the other consequences such as HIV/AIDS and law intervention. Some participants indicated that they did not expect the consequences of their sexual behaviour to be so harsh such as being expelled or arrested. The following statements indicate that participants felt scared about their sexual behaviour at school, primarily with regrets to the consequences.

"When I slept with that girl I felt scared and what if she goes to the principal and tell him what I have done to her but somewhere in my mind something just came and said don't worry there is nothing wrong with what you are doing, be happy but I wasn't happy after the whole thing. Even now I'm not happy or proud of what I did because I know that it is wrong to abuse other children or have sex at school. When you do

these things at school you don't focus in class because you will be thinking about them."

"I was scared that this will end up been or heard by teachers and they will be investigating and find out where it happened or how it happen. You can be expelled from school and this will be a disappointment to your parents because you went to school to learn not to engage in sexual intercourse."

"I was scared. I don't want to lie, I was scared."

One female participant mentioned that she was angry when she found out that she was pregnant and felt stupid about what she did (sex) as she thought she could handle the consequences but realised that she could not.

"Shooo...hai...mmmm (expressing shock). I was angry, I was really angry. I can't explain. I was very angry. I feel really like stupid in a way because I did something I knew, I thought I could handle but apparently I couldn't."

The female participant mentioned that she initiated sex with the boy at school and experienced anger and felt stupid about what she did. She also reported that she felt used and even thought of committing suicide. In Schreiner's (2010) research, findings indicate that girls were three times more likely to report that they felt used as a result of their sexual encounters and perhaps as a result, were more likely to keep their non-virgin status under wraps. Three participants mentioned that they found it difficult to go back to school the following day after having sex at school because the whole school knew about it. They reported that they could not face other learners and the educators so they thought of quitting school and would come with excuses not to go to school.

“The feeling was ... I wanted to quit school. I felt that I’m done with school; I better go and find work somewhere. I didn’t want to go back to school because I was one of the good learners at school so my teachers were also disappointed in me. I felt that I don’t want to go back to school and that made me to change school in the middle of the term and start afresh without thinking about what I did.”

“I guess you get overwhelmed about it (sex at school) because of how people look at you, how your peers look at you. Your school life becomes one nightmare then you feel that you don’t want to go to school. You do everything you can to avoid school, even if you had to pretend that you are sick just to stay away from school which I did most of the time. I just pretended I was sick and my parents would come and take me home. So it would be like on a weekly basis that I would be taken home until my mom said it is enough.”

“I could not face the teachers in class so I thought of leaving school but that was not an option for me, so I had to come up with excuses not to go there.”

For some of the participants sex at school was like a joke. They did not take it serious and made jokes about it with their friends:

“After having sex at school I took my friend and went home and we were making jokes about it. When I arrived at home I pretended that nothing happened. When I went to school the following day I found out that other children were talking about it and informed me that the police were looking for me.”

In conclusion, fear (anxiety, guilt) about pregnancy or disease is common. Anger (if the sex was forced or if the relationship ends) is likely. The female participant was angry and felt stupid after having sex at school; however she did not fear being pregnant. The participants were scared of being expelled at school should the principal or teacher found out about their sexual acts. Sadness (about losing virginity

or a reputation perhaps) may be felt. Some adolescents who had sexual intercourse felt regret and decided to postpone having further intercourse until a later point in their lives. In the researcher's experience, this is most often the case when the circumstances have been one or more of the situations listed above. These emotions and feelings had a negative impact on their self-image at school and around their communities.

3.3.6 THEME 6: CONSEQUENCES OF THE PARTICIPANTS' SEXUAL ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL

This theme describes in detail the consequences of the participants engaging in sexual intercourse and other sexual behaviours at school. Adolescent sexuality and its consequences have been a concern of numerous societies across many generations. Sexual activity among teenagers can bring with it serious consequences including unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and emotional stress (Erickson, 1998:1-3). The researcher noted that the participants tend to focus on the here and now. Long-term consequences of behaviour are often unanticipated or ignored. They rarely look ahead and think for themselves.

One participant mentioned that when it comes to sex they think of what they want and would consider consequences at a later stage. He said: *"They do things (sex) without thinking about the disadvantages and thinking for that certain moment. They don't think outside the box, they just think close in about what they have at that moment. That's the kind of minds teenagers have"*. The participants stated that teenagers who do not have the essential aptitude to negotiate and refuse sex and do not think of the consequences of the behaviours present a higher risk because these characteristics can work as risk factors. Literature indicates that for many teenagers getting pleasure now is better than satisfaction later even if later would bring more total rewards (Abbott et al., 2010:165). The participants described the following sub-themes as consequences of their sexual behaviours:

3.3.6.1 Sub-theme: Sexual transmitted diseases

The participants had some level of knowledge about STD's, especially HIV and AIDS. With regard to their level of knowledge, participants generally knew what condoms are and understood what the phrases "safe sex" and "unprotected sex" meant, though some concerning misperceptions did persist. Although none of the participants has been exposed to HIV/AIDS they indicated that they are aware of the fact that engaging in high risk behaviours and sex without a condom can results in HIV/AIDS infection or other related STD's. They knew that they were at risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease or becoming pregnant/impregnating girls should they engage in sexual activities without condoms as they received this information from school's Life Skills course and the LoveLife campaigns. The following quotes from the interview data substantiate this observation:

"There is a danger. Maybe I can make a girl fall pregnant, maybe I can get HIV, maybe I can get many sicknesses, I can get STI's."

"I guess when you are a teenager you don't know much about anything, so when I was told that when you want to have sex your responsibility is to go and test with that person whether they have some sort of STD, STI, HIV or anything like that and as a teenager you find that unnecessary like aagh please."

"Like I said people get pregnant at a very young age, people get HIV/ADIS; people get sickness that they really don't even know. Like at some point there are people who can get 'gold stones' at a very young age well knowing what they were doing."

"But with disadvantages of the whole thing it can kind of destroy you in a way because as you know that the more you feel comfortable with everything is the more it destroys and most of teenagers have sex without using condoms. So HIV/ADIS can affect like most teenagers."

Other research findings provide a different view from this study. They found that despite continuing education and efforts to inform adolescents of the health risks and consequences of sexual activity, many sexually active teens do not consider themselves to be at risk for STD's or pregnancy (Erickson, 1998:5). Young people are at the centre of the global HIV/AIDS pandemic as the next generation who has to face a cumulative impact in the forthcoming years. The predictions are that a large part of the young generation, as most infected, will be unable to raise and educate their children (Lindner, 2010:30).

According to Lindner (2010:30) South Africa experiences, besides one of the highest rates of HIV infection in the world, a non-foreseeable increase in new HIV infections among the youngest groups of society. South Africa has one of the highest numbers of people living with HIV worldwide. The National Department of Health (2004a) estimated that between 5.7 and 6.2 million South Africans are currently living with the virus and 1700 more people are infected with this virus every day. The National Survey of South African Youth (2001:12) found that South African teenagers name HIV/AIDS as the top concern facing young South Africans today. However, despite this concern about HIV for South African youth overall, the large majority of youth believe that they personally are at very low or no risk for infection.

The participants held misperceptions about condom use during sexual intercourse. One participant said that sex was superior and pleasant without a condom as they could really feel each other. She believed that condoms take the pleasure away. She said: *“Some of us are (taking responsibility) but majority of teenagers just wanna go there and do it. Like most teenagers go like is better to have sex without a condom, because if there is a condom then the guy cannot feel it.”*

The reactions by the participants are confirmed by Richter and Mlambo (2005:65). In their study boy participants refused to use condoms during sex, they commented that sex with a condom was not enjoyable. In a study conducted by Mwaba (2000:33)

teenage girls expressed a preference for receiving the injectable contraceptive and stated that condoms were not the birth control method of choice. Research shows that adolescents are at a higher risk for acquiring STD's for several reasons: they are more likely to have multiple partners, to engage in intercourse without contraception, and to select partners at higher risk. According to Erickson (1998:3) every year three million teenagers, which is about one-fourth of teenagers who have had sex (at least once), acquire an STD. HIV infection is considered the sixth leading cause of death among 15–24 year olds.

Another serious consequence of adolescent sexual activity is teen pregnancy. For a teenager the consequences of such pregnancy are difficult to comprehend during teenagehood. Most of the participants in the study were male, while only one female participated in this study. During the interviews participants indicated that pregnancy is one of the serious consequences of their sexual behaviour. In other schools girls' pregnancy was seen as fashion and those who were not pregnant were seen as stupid and would be excluded from the 'teen mums' peer group, same for boys if you were not a 'teen daddy'.

The female participant mentioned that she fell pregnant after engaging in sexual intercourse at school and this experience changed her life. According to her, she was lead to believe that first time sex will not cause pregnancy. She mentioned that having sex at school was the most painful experience she ever had. Educators and peers treated her differently and she felt that they thought she is worthless and disgusting for having sex and being pregnant at school. She did not care what her parents or peers say about her and felt that they were stressing her when they asked her about what happened:

“Well my experience is little bit complicated. My one is that I had a lot of frustrating events that happened which got me pregnant ... so there was a guy at school who said he liked me but I noticed after a while that it is all about sex ... well at that time

they (parents and peers) just found out I was pregnant and that I slept with someone at school. They were stressed and stressing me out and I felt aaagh ... please I heard a lot of that really I'm tired of fighting with people so now I'm just done. Whether they hate me, kill me, send me away or whatever I really don't care. So it was just that kind of attitude".

According to the report by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (2002) adolescent sexual activity and unwanted pregnancies are increasing throughout the world. In addition to this information, Richter and Mlambo (2005:65) postulate that teenage pregnancy is a major health problem in many communities in South Africa. The incidence of teenage pregnancy remains high amongst the teenagers in this country despite the proliferation of sexual education and contraception methods.

3.3.6.2 Sub-theme: Arrest

All the participants in this study were in the diversion programme for young sex offenders at The Teddy Bear Clinic for abused children. All under 16-years-old participants were charged for engaging in consensual sexual penetration while under the age of 16 years while those over 16 were charged with statutory rape for "consensual sexual penetration" with those under 16 years. They were charged with contravention of Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act (Act No 32) of 2007. The charges are based on Section 15 (1) (a) of the Act which reads as follows: "*A person who commits an act of sexual penetration with a child is, despite the consent of the child to the commission of such an act, guilty of the offence of having committed an act of sexual penetration with a child*". The Act defines consensual sexual acts between children, not including penetration, to be statutory sexual assault including kissing, petting and bodily contact like cuddling and hugging while fully clothed. Children found guilty are registered into the National Register for Sex Offenders.

These laws do not only apply in South Africa. In the state of Texas teenagers under the age of 17 cannot legally give consent to engagement in sexual activities (Smith

& Kercher, 2011:6). This is true even if they are a willing participant. While the age of consent varies, currently each state requires a minimum age of consent of at least 16 years and no older than 18. In all of this, the participants were dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Child Justice Act (Act No 75) of 2008 and the intention was to have them diverted from the criminal justice system. Sexually active South African teenagers find themselves in a vulnerable position. The following statements indicate that the participants were arrested and this affected their schooling:

“This matter has affected me badly because I was not supposed to do this. I was arrested and had to attend the diversion programme which affected my schooling as I had to be at The Teddy Bear Clinic once a week. I also stopped see my girlfriend because I felt that if I could be with her alone we might have sex again.”

“I feel like it’s a good thing for us to go there (to court) but at some point I feel like it’s a bad thing because it interferes with school.”

“I was enrolled in the diversion programme at The Teddy Bear Clinic after the court sent me here.”

“On that Monday (after having sex at school with my girlfriend), the cops were looking for me, they got me in Jeppe then we went to the police station and I confessed. I spoke the whole truth, what I know and did.”

All the participants engaged in consensual sex, no coercion was reported during the interviews. Statutory rape laws have been enacted to protect minors from sexual abuse from either adults or peers. The intent of the laws when they were passed was to protect minors from coercive and involuntary sexual activity. However, it is clear that some teenagers engage in sexual activity even before they reach the legally

defined age of consent. In the eyes of the law, persons below that age cannot give “consent” (Smith & Kercher, 2011:6).

3.3.6.3 Sub-theme: Expulsion from school

The participants indicated that one of the most painful consequences of having sex or engaging in sexual activities at school is to be expelled or suspended. Most of the participants were suspended following their sexual acts at school. Only two of the participants were expelled from school. They mentioned that being expelled was a setback in their education especially when expelled in the middle of the year. Finding another school in the middle of the year was a crisis and most of the schools would screen them before admission. As indicated above, the participants said they also wanted to quit school after having had sex on school premises because they could not face their peers and educators.

“It affected me a lot because I was suspended from school for doing that, I had to change school. It took me days sitting at home suspended looking for a new school in the middle of the year, starting a new year in a new school, new class, new teachers, new people and I had to adjust , I had to study hard because I didn’t know what they were doing.”

“Although I passed at the end of the year it was not satisfying because I’m a good learner. It was also because I came in the middle of the year after I was expelled, it was third term. I didn’t even write the June exams because of what I did. I worked hard to pass.”

“You can be expelled from school and this will be a disappointment to your parents because you went to school to learn not engage into sexual intercourse.”

Given the lack of academic literature about this theme the researcher will substantiate the utterances made by participants via information gathered in the media. Various

newspaper articles reported that most of the teenagers who engaged in sexual activities at school were either expelled or suspended from any school activities such as learning, sports, festivals and matric farewells. According to the *Sowetan* (2010:4) a group of 13-year-old girls who were caught drinking vodka and watching a video of one of the girls having sex with her boyfriend were apparently banned from attending matric farewells or valedictory services, as well as the highly esteemed carol festivities at the Feather Market Centre held at the end of every year for the rest of their school careers.

They have also been put on indefinite Saturday detention and, for the time being, were banned from participating in school sports. After disclosing several cases of sexual misconduct at school by teenagers, the schools in the Western Cape had recommended to the Department of Education that the pupils be expelled. All the pupils involved, were expelled (*Cape Times*, 2010:3).

3.3.6.4 Sub-theme: Lack of concentration at school

The participants stated that engaging in sexual acts at school has also affected their levels of concentration as most of the time they were reminded of what they did either by peers or educators in class. With the media coverage on some of the participants' cases, it was not easy to deal with the matter or forget it as it often surfaced without caution. Other participants mentioned that they tend to focus more on planning sex with the girls while in class and lost concentration on school matters. The lack of concentration (due to sex at school) affected their school work, their future and some of them could not continue to the next grade so they had to repeat.

“Well it affected me in a huge way because I couldn’t concentrate at school. When I’m dedicated into something I make sure I do it and school work was suppose to be my number one priority but I went on and done something that was definitely out of line. So this cost me a whole year of my school because right now I was supposed to be doing matric but I’m in grade 11. So it made me kind of stay back because I repeated

my grade 10 because of less concentration on my school work and more concentration on something else that I was really not suppose to take part in. It affected me a lot because seeing people whom I attended with grade 10 progressing to grade 12 and seeing myself doing grade 11, well it really hurts.”

“Having sex at school was the most painful experience that I ever had because it blocked a lot of things for me at school. Usually at school when they take you to certain subjects, let say you have to go to grade 10, they look at behaviour, how you handle yourself and look at your check record. I guess in a way it also affected my future even if I’m not there yet because this might also reflect on my CV and people will think that I will have sex at work if they were to employ me.”

“For me it affected me a lot because now when you start with these sexual activities at school you no longer concentrate. It mostly happens when that person you do sexual activities with is in the same class because now you will be thinking of the person the whole time, you no longer write, all you want to see is finishing what you are doing and out to do what you normally do with the person.”

In assessing the data given by the participants it is evident that teenage sexual activities bring along serious consequences such as teen pregnancy. In summary, teenagers lack strong emotional control, they often fail to reason logically, they rarely plan ahead, or envision adverse consequences; they tend to make impulsive choices, and they often over-react emotionally to real or imagined counsel or correction. They lack the capacity to foresee the possible ramifications that premarital sex can have on others.

3.3.7 THEME 7: PARTICIPANTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR NEEDS

This theme describes the perceptions of the participants regarding factors that could assist them in dealing with their sexual experiences. Young people have various needs and require support from society as a whole, especially parents. During the

interviews it became clear that participants required assistance/support to deal with their sexual behaviour in and out of the school environment. The participants described their experiences of sexual activities at school and related these behaviours to a lack of awareness, a lack of extramural activities and a lack of support from parents and educators. Apart from factors precipitating their sexual behaviours and their experiences, the participants also described their perception of factors that could assist them in dealing with or preventing/delaying further sexual activities at a young age. The following four sub-themes were identified:

3.3.7.1 Sub-theme: Need for support and acceptance

Under this theme, participants' responses indicated a need for emotional support and acceptance by family, friends, educators and social workers. This sub-theme is divided into two categories:

- Support from parents and educators

The majority of participants stated that a lack of communication, support and information from parents can be risk factors for teenage sexual behaviour. The participants also highlighted a lack of parental supervision as a risk factor. They reported that there was a lack of support by parents and some participants found it difficult to discuss sexual issues with their parents. They preferred peer friends than parents or educators. The participants stated that talking about sexuality in the family is considered taboo and therefore sex topics were often avoided.

The participants also indicated that they would prefer their parents to be primary sex educators. They needed support during and after engaging in sexual activities and emphasised the need for open discussions with parents about sex. They informed that they did not get support from their parents; however few indicated that their parents supported them during the diversion programme. The following quotes from the interviews indicate that their parents did not have open discussions with them about sex; they did not get the support they needed:

“I guess most teenagers do it (sex) for fun and just to have a feeling of what is like because most of our parents deprive us of that. They try as hard as they can to block it from our eyes and I guess as a child you want to see what they are blocking away from you, then you go out and explore. Anyway it’s like a taboo to talk to them.”

“During that time when everything was happening I did not get any support from anyone because everybody was hurt, everybody was dealing with their own emotion and how they felt and they didn’t care about how I felt, what happen, how the whole thing affected me. I didn’t get much support.”

“I guess I would have needed, even if it was just a hug or somebody to talk to me at school or home because I didn’t have any friends at that time and nobody spoke to me at all except for this one person (friend) because I have been there for her too.”

Research indicates that South African adolescents have poor communication with parents about sexual matters and they claim that their parents refuse to talk to them, only give them vague injections rather than information and may even punish them for raising the subject (Dias, 2007:204). According to Rhodes (2007:204) teenagers tend to perceive parental discussions about sex as restrictive with emphasis on the risk of sexuality. The author further emphasises parental support and open discussions with children about sex as parents have more experience and can help their children to protect themselves in future situations. Furthermore, research studies consistently show that parent-child communication is associated with delayed onset of sexual activity and increased contraceptive use (Lagus, Bernat, Bearinger, Resnick & Eisenberg, 2010:2).

As the primary socialising agents of children, parents are a trusted source of information about sexuality for young people. Yet this represents a missed opportunity because parents lack both knowledge and skills to talk openly about sex

and felt disempowered to parent their children in an environment that emphasises a rights-based culture for children (National Department of Education, 2009:62). Two participants indicated a need for educators' support:

“Teachers must not act only as teachers but as parents to children. If a teacher knows that a child lacks here and there, they should sit down with them as parents, be open and guide them.”

“There must be a teacher/counselor who deals with the problems of the children at school. When children come with family problems she sits them down and tells them what to do. She will also inform parents if children are experiencing problems at school.”

Given the data and literature studied the researcher can conclude that little communication within the family on the subject of sex, both supervision and lack of communication from parents may contribute to unsafe and early onset sexual behaviour.

- Social work support

Some of the participants reported that they were not aware of social work services in their schools or community and felt that social workers assisted them more following their incident of sex at school. They mentioned that should social workers have been present at school the risk of engaging in sex at school would have been minimal as social workers have open and sympathetic discussion with teenagers. The participants indicated that educators were not open about sexuality and did not handle “teenage sex at school” well during investigation of their sexual incidents.

The male participants felt that educators were quick to judge them and often sided with the female learners. All the participants indicated the need for social work support and counselling at school before and after exposure to or engaging in sexual

activities. They felt that social workers would address the issues from an individual to a family perspective taking into consideration both family and social factors that influences their sexual behaviour. They also emphasised the need for social workers to render preventative rather than statutory services (they should not wait for children to come to them or be arrested, they must go out and assess schools).

The participants constantly reported the need for social work support and showed insight regarding the role of social workers. They further reported that they did not receive immediate social work intervention services following their sexual acts at school. As a result they felt unsupported and regarded this aspect as a need to be address. Focusing on the need for social work support, the participants further mentioned they would rather discuss their sexual issues with social workers than educators because some of the educators were dating pupils at schools. The following quotes attest to the aforementioned statements:

“There is a need for social workers to be there (at school) because the learners (children) need someone to talk to. We need someone to talk to, who will talk to us and us been open to them, how can I be open to my teacher while I know my teacher would want to do the very same thing that I told him that someone is doing to me. I can’t be open to my teacher because when I tell them my problems they want to be my boyfriend or girlfriend because there is no longer been an adult or young person.”

“Social workers must understand us. Let me say in my situation I was called in the office by teachers and they were asking me about what happened but they were telling me and they blamed me, accused me of raping the girl. So we need social workers because they will not judge us and will listen to us. They can tell the principal that they don’t have rights to shout at us. Even though I might be guilty I know what I have done. Social workers must be supportive. It’s not like as teenagers we don’t know that what we are doing is wrong we do it to gain status and impress each other.

We are big enough to think and understand it's wrong. If it is mistake it would not be repeated."

"...social workers should be there advising children about the home circumstances and problems. Social workers can also deal with the family rather than the child only. Other children can also learn to have sex by observing others which is not good. Social workers are needed at school. Social workers helps a lot because the more you talk to them about everything is the more they see everything in good hand."

"Social workers told me that if I repeat the same things I will go straight to prison. They were supportive and the things they teach us is important because it helps me to make better decisions and learn to help other children who might be in the same situations. If social workers are available full time at school it will help because we can access them anytime rather than to come when there is a problem. What they are helping us with is serious. I can now also assist my friends who are in the same situation through the help I got from social workers."

These statements are confirmed by a study done by Naidoo (2006:124-129). In Naidoo's research study (2006:124) learners indicated the need for social workers to visit school in order to address teenage sexuality. With many adolescents engaging in sexual behaviour at schools, it is implied that social workers may take on many roles in addressing this problem. Any social worker working with young people will likely address the decisions concerning and consequences of early sexual activity. Social workers can assume roles such as enabler, mediator, manager, educator and a broker. As an enabler, a social worker can help adolescents and their families cope with the incident of having sex at school. As a mediator, the social worker can aid in resolving conflicts among micro, mezzo or macro systems (Kirst-Ashman, 2003:90-91). Social workers can take on the role of a manager by planning programmes which would assist parents with improving their communication with their teenagers about sex. As an educator, a social worker can provide information to teenagers and their

families on the type of sex education and HIV-programmes available for them to attend within their community or teaches them life skills. They can also offer workshops or training sessions to learners/teenagers on sexuality and life skills.

Lastly, as a broker, the social worker can link adolescents and their families with community resources and services (Kirst-Ashman, 2003:90-91). Social workers have been found to be of a great assistance with learners at schools particularly when they are stationed in these institutions.

According to Kirst-Ashman (2003:399) social workers at schools strive to improve the overall functioning of learners, educators, school systems and communities. They provide clinical service support such as counselling for learners with behavioural problems or who are experiencing family difficulties. Learners need social work intervention from both an educational and therapeutic perspective to prevent early sexual intercourse or to provide information on contraceptive use for those who are sexually active. One of the first things to suffer when adolescents experience social and emotional problems is school performance and attendance. They require support to maintain a balance after engaging into sexual intercourse at school (Kirst-Ashman, 2003:399).

Based on the researcher's knowledge of working with schools, he can postulate that most of the schools in South Africa do not have social workers/counselors, however some of the privileged 'model c'-schools, especially schools of children with special needs, have social workers and psychologists.

3.3.7.2 Sub-theme: Need for more awareness and education

Under this theme the researcher discuss the need for educational campaigns, awareness and sexual education about sexual activities. The participants indicated that they have access to countless avenues of information, some of which may not be correct and can lead to mistakes in life. Awareness and education about sex can

dispel many rumors and lies about sex and provide a realistic view of sex and reproduction. While many young people will have sex regardless of the information and because of peer pressure, media and substance abuse, the participants still felt that the education about sex may make them safer and alert them to the consequences and dangers of sex.

The participants' responses indicated that they would like social workers to be more involved at the level of increasing awareness about sex, rights, responsibility, contraception use and consequences of sexual activities. Although emphasis was placed on social workers creating awareness and running campaigns, other participants felt that it should start at home and parents must take full responsibility to educate their children about sexuality issues. The statements below are evidence of this feeling among the participants:

“There must be good role models to motivate us and people who have experience in these activities so that we can identify with them. Social workers should also campaign for awareness of sexual activities at school. However it begins at home and the parents should take responsibility for their children.”

“Children need to be supported, we need to be educated about these issues (sexuality). The social workers are there but the children are not right. Social workers should go out there and assess the needs of the school rather than wait for the children to come to them. They must go to the assembly and make awareness to the children.”

“Other children are not aware of the consequences of having sex at school or sex in general, so social workers can help them by teaching them and make them aware of the consequences ...”

Data from this study indicate that with young people attempting to achieve an acceptable balance between modern day societal standards and their own sexual requirements, the need for sexual education has been greater. In general communities and the school setting in particular, while preparing children for parenthood would need sexuality education to prevent teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and early onset sexual intercourse. Social workers can provide sexual education/awareness at schools via assembly or life-skills programmes which will equip learners with the necessary and accurate information for decision-making regarding sexual behaviour. The participants recommended that sexual education at school should continue and be carried out by professionals and organisations such as LoveLife other than the educators. The following quotations demonstrate the importance participants attached to the need for sex education at school:

“The school can help the children by teaching them more about sex and they should look at working with social workers because they can’t judge us.”

“I won’t say teachings about sex at schools must be stopped but now schools, teachers at schools must make sure that when it comes to the points of sexuality, they must make it a point whereby, they must make the children understand exactly. Because now if I teach you about sex I’m not been specific, Ok, that now I’m teaching you about sex, I want them to aim specific at why must I have sex, when must I have sex, what certain age must I reach to have sex, what things must I do in order for me to have sex.”

“The information about sex is the information you get form the Life Orientation teachers and it is not like what they did is a bad thing, about teaching children about sex. It’s a good thing because children need to know what happens, they need to see, ok, they don’t need to experience it at a younger age but they need to know about it.”

“No like telling them more. I mean you know that school children are hard-headed and don’t listen. They see school subjects as school subjects and think that no that is for Life Orientation. They must be told by someone from outside like LoveLife often goes to schools to address children. They must be helped and informed to stop this especially in the school property even outside the school premises. It is actually worse outside the school premises because they are no people who are supervising children.”

According to Wodarski and Wodarski (1995:15) sex education has to be integral to a young person’s personal development and has to begin before or during puberty. Every child ought to receive sex education in schools at an appropriate age. In addition to the basic anatomical and biological information, young people also need to know how to prevent unwanted pregnancy and avoid sexually transmitted diseases. In a nationwide assessment of model programmes, Kirby (2001a:74) found that sex education increased students’ knowledge but had little or no effect on the timing of sexual behaviour, on contraceptive use or on pregnancy rates. However, those exposed to sex education were more likely to practice contraception and less likely to become premarital pregnant.

Pupils should be taught which sexual behaviour is appropriate at school. Sex education develops young people’s skills so that they make informed decisions about their behaviour and feel confident and competent about acting on these decisions (Naidoo, 2006:1). It is widely accepted that young people have a right to sex education, partly because it is a means by which they are helped to protect themselves against abuse, exploitation, unintended pregnancies, sexual transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Schools are often uniquely placed to provide sex education which is both well structured and comprehensive. The general aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual (Naidoo, 2006:1). The following are some of the aims of a sexuality education programme:

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships.

- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction and to provide opportunities for learners to develop appropriate skills to make informed decisions on sexual matters based on factual information. To help foster full awareness of gender equity.
- To enable young people to develop healthy attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework. To develop fuller understanding and appreciation of relationships and marriage and the responsibilities of love, parenthood and family life.
- To create an atmosphere where dignified discussions regarding human sexuality can take place.
- To help learners grow towards the management of emotions leading to responsible behaviour.
- To help learners develop an awareness of potential threats to their sexual safety and to learn skills for preventing or coping with such situations.
- To inform learners of the personal health and safety aspects of their sexuality (Naidoo, 2006:1-2).

Each province in South Africa formulated policy guidelines and held intensive training workshops to prepare educators to teach sexuality education in all schools. However, since the beginning of 2005 there has been an escalation in newspaper reports (*City Press, The Mercury, Cape Times* and *Sowetan*: 2011-2012) highlighting learners involved in teenage pregnancies, child rape as well as children (some as old as six years) engaging in sexual acts. However, Green (1998:68) postulates that sex education remains a contentious area caught up in conflicting values and attitudes within society, and the tensions that exist between traditionalist and progressive arguments.

3.3.7.3 Sub-theme: Need for extra mural activities at school

The participants indicated that schools lack extra mural activities and as a result teenagers engaged in sexual activities due to ennui especially during exams times.

Some participants mentioned that there was nothing to do in class as some classes were not supervised due to educators' absenteeism. They suggested that more activities be introduced at schools to keep them busy and that educators should always monitor the school premises on a daily basis.

"If I had something to do by that time or when I get to school early or during the breaks and would not have done that because I would have been occupied and kept busy."

"Maybe they should add something at school where all the learners must participate in it, so that they can be always keep an eye on them."

"Yes (children wouldn't be involved in sex if there were other activities). Maybe it should be a must for everyone to participate not like they tell you who going to participate. Every child should be engaged into something like activities."

"At school if my mind keeps busy and I have something to do, I have people around me obviously my mind won't be there in a certain thing that I will end up finding myself thinking about sexual activities. At schools there is this thing we call free period, for 1 hour learners don't do anything. They just stay in classes or they just go out sit around at school in the school premises. I think it will be better if at schools that free periods is give learners something to do. It can be either a sports activity or they can make them clean their class just to keep them busy."

These statements are confirmed by Eaton et al. (2003:149-165) who write that young people in areas with chronic unemployment and lack of recreational facilities claim that they use sex as entertainment when there is nothing else for them to do.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter a description of the demographic data of the participants is provided together with the presentation of the findings of the study relating to teenagers' experiences of sexual activities at school and their need for social work support. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the literature review undertaken by the researcher. The literature review provided insight into the complex and multifaceted dynamics of sexual activities at school and teenagers' experiences. The themes, sub-themes and categories provided in this chapter indicate participants' experiences of sexual activities at school and their needs for social work support. Findings indicated that participants received information about sex from various sources, are vulnerable to multiple factors which influence their sexual behaviour and are unable to deal with the consequences of having sex at school. The next chapter comprises a discussion of conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher outlined a general overview of the research problem that the study sought to address and provided a brief introduction to the methodology in Chapter One. A description of the research methodology was provided in Chapter Two with the approach to be employed, namely the qualitative approach. In Chapter Three the researcher discussed the data that was analysed and verified by means of a literature control. In this Chapter, conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the data analysis will be drawn. The researcher will summarise the findings and draw conclusions from them.

Suggestions for further research will also be discussed. This research confirms the high prevalence of teenagers having sex in South African schools during school hours. It also demonstrates that within the lives of young people who have sex at school there are multiple influential factors and these young people have psychosocial needs.

4.2 CONCLUSIONS

In this section the researcher draws conclusions about the research methodology, process and research findings.

4.2.1 CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS

The research approach used in this study was qualitative in nature. Understanding the basic assumptions underlying a qualitative approach provided the researcher with a profound sense of direction regarding the design of the phases of this study. An exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design was used in this research study. The use of the qualitative research method allowed the researcher to explore participants' experiences of sexual activities at school from their own frame of

reference without imposing his own views or being directive. The qualitative research method also ensured the flexibility that was needed in order to explore the participants' experience of engaging in sexual activities at school, this proving to be an effective means to obtain the goals of this study. The purposive sampling technique, as a typical sampling technique used in qualitative research, was employed in order to obtain a sample to answer the research questions. The sample size was determined by data saturation (i.e. when no new information was obtained and the researcher noted repetition of themes).

Semi-structured interviews which were employed as a tool for data collection and allowed the researcher flexibility for further exploration, providing space to probe for more information. Therefore, it can be concluded that semi-structured interviews, as a method of data collection, worked effectively in answering the research questions set out in the interview schedule. The data was analysed according to the framework for qualitative research provided by Tesch (in Creswell, 1994:70, 2003:192-193 and Smit, 2002:66) using a coding system through which themes and sub-themes emerged. It is concluded that the qualitative research design was suited to reach the goal and objectives of this research study. The researcher was able to interpret the participants' narratives ascribed to their experiences.

The goal of this research study was to develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences of teenagers engaging in sexual activities at school and an understanding of the social work support required by these teenagers. In order to attain this goal, the following research objectives were formulated:

- To explore and to describe the experiences of teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school.
- To explore and describe the need for social work support by teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school.

In order to realise the research objectives the following task objectives were formulated:

- To obtain a sample of teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school.
- To conduct semi-structured interviews in order to explore the experiences of teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school and the need for social work support.
- To sift, sort and analyse data using Tesch's eight steps for qualitative data analysis as cited in Creswell (2003:192-193) and Smit (2002:66).
- To describe the experiences of teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school and social work support that they require.
- To draw conclusions about experiences of teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school and make recommendations about social work support that is required.

The researcher believes that the above goals and objectives were attained through the completion of this research study.

4.2.2 CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The conclusions were drawn from the themes, sub-themes and categories that emerged from the semi-structured individual interviews with the participants and the observations made by the researcher.

4.2.2.1 Theme 1: Sources of participants' information about sex

Findings of this study indicate that young people are exposed to various sources of information about sex in search for or to gain answers to questions about sexuality, in particular intimate relationships. Based on the findings of this study the researcher can conclude that participants/teenagers derive their information about sex from the media (newspapers, cell phone, magazine, radio and TV), schools (through Life Orientation courses), conversations with their peers and by being exposed to adults having sex. This study revealed that participants were attracted to programmes with sexual content which in turn served as information about sex and influenced their sexual behaviour. From the participants interviewed, 9/10 indicated that they obtained information about sex from the media.

As observed from the findings in this study, teenagers have easy access to Internet, particularly via their cell phone. Out of 10 participants in this study only three participants did not access the Internet on their cell phones but they frequently used their computers at home or from the Internet cafe within their communities. From this study it was further observed that the Internet and mobile technologies have become integrated into young people's (teenagers) lives as essential forms of communication. The participants indicated that they grew up with these new channels for gathering and sharing information. The participants often made reference to social networks as modes/forums of communication and information sharing, that is, Twitter, WhatsApp or Facebook.

During the interviews some participants reported that young people hardly learned about sex from family members, particularly their parents. For others it is a taboo topic and they were not allowed to discuss sexuality with their parents. They learned about sex from an early age while at primary level through Life Orientation in their school curriculum. This study further revealed that it is common practice for young people to have discussions about sex among themselves which later serves as their source of information about sex to others. The participants spend hours conversing with their peers and often did not talk to their parents at all about sexuality.

Unintended exposure to sex by adults and having been sexually abused was also added as sources of information to the participants' list. One participant reported that he/she learned about sex through the exposure of adults having sex. Past sexual abuse was listed as a source of information about sex by two participants. These two participants reported being sexually abused by family relatives while growing up. These two participants indicated that they learned this behaviour; saw it as socially acceptable and mimicked it. Based on the participants' responses it was clear that the main sources of information that teenagers utilise in order to obtain information about sex were the media and the school.

4.2.2.2 Theme 2: Participants' description of sexual activities at school

The findings of this study indicated that young people are engaging in various forms of sexual activities such as kissing, touching and sexual penetration from an early age (10 years) while at school. The participants' responses focused on sexual behaviour among the youth in general with specific focus on school premises. They generally agreed that sexual activity was common among young people. All responses in which participants described the kinds of sexual activities they engage in at school included kissing, sexual penetration, touching and heavy petting. The vast majority agreed that in their communities, people began having sexual intercourse at an early age (10 years) and they did not see anything wrong with it until they came in contact with the law.

Four participants mentioned that children as young as the age of 6 to 13 years in their communities have started to experiment with kissing, inappropriate sexual touching and sexual penetration. From the responses of the participants it is evident that sexual activities, in particular sexual intercourse/penetration, are happening at schools in various places such as toilets, classrooms and top-fields. Kissing and touching were common activities which were practiced everywhere, anytime and could be done in the presence of the educators. The participants were united in saying that the school was convenient for them to have sex due to the lack of privacy at home or not being able to see their boy-/girlfriends due to geographical boundaries.

Furthermore, the participants described school as a convenient place to engage in sexual activities, because both girls and boys are present and there are unsupervised areas at school. The results of this study indicate that schools have become highly sexualised and the Department of Education is battling with the crisis as it continues. A general shared thought by all participants was that teenagers normally engage in sexual activities in private. All the participants agreed that sexual intercourse was a private practice yet it was more often practised in public. Some of these activities were practised in open, publicly on school premises and even in front of other pupils.

Furthermore, findings indicate that school children are having sex at school even in full view of the CCTV-cameras. Filmed group sex is also becoming increasingly common as 7/10 participants/teenagers took cell phone videos which were later distributed among the school children and posted onto social networks. The participants revealed that they took explicit videos and photos of themselves performing sexual intercourse while in school uniform to distribute on websites/social networks which feature young people having explicit sex in uniform because they were also paid by the hosts of these sites.

The data collected during this research study revealed that the majority of the participants had sex on top-fields, toilets or in classrooms in the presence of the educator (who will be unaware). Participants indicated that they gave each other 'blow jobs' (oral sex) under the desks. This kind of behaviour was seen as influencing and pressurising those who are not sexually active to be sexually active. From the responses of the participants it is evident that sexual activities at schools are properly planned among teens although some happened spontaneously. The participants knew when, where and how these acts would take place.

Evidence based on participants' responses indicated that sexual activities at schools happened during school hours: in the morning before classes, break times, often after school and on their way home in the school transport. Access to a cell phone made planning easier during school hours as participants could chat with their boy-/girlfriends through various media social network forums such as SMS's, MixIt, Facebook, MySpace and WhatsApp. All the participants in this study engaged in consensual sex while at school and only two participants used a condom. They however, all had misperceptions about condom use and one participant had unprotected sex while he had a condom in his pocket.

4.2.2.3 Theme 3: Factors influencing participants' sexual activities

Data from this study confirmed the notion that interrelated factors influence sexual activity among the participants. During the study, the participants described the factors that could influence them such as substance use, peer pressure, curiosity and wanting to experiment, media and girls dressing provocatively. The prevalence of engaging in sexual activities while at school was associated with the frequency of substance use i.e. dagga and alcohol. Most of the participants' described using alcohol and dagga prior to their sexual experiences at school. They believe that this influenced their sexual behaviour. Alcohol and dagga featured prominently in the participants' discussions of sexual intercourse with most of the participants' indicating that the intake of large amounts of alcohol and smoking dagga was a determining factor in their risk-taking sexual behaviour.

Four participants engaged in group sex at school after consuming alcohol and smoking dagga with their friends. Participants' responses indicated that group sex was a new thing among teenagers and they liked it. One participant also indicated that he was involved in group sex at a friend's house party. Based on the data collected and the literature reviewed evidence further indicates that teen sexual behaviour is alarming because teenagers who start having sex before/on age 13 are much more likely to have multiple lifetime sexual partners, use alcohol or drugs before sex and have unprotected sex, all of which puts them at greater risk for getting a sexually transmitted disease (STD) or becoming pregnant. According to the participants, peer influence had a negative effect on their behaviour, they feared to be sidelined/rejected from the peer groups and therefore had to bind by the norms of the groups.

Data from this study demonstrated that peers exerted a major social influence on teenagers' sexual behaviour and most of the participants engaged in sexual acts to impress their peers, to fit or gain social status among peers. Sex was like a competition to reflect how many girls/boys one has slept with at school and what

kinds of sexual styles one has performed. Some participants gave reasons for the high degree of sexual activity, including the perception that sex was a way to act like a grown-up. Misconceptions about sex and contraceptives are still evident in most teenagers. The female participant indicated that boys did not want to use condoms because they believe that condoms take the pleasure, feeling of sex, away and one does not feel his partner.

Findings of the study also revealed that most of the male participants were in agreement with this statement. However, four participants' responses pointed out that at the moment or during sexual intercourse they did not consider the consequences of unprotected sex and felt that a condom was delaying them. It is evident from the participants' responses that curiosity about sexuality led them to want to experience the feeling/pleasure of sex. Teenagers wanted to experiment and experience what they heard about sex.

In these responses the participants indicated that the information they got about sex stimulated their curiosity, which in turn influenced their sexual behaviour. The participants continued to blame sexual contents in the media and insufficient information provided through sexual education and parents. Their responses indicated that various forms of media, including TV, magazines and social networking, influenced their sexual behaviour.

The data collected during this study illustrated that the mass media with its sexualised content was another contributing factor that perpetuated participants' sexual activities as it gave them easy access to pornographic, adult television programmes and multimedia text messages. From this study, it was observed that all participants had easy access to pornography. Girls dressing provocatively were also considered as an influential factor. The male participants felt that girls seduced them by wearing short mini-skirts without panties/underwear to school. This study has also found that boys

enjoyed watching girls in mini-skirts although they felt that it influenced them to have sex.

Based on the information provided by the participants it can be concluded that the participants were risk-takers who live only for the moment. They hardly considered the consequences of their actions. Findings from this study indicate that participants influenced each other to engage in sexual activities and the media exerts an enormous, almost a normative, influence on teenagers.

4.2.2.4 Theme 4: Participants' perceptions of teenagers' sexual activities

During the interviews all the participants felt that the high prevalence of sexual activity among teenagers was problematic, attributing such behaviour to the effect of poor parenting, the lack of accurate information during sex education and attitudes conveyed through the media. The participants held the perception that teenagers have a lack of adequate information about sexuality and teenage sexual behaviour was associated with ignorance and a lack of knowledge. Participants perceived teenage sexual activity to be wrong and unacceptable because they are too young. During the study, the participants perceived teenage sexual activities as wrong acts which young people should not be doing.

They associated teenage sexual behaviour with individual characteristics such as knowledge, maturity, skill, and age at first intercourse. They acknowledged that they are sexually active and will continue to engage in sex irrespective of information and consequences of sexual behaviour they experienced; however they maintained that it is unacceptable for young people to engage in sexual activities while at school. Some felt that teenagers are too young to engage in sexual acts and they cannot handle the consequences that come along with sex at a younger age. It is evident from the participants' responses that sex was also perceived as a 'game' and resulted because there is a lack of respect for school personnel. As discussed in the previous section participants mentioned that sex was also seen as competition among both

boys and girls in order to determine how many partners one had sex with and which styles one has experimented with.

The participants further shared their perceptions regarding the lack of knowledge about sex and sex with multiple partners, including how common and how risky these behaviours are. There was a greater variety of opinions about these behaviours. For example, there was greater agreement that young people are engaging in sexual activities at an early age. Responses also described the negative impact that the participants' perceived teenage sexual behaviour at school have on others, including other learners, parents and the school. It became clear that teenagers who are sexually active influenced those who are not yet sexually active. Participants reported that other pupils engaged in sexual acts because they saw their peers having sex at school.

The data further indicated that teen sexual behaviour had an impact on the school as these behaviour disrupted school lessons. Various comments by participants pointed to a lack of quality sex education and ignorance by teenagers. A perception among the participants with regards to ignorance was that teenagers tend to ignore sex education and was curious to experiment with sex. It can be concluded that parents neglected sex education as none of the participants received sex education from family/parents.

4.2.2.5 Theme 5: Feelings expressed by the participants after engaging in sexual activities at school

During the interviews it became clear that participants experienced different feelings following their sexual acts at school. The participants expressed feelings of being ashamed, happy, embarrassed, angry, sad, bad, stupid, scared, regret, disappointed and used. The study findings indicated that teenagers were too young to handle the emotional aspects of their sexuality and required professional intervention, in this instance, social work intervention. Some of the participants indicated that they

thought of quitting school because they could not handle/face other learners and educators at school. Almost all the participants felt embarrassed and ashamed about their sexual behaviour and considered quitting school.

From the female participant's responses it was evident that having sex at school later disrupted learning and teenagers often came with excuses not to go to school such as pretending to be sick. An interesting aspect highlighted by the participants was that it became difficult to deal with the emotional aspects of their sexual behaviour particularly those whose incidents were captured on cell phones and distributed on social networks or covered in the media such as TV and newspapers. Being exposed to media erupted feelings of sadness, shame and anger. The participants felt that they were further victimised by the media when their stories made headlines on the news, they partially blamed themselves and regretted what they did. Furthermore, they felt that they brought shame and disappointment to their families, lost parental trust and also disappointed themselves.

One participant indicated that he was happy to engage/experiment with sexual intercourse while at school as it was his first time and his friends will praise him as he sought to gain status while six participants' mentioned that having sex at school was a competition among school children and was often seen as a joke. They felt scared and shocked when they heard about their sexual behaviour at school from other learners especially the principals. They were scared that they might be expelled from school. The teenagers were not aware that they could be prosecuted for engaging in sexual activities while under age nor that being in a possession of a video of one of their peers performing sex was an offence (child pornography).

4.2.2.6 Theme 6: Consequences of the participants' sexual activities at school

From this study, it was observed that teenagers tend to focus on the here and now aspect of an issue (sexual activities) and would not consider the consequences of their behaviour. The participants' responses indicated that they were not concerned

about the consequences during that period (when engaging in sexual activities) although they were aware of the consequences. Various comments by the participants pointed that they were more interested in pleasing themselves at that moment than anything else. Long-term consequences of behaviour were often unanticipated and ignored. However, most of the participants' responses indicated that they were more concerned about being suspended from school and tend to overlook other consequences such as HIV/AIDS, pregnancy and law intervention.

During the data collection process the researcher discovered that although the participants were informed of the consequences of their sexual behaviour (through sex education at school, LoveLife campaigns and the media) these did not stop them in engaging in further high risk sexual behaviour. Data gathered during this study indicates that they had some level of knowledge about STD's, especially HIV and AIDS. As observed during the data collection process, knowledge about HIV/AIDS and STD's did not necessarily translate into adopting healthier behaviours among adolescents in this sample. As indicated in the previous section, participants had misperceptions about contraceptives and condom use. From the participants' responses it was evident that teenage sexual activities bring with serious consequences including unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and emotional stress.

Among others, the participants faced the consequence of being pregnant or impregnating girls. One female participant found out that she was pregnant three month after having sex at school. She was led (by her friends) to believe that there is nothing wrong with having sex and that first time sex could not cause pregnancy. However, participants' responses indicated that being pregnant at school was a fashion 'thing' and almost every girl at their schools was pregnant. Data in this research study also demonstrated that teenagers were not scared of impregnating girls or (girls) getting pregnant as it is considered socially acceptable behaviour and normal for young people to be pregnant. Furthermore, the participants faced

consequences such as arrest, expulsion from school and a lack of concentration while in class.

Based on the information provided by the participants it can be concluded that the participants were ignorant and received inadequate information about sex. The findings of this study are alarming because young people who engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse face the risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease or becoming pregnant. The participants held misperceptions about condom use during sexual intercourse. Suspension, arrest or being expelled from school affected their education and as a result they had to repeat a grade. The participants in this study were engaged in consensual sex and were charged with contravention of Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act (Act No 32) of 2007.

4.2.2.7 Theme 7: Participants' perceptions of their needs

During the interviews it became clear that participants required assistance/support to deal with their sexual behaviour in and out of the school environment. The data collected indicated needs for emotional support from family, friends, teachers and social workers. The participants' responses indicated that they would like social workers to be more involved at the level of increasing awareness about teenage sex, rights, responsibilities and consequences. They further suggested that more social activities such as sports should be introduced at schools to keep learners busy. In short, all the participants indicated a need for social workers to be deployed at schools so that social work services can be easily accessed. None of the participants received immediate social work intervention following the incident of engaging in sexual activities while at school as cases had to be reported to the social workers outside the school.

The participants felt that educators are not trained counselors and therefore could not address their incidents sympathetically. A need for social workers to render preventative services rather than statutory services were strongly emphasised as well

as their need for educational campaigns, awareness and sexual education about sexual activities. Although the participants felt that sex education should be improved and social workers should run campaigns, they also indicated that parents should be more involved and sex education should start at home.

Participants' responses indicated that parents and teenagers are often uncomfortable talking about sexuality. Findings in this study show that parent-teen communication about sex appears to be linked to responsible sexual behaviour among adolescents. One participant indicated that after having sex at school he received accurate information from his mother, who never had a discussion with him about sex before, he feels that this information empowered him. The findings of this study remain consistent in supporting the importance of familial participation in sex education toward increasing communication and comfort levels between parents and children.

Findings indicate that participants spend most of their time at school and this institution is capable of reaching many of young people. However, the participants' responses shows that the current curriculum on sex education tend to avoid open and honest communication on the sensitive nature of sexuality.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations relating to the research process, the research findings, practice, policy, training, and education as well as further research regarding the present research topic will be provided in this section. This study, through the methodology described in Chapter Two aimed to develop a better understanding of teenagers' experiences of sexual activities at school in order to interpret the data and to provide the social work profession and the Department of Education with concluding guidelines and recommendations regarding teenage sexual activities at school. In the previous paragraphs the researcher drew conclusions based on the findings and proposes the following recommendations based on these conclusions:

4.3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS

The researcher recommends this research approach as a suitable manner through which the social needs of a specific group in a specific context could be investigated (in this context, teenagers' sexual activities at school and their needs for social work support). It is advisable, as a recommendation, that novice qualitative researchers consult various texts on the qualitative paradigm to gain a better understanding of the principles of this approach. In addition, the exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design is recommended as a valuable framework from which to procure findings related to a research problem and when a specific focus is needed in terms of a specific situation in a specific context.

It is further recommended that this design must be utilised when dealing with people's subjective experiences of their situations where the researcher's endeavors to gain in-depth information. This proved useful as the participants were able to express their views and experiences without being restricted by a rigidly structured format of data collection. The purposive non-probability sampling technique is useful to ensure that the participants are able to answer the research question, and is best equipped to do so based on the fact that they are able to provide insight in experiences. The utilisation of semi-structured interviews is recommended as it allowed the researcher flexibility for further exploration and also provided a structure from which the researcher could obtain information while focusing on the answering of the research question and addressing the research problem.

Tesch's framework for qualitative data analysis (cited in Creswell, 1994:70, 2003:192-193 and Smit, 2002:66) and Guba's model of trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004:63-75, Moss, 2004:359-374 and Rolfe, 2004:305-309) are recommended to assist the qualitative researcher with a sound method to analyse data and to draw conclusions based on the findings.

4.3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO POLICY

Based on the findings of this study, some recommendations could be made on policy influencing sexual activities of teenagers.

- Sexually active South African teenagers find themselves in a vulnerable position due to the criminalising of young people/adolescent's sexual activities as stipulated in the Criminal Law (Sexual Offence and Related Matters Act (Act No 32) of 2007 (2007:section 15 and 16). As a result teenagers' access to health services could be threatened as health professionals are mandated to report teenage consensual sexual activities. The Children's Act (Act No 38) of 2005 (2006:section 110) also threatens health workers, educators, parents and guardians to report any sexuality activity among teenagers, failure to report could result in prosecution.

Although the North Gauteng High Court has ruled that the two sections (15 and 16) of the Sexual Offence Act (Act 32) of 2007 were invalid and inconsistent with the constitution, it is strongly recommended that the organisations and other parties such as the Centre of Child Law and Justice Alliance who filed the petition continuously follow up on the implementation of this matter. With the two sections ruled to be unconstitutional this means that teenagers' consensual sexual activities will not be criminalised and children will freely access social welfare and health services without fear of prosecution.

- The association between alcohol use and sexual activity highlights the need for integrated public health programmes. The Department of Health and Social Development should formulate policies restricting alcohol advertising in the media. They must also restrict advertisements where teenagers use alcohol because this help to reduce teenagers' temptation to consume alcohol and sexual exposure among young teenagers as most of the teenagers engage in sexual activities while under the influence of alcohol.
- Currently, the Department of Education has various policies and legislations on the management of sexual harassment at schools. However, there is a need to

develop guidelines or amend existing guidelines on the management of sexual behaviour at schools to include measures and procedures to be followed when children engage in consensual sexual activities.

4.3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The findings of this study has implications for professional social work practice, especially if practitioners are to design interventions at a variety of levels that address the complex problems of sexuality among young people with specific focus on “teen sex at school”.

- There appears to be a crucial need for debates involving communities and schools about teenage sexuality in South African schools in order to gain broader understandings of the contexts and factors that influence young people to engage in sexual activities at school premises.
- The researcher strongly recommends that social workers be deployed at schools in order to address pupils'/teenagers' psychosocial needs. The participants' responses indicated that many educators lack the skills in guidance and counseling as their matters were not handled accurately. Educators are not well trained in counseling and hence the need for social workers at schools. Participants felt that they need someone whom they will feel safe and comfortable with when discussing their personal problems such as a social worker. Deploying social workers at schools will also strengthen quick and easy access to social work services following incidents of anti-social behaviour (sexual). With the various roles assumed by social workers, a school social worker can help adolescents and their families cope with the incident of having sex at school and planning programmes which would assist parents with improving their communication with their teenagers about sex. Social workers can also attend to other problematic behaviours such as substance use at school or bullying.
- Findings in this study indicated that sexual education currently focuses on the physical side effects ignoring the emotional aspects. While it is important that these developing adults know about the physical side of engaging in sexual

behaviour social workers should put more emphasis on an exploration of the emotional side of engaging in sex as well. Preparing teenagers for the emotions that they will likely feel after having sex is vital to ensure that they do not become overwhelmed by these emotions.

- Social workers should ensure that parent-child communication about sex is strengthened by educating both parents and children around issues of young people's sexuality and parents' needs to acknowledge that their children are sexually active. Specific programmes could be developed for parents or group discussion sessions could be facilitated for parents at their children's schools.

4.3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The participants' own perceptions provided the researcher with a rich understanding of adolescents' relationships and sexual activity, which in turn could be utilised in the development of sexual education programmes to promote the sexual health among this population. The following is recommended:

- The Department of Health and Social Development together with Department of Education should take a rigorous look at their current programmes (such as sex education) which intend to address the needs of adolescents focusing on promoting social skills and attitudes which delay the onset of sexual activities among young people. They need to implement more innovative programmes that are proven effective. Clearly these programmes are not well implemented given the statistics of young people engaged in sexual activities at school.
- Just like Richter and Mlambo (2010:68) this study also recommends that teaching should be based on empowering teenagers and should aim at developing responsible attitudes with regard to sexual behaviour. An attitude of responsibility will reduce casual sex and repeated pregnancy; ensure contraceptive compliance, continuation of education or employment.
- School officials need to be aware of the factors that may contribute to early sexual activity such as the media, the lack of sex education and girls dressing

provocatively as well as substance use. School based substance use prevention programmes should be reviewed as a priority in all schools. Findings indicated a high prevalence of substance use among teenagers prior to engaging in sexual activities while at school.

- Schools should monitor or supervise the school premises properly during school hours and should introduce extra mural activities to keep learners busy during free periods. The security system at schools should be upgraded by installing cameras and security measures to prevent learners entering school premises with drugs.
- The Department of Education needs to empower educators by continuously exposing them to training and short courses to keep abreast with the current issues around teenagers. Training should address sexual behaviour among teenagers taking into consideration sexual abuse and procedures to be followed if a child has been abuse at school or engaged in consensual sex.

4.3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO MEDIA

The research findings as well as the literature reviewed indicated that most of the participants' sexual behaviour was influenced by the media and this medium also provided them with information about sex. Technology is here to stay. While it will never replace human interaction and intimacy, the power of the digital world may reach large numbers of youth with accurate sexual health information and this power should not be underestimated.

- Encouraging dialogue between experts, educators, parents, and youth can increase the possibility of healthy sexual experiences and better sexual communication, now and in the future.
- It is recommended that there should be improvement in monitoring and controlling what children can access and not only on the media, but especially pornographic materials. Parents should supervise and monitor or limit viewing access to late television.
- Media channels can be a powerful tool in educating young people about sexuality; therefore there should be constant dialogue/engagement among the Department

of Health and Social Development, Department of Education, diversion service providers (NGO's sector) and media bodies on the impact of exposure to young people.

4.3.6 RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO FURTHER AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of this research study highlighted the need for further research related to several themes in understanding teenagers' sexual activities within the school context. Based on these findings and limitations of this study the following is recommended:

- Future research should explore teenagers' sexual activities at school, taking into consideration educators' attitudes towards sexual activities at school and procedure which are followed after teenagers engage in sexual activities at school.
- Furthermore, the study was conducted among a small sample of teenagers in the Gauteng Province; the findings cannot be generalised. A further study involving teenagers from all provinces is recommended with focus on the female participants (girls) and considering racial and cultural factors.
- This study included teenagers who were convicted and attended a diversion programme, with the researcher being a diversion facilitator. It is therefore recommended that future studies should examine sexual activities at school with teenagers who are not convicted and not in a diversion programme as this may shed further light onto the phenomena.
- Although some of the findings in this study are confirmed by other research studies that investigated teenage sexual behaviour, future research could attempt to evaluate the effects of different interventions focusing on teenage sexual behaviour, in particular, the diversion programmes for young sex offenders in South Africa.
- Future studies should also attempt to investigate sexual activities among pupils and educators as this study focused only on sexual activities among teenagers.

- There is a need to investigate parental needs and to empower them to support and provide guidance around sexuality to their children based on accurate knowledge. This will ensure that parents will be the primary sources of information about sex and children will not be misled by their peers.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The study's research goals and objectives were achieved. This study illustrated that young people's sexual behaviour is influenced by various factors. Among these factors, media was the most influential factor with teenagers being vulnerable to social networks and TV. Teenage sexual behaviour continues to be a global problem with South Africa facing high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy. Young people tend to use school premises to engage in sexual activities due to the lack of supervision at school. The study findings clearly indicate the need for open discussion about sexual health at the school level and at home. Of importance is the review of the current sexual education programmes at schools and recognition of the valuable role school social workers can play in the promotion of the well-being of teenagers at school.

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APPENDIX A: A PREAMBLE TO INFORMATION

Dear Participants

I ***Tshilidzi Stanley Makhitha***, the undersigned, am a student social worker/social worker in service of ***The Teddy Bear Clinic for Abused Children*** in Park Town, and also a part-time BA master's student in the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa. In fulfillment of requirements for the BA master's degree, I have to undertake a research project and have consequently decided to focus on the following research topic: ***Sexual activities at school: Teenagers' experiences and social worker support.***

In view of the fact that you are well-informed about the topic, I hereby approach you with the request to participate in the study. For you to decide whether or not to participate in this research project, I am going to give you information that will help you to understand the study (i.e. what the aims of the study are and why there is a need for this particular study). Furthermore, you will be informed about what your involvement in this study will entail (i.e. what you will be asked/or what you will be requested to do during the study, the risks and benefits involved by participating in this research project, and your rights as a participant in this study).

This research project originated as a result of young people engaging in sexual activities at school and the aim is to explore and describe teenagers experiences about this matter and how social workers can intervene based on the teenagers' needs. Should you agree to participate, you would be requested to participate in an individual interview, semi-structured (i.e. face-to-face/focus group) interview(s) and complete the biographic questions that will be conducted at The Teddy Bear Clinic from July to August 2011. It is estimated that the interview(s) will last approximately one hour. During the interview(s) the following questions will be directed to you:

Questions for obtaining data of a biographical nature:

1. Gender of participants: a) Male
b) Female
2. Please indicate your age in complete years:
3. Indicate your sexual preference: a) Homosexual
b) Heterosexual
c) Bisexual

4. Who informed you about sex?

Request: Tell me about teenage sexual activities at school.

Questions:

- What kind of sexual activities are there at school?
- What are your views about teenagers who engage in sexual activities at school?

Request: Tell me about your experience regarding your exposure to sexual activities at school.

Questions:

- How did you get involved?
- What kind of sexual activities are/did you engage in?
- How has this affected you? If negatively, how did you deal with this?
- What are your needs for support?
- How would you like to be supported by social workers specifically?

With your permission, the interview(s) will be audiotaped/videotaped. The recorded interviews will be transcribed word-for-word. Your responses to the interview (both the taped and transcribed versions) will be kept strictly confidential. The audiotape(s)/videotape(s) will be coded to disguise any identifying information. The tapes will be stored in a locked office at The Teddy Bear Clinic and only I will have access to them. The transcripts (without any identifying information) will be made available to my research supervisor(s)/promoter(s), a translator (if they need to be translated into English), and an independent coder with the sole purpose of assisting and guiding me with this research undertaking. My research supervisor(s)/promoter(s), the translator and the independent coder will each sign an undertaking to treat the information shared by you in a confidential manner.

The audiotapes/videotapes and the transcripts of the interviews will be destroyed upon the completion of the study. Identifying information will be deleted or disguised in any subsequent publication and/or presentation of the research findings. Please note that participation in the research is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part in the research. Your decision to participate, or not to participate, will not

affect you in any way now or in the future and you will incur no penalty and/or loss to which you may otherwise be entitled. Should you agree to participate and sign the information and informed consent document herewith, as proof of your willingness to participate, please note that you are not signing your rights away.

If you agree to take part, you have the right to change your mind at any time during the study. You are free to withdraw this consent and discontinue participation without any loss of benefits. However, if you do withdraw from the study, you would be requested to grant me an opportunity to engage in informal discussion with you so that the research partnership that was established can be terminated in an orderly manner. As the researcher, I also have the right to dismiss you from the study without your consent if you fail to follow the instructions or if the information you have to divulge is emotionally sensitive and upsets you to such an extent that it hinders you from functioning physically and emotionally in a proper manner. Furthermore, if participating in the study at any time jeopardises your safety in any way, you will be dismissed.

Should I conclude that the information you have shared left you feeling emotionally upset, or perturbed, I am obliged to refer you to a counselor for debriefing or counseling (should you agree). You have the right to ask questions concerning the study at any time. Should you have any questions or concerns about the study, contact these numbers 072 988 7379 or 011 484 4554. Please note that this study has been approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at Unisa. Without the approval of this committee, the study cannot be conducted. Should you have any questions and queries not sufficiently addressed by me as the researcher, you are more than welcome to contact the Chairperson of the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at Unisa. His contact details are as follow: Prof AH (Nicky) Alpaslan, telephone number: 012 429 6739, or email alpasah@unisa.ac.za.

If, after you have consulted the researcher and the Research and Ethics Committee in the Department of Social Work at Unisa, their answers have not satisfied you, you might direct your question/concerns/queries to the Chairperson, Human Ethics Committee, College of Human Science, PO Box 392, Unisa, 0003. Based upon all the information provided to you above, and being aware of your rights, you are asked to give your written consent should you want to participate in this research study by signing and dating the information and consent form provided herewith and initialing each section to indicate that you understand and agree to the conditions.

Thank you for your participation.

Kind regards

Signature of researcher

Contact details: (O)

(Fax)

(Email)

APPENDIX B: INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: **Sexual activities at school: Teenagers' experiences and social worker support.**

REFERENCE NUMBER: **47962453**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/RESEARCHER: **Mr. Tshilidzi Stanley Makhitha**

ADDRESS: **4189 Dimbaza Street, Diepsloot, 2189**

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER: **072 988 7379 or makhitha@yahoo.com**

<p>DECLARATION BY OR ON BEHALF OF THE PARTICIPANT:</p> <p>I, THE UNDERSIGNED, _____ (name), [ID No: _____] the participant or in my capacity as _____ of the participant [ID No _____] of _____ (address)</p> <p>A. HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS:</p> <p>1. I/the participant was invited to participate in the above research project which is being undertaken by (name) _____ of the Department of Social Work in the School of Social Science and Humanities at the University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.</p>	<p><u>Initial</u></p>
<p>2.The following aspects have been explained to me/the participant:</p> <p>2.1 Aim: The investigator(s)/researcher(s) are studying _____</p> <p>The information will be used to/for _____</p>	<p><u>Initial</u></p>
<p>2.2I understand that _____</p>	<p><u>Initial</u></p>

APPENDIX C: TEDDY BEAR CLINIC PERMISSION LETTER



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26th March 2012

Dear Sir/Madam

Permission for Stanley Makhitha to conduct research at The Teddy Bear Clinic

This letter serves to confirm that Mr. Stanley Makhitha has been granted permission to recruit children through our clinic for his research on children's sexual experiences at school, pending the approval of his research proposal by the UNISA Ethics Committee. If you would like any further information, please contact me via any of the details listed below.

Yours Sincerely,

Sheri Errington

Research & Development Manager

sherie@ttbc.org.za

011 484 4554 Or 083 280 9613