

**Educational Challenges Associated with Orphanhood and Vulnerability at  
Secondary Schools in Lesotho**

**By**

**'Maneo Patricia Moteuli**

**200001201**

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**Supervisor: Dr Paseka A. Mosia**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this dissertation has been read and approved of as having met the requirements of the Faculty of Education, at the National University of Lesotho, for the award of the degree of Master in Education.

.....

**Dr Paseka A. Mosia**  
**Supervisor**

.....

**Dr Paseka A. Mosia**  
**Head of Educational Foundations Department**

.....

**Associate Prof. Tšepo Mokuku**  
**Dean of the Faculty of Education**

## **DECLARATION**

I, 'Maneo Patricia Moteuli, declare that the research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work, and has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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## ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ACR	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CAP	Curriculum and Assessment Policy
CPWA	Children's Protection and Welfare Act
DFA	Declaration and a Framework for Action
ECCD	Early Childhood Care Development
EFA	Education For All
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HP	Help Lesotho
JLIC	Joint Learning Initiative on Children
LBSE	Life skills Based sexual Education
LDHS	Lesotho Demographic Health Survey
LNSP	Lesotho National Strategic Plan
LNSPVC	Lesotho National Strategic Plan on Vulnerable Children
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOSD	Ministry of Social Development
MH	Ministry of Health
MTP	Medium Term Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NMDS	National Manpower Development Secretariat
OSISA	Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
PPCT	Proximal Process Context and Time
RC	Red Cross
SFS	School Feeding Scheme
SSBS	Secondary School Bursary Scheme
TRS	Textbook Rental Scheme
TTIs	Teacher Training Institutes
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	United Nations global programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDHR	United Nations Declaration of Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Educational and Cultural Organizations

UNICEF United Nations International Children's Fund  
WFP World Food Programme

## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 Authorisation letter from the District Education Manager
- Appendix 2 Informed consent
- Appendix 3 Interview schedule

## **ABSTRACT**

The study explored the educational challenges associated with orphanhood and child vulnerability at secondary schools in Lesotho. Using a qualitative approach and case study design two schools were purposively selected in Berea district. Data was collected through interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis with principals and teachers from the two schools. The study examined the psychosocial challenges faced by OVC in schools through teachers' views on mechanisms put in place by schools to support OVC, their views on their training and perceptions on how OVC must be supported to progress.

The findings reveal that OVC are faced with various challenges in their learning. Though there are no specific policies on how learners must be supported, schools have some methods of supporting OVC which may not be sufficient because teachers have not been trained to support OVC. Orphaned and vulnerable children form the core of special educational needs alongside disability in Lesotho and as participants indicated, they need to be supported emotionally, spiritually and psychosocially so as to boost their morale and enhance their learning.

**Key words:** Orphans, Orphanhood, Vulnerability, Psychosocial Support, Inclusive Education



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## **CHAPTER ONE: AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the background to the study culminating in the statement of the problem. The chapter presents the aim, research questions and objectives of the study, the rationale for and the theoretical framework of the study. Finally, the chapter ends with an outline of the whole study.

### **1.2 Background to the Study**

#### ***1.2.1 Vulnerability and Orphanhood***

Many factors, which contribute to child vulnerability such as wars and natural disasters, have been noted globally. However, this study draws attention to the effects of Human Immunodeficiency virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic on children and how these have radically changed the world in which they live. Millions of children have been infected with and died of the disease, while an equally large number of people have gravely been affected by the spread of HIV in their families and communities (UNAIDS, 2012). The number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS, some of whom have become vulnerable has risen worldwide, creating peculiar circumstances that may affect children's ability to benefit from regular education (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015). Globally, almost 10% of people infected HIV/AIDS are children and youth under 18 years and in 2013 an estimated 17.8 million children worldwide were reported to be orphaned by AIDS (UNAIDS,2013). For example, Avert (2011) states that within the education system the HIV/AIDS pandemic affects teachers and children alike, thereby rendering school-going children vulnerable.

There are some factors which contribute to child vulnerability. Subbaro, Mattimore and Plagemann (2001) state that vulnerability and orphanhood of children may be caused by various factors such as death of parents, abandonment by parents, living in extreme poverty, living with a disability, abuse by parents or carers, HIV positive status, to mention a few in different countries. Vulnerability can also result from the children's needs which are compromised once they lose one or both of the parents (Zhou, 2012). A great number of orphans live with either one parent, elderly grandparents who also need care and support or with poor relatives who struggle to meet their own needs (UNAIDS, 2013). Children in such

circumstances are at risk of losing opportunities for schooling, decent living and meeting their psychosocial needs. The study conducted by Zhou at the Yale University in the United States of America (2012) explains that children orphaned by AIDS face increased economic, medical, nutritional and psychosocial deprivation. It is, however, noted that the burden of the epidemic varies considerably between regions with Africa worst hit by the scourge.

According to the UNAIDS (2017), Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most severely affected region with nearly one in every twenty-five adults (4.4%) living with HIV. The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) (2012) states that as HIV epidemic continues to unfold across the Southern African region, with its negative impact at the individual, family and community levels intensifying. One of the most visible signs of this devastation is the endlessly swelling tide of orphans and children made vulnerable by the direct and indirect effects of HIV on their households. Sewpaul and Mathias (2013) note that Sub-Saharan Africa has been identified as inhabited by the largest proportion of vulnerable children in the world. Pillay (2014) indicates that more than four fifths of all children orphaned by HIV/AIDS worldwide live in Sub-Saharan Africa where every eighth child is an orphan who has lost one or both parents through HIV/AIDS. Mwoma and Pillay (2015) point out that prior to being orphaned, such children care for their dying parents leaving them traumatised, and later look after their siblings, thus continuing their vulnerability. Therefore, schools with teachers acting as parents away from home become the only possible avenue where these particular children may obtain systematic support for effective learning.

### ***1.2.2 Vulnerability and Orphanhood in the Context of Lesotho***

Lesotho, as one of the Sub-Saharan African countries, is not an exception to effects of the scourge of HIV. Globally, Lesotho has the second highest HIV prevalence of about at twenty-five per cent globally (Ministry of Education and Training (MOET, 2016). Lesotho not only has a high HIV prevalence, but she is also reportedly to have the highest orphanhood rate in Southern Africa (UNAIDS, 2013). Lesotho Orphans and Vulnerable Situation Analysis Report (2011) notes that in 2011 there were 1,072 974 children under 18 years of age in the country of whom 33.8% were orphans, with 23.6% as double orphans and about 13%, being characterised as vulnerable children. Thus, the pandemic has visibly fuelled the number of orphans and vulnerable children beyond a proportion.

When children do not have reliable social safety networks at hand adequately manage any impending risks to which they are exposed daily. Their risk of vulnerability is exacerbated by a lack of support at home by parents who have given in to poverty, thus making a living for their families (Ntaote, 2011). The Lesotho National Strategic Plan (2005-2015) highlights that vulnerable children find themselves in compromising and life-threatening situations, including being neglected, abandoned, physically or sexually abused and engaged in child labour including sex work. Mosia and Lephoto (2015) note that lack of safety nets at home mandate the schools to identify vulnerable learners so as to help to alleviate negative effects of their vulnerability.

Children's psychosocial needs should be met, which form part of children's right for development (Repssi, 2008). The death of one or both parents leaves children struggling with unmet social, physical and emotional needs such as inadequate clothing, medical care, love, dignity, and shelter (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015). As Mbangwa (2013) notes, should children's needs not be met, this may increase schooling interruption. Similarly, Ntho (2013) shows that learners, whose basic needs such as food and proper clothing are not addressed are likely to be preoccupied with survival instead of their studies.

Wood, Ntaote and Theron (2012) observe that the socio-economic impact of HIV/AIDS in Lesotho continually threatens the well-being of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) who are at an increased risk of malnutrition, illness, abuse, sexual exploitation, homelessness and reduced access to education and healthcare. On the other hand, teachers who support these vulnerable children are not immune from the dire effects of HIV/AIDS themselves. As Ntaote (2011) observes, HIV/AIDS threatens to erode the wellbeing of teachers who are faced with an increasing number of children rendered vulnerable by the pandemic. In addition, teachers in Lesotho reported that they were not coping with the rising numbers of HIV/AIDS affected and infected children and they constantly required a supportive intervention (Ntaote, 2011).

Research indicates that children orphaned by HIV in Lesotho face challenges continuing with their studies consistently. For example, Nyabanyaba (2010) argues that absenteeism abounds amongst orphans and vulnerable children who struggle to attend school. Similarly, Ntaote (2011) indicates that these children sometimes experience long periods of absenteeism from school because of difficult home circumstances and lose out on classroom instruction. Those who manage to go to school after their parent's death suffer profoundly from psychosocial

distress due to the impact of having to care for their terminally ill and ultimately dying parents (Ntaote, 2011). This implies that orphans and vulnerable children's performance in schools is likely to decline because of challenges they face at home. The Ministry of Education and Training confirmed the view that being HIV-positive and/or being an orphan can negatively affect a child's expected learning outcomes and thereby impose more pressure on the education system (Ministry of Education and Training, 2016).

The following are policy initiatives in Lesotho in response to the 2000 Darker World Education Forum on Education for All (EFA): the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MHSW) 2011), Curriculum and Assessment Policy (Ministry of Education and Training 2009), Lesotho Education Sector HIV and AIDS Policy and the Education Sector Plan 2016-2026 MOET, 2016). One of the Ministry's strategic goals within the 2016-2026 Sector Plan is "To curb the spread of HIV and AIDS among sector employees, teachers and learners by 2025" (MOET, 2016, p.80). These policy initiatives reflect on the concern by the Kingdom of Lesotho about the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the government's commitment to addressing the scourge.

Education in Lesotho is reportedly free, accessible and compulsory as legislated by the Education Act of 2010 (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2010). To enhance access, Lefoka, Nyabanyaba and Sebatane (2008) note that orphans and vulnerable children at secondary and high schools receive a bursary for school fees and learning materials. However, orphans are also made vulnerable by their psycho-social challenges or unmet physical needs (Mosia & Lepphoto, 2015). With Nyabanyaba (2010) viewing many orphans and vulnerable children as struggling to attend school and Ntaote (2011) reporting on their missing classroom instructions, Hlojeng (2014) further indicates underachievement by such students. The author also notes financial problems, teachers' negative attitudes towards orphans and implementation failure and policy monitoring as being instrumental. Further noted is that the implementation of free primary education from the year 2000 onwards, at a primary level, has prevented many learners from completing the seven-year programme on time because of repeating classes and dropping out of school (Khati, Khati & Makatjane, 2009).

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

As noted earlier, the HIV-prevalence rate in Lesotho has remained extremely high thereby making the country the second highest in the world, after Swaziland with the reportedly

higher prevalence (Lesotho Demographic Health Survey (LDHS, 2014). The UNICEF (2014) reports about 150,000 children below 18 years as orphaned by HIV in 2013 representing 17% of all children in Lesotho. Therefore, more than any other country in the region, the HIV and AIDS scourge has had the devastating effects on the situation of the children in Lesotho. This group of vulnerable children is at risk of dropping out of school, with some 30% of orphans already out of school (UNICEF, 2014).

The state of being an orphan is very challenging during an adolescent stage of human development. It is in this period when orphans should be supported to pass successfully to the next stage of human development (adulthood) (Mbangwa, 2013). Mbangwa (2013) observes that family has the responsibility for ensuring that orphans are nurtured to become independent adults. Traditionally, absence of biological parents was not a problem. As Kimane and Mohale (2007) observe, orphans were supported by extended family. However, these structures have been overstretched and destroyed by HIV/AIDS, with many households being led by young people (Bless, 2005). An adolescent stage is the stage at which children are at secondary schools where educational costs are borne by parents; parents pay school fees, and buy uniform and books. Although the government of Lesotho provides bursaries to orphans and vulnerable children, this is inadequate since the funding does not cover additional costs such as transport, meals and other needs; it covers only school fees (Nyabnyaba, 2009). Therefore, while there are a number of programmes that attempt to assist children, many orphans are either minimally assisted or left out altogether.

Hlojeng (2014) found that orphans and vulnerable children underachieve due to some challenges facing them at schools in Lesotho. Such are victims of poverty, rape, poor health services, child labour and others. Besides, Nyabanyaba (2010) notes that usually orphans attend school poorly and eventually drop out of school. Although the researchers have attempted to highlight some challenges facing orphans and vulnerable children in their education, no empirical evidence shows how psychosocial challenges of orphans and vulnerable children are addressed by schools. It is for these reasons that the researcher conducted the study on exploring educational challenges facing orphanhood and child vulnerability and how such challenges can be addressed at schools.



## **1.4 Aim of the Study**

This study aims to explore how the psychosocial challenges of orphans and vulnerable children influence their participation and achievement at schools.

### **1.4.1 Objectives**

- a.** To explore what teachers view as psychosocial challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children in schools.
- b.** To explore support mechanisms used by teachers to address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children in schools.
- c.** To explain how teachers view their training with regard to supporting vulnerable learners.
- d.** To suggest ways which can be used to best support orphans and vulnerable children to stay and progress in their studies.

### **1.4.2 Research Questions**

- a.** What are the educational challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children in schools?
- b.** What mechanisms are put in place by schools to support orphans and vulnerable children?
- c.** How do teachers view their training to support orphans and vulnerable children?
- d.** How can orphans and vulnerable children be best supported to stay and progress in their studies?

## **1.5 Rationale for the Study**

The study is expected to shed light on teachers understanding of challenges associated with orphanhood and vulnerability on children's education and what support mechanisms are put in place by schools to help them in their learning. The study will inform the concerned stakeholders of the impact of orphanhood and vulnerability on children at schools. In addition, the study will inform policy makers in order to enhance sustainability and understanding of challenges and support needed for OVCs at schools.

## **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

The study draws on Bronfenbrenner's (1994) bio-ecological model for interpreting the phenomena in focus. Base on the model, human development should be considered in line with the ecological system relating to growth. For this study, the researcher set out to describe how a child's context of orphan-hood, poverty and vulnerability are addressed at schools. Bronfenbrenner (1994) argues that a person's development is affected by everything surrounding him or her including the immediate family/community environment and societal

landscape. The theory was intended to answer the question such as how a child's cognitive development is affected by their psychosocial and physical needs.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), different role players in a child's life act independently in various contexts called microsystems but they have a possibility of balancing each other's effects. For example, a child who is emotionally abused at home may find comfort in the support by teachers and develop normally. Any interaction between an individual and the environment becomes effective more especially if such an interaction, also called proximal processes, influences him or her personally and these. This means that whatever happens in one system will affect or be affected by any other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

## **1.7 Methodology**

### ***1.7.1 Research Paradigm***

The paradigm that the researcher used is interpretive because it emphasises the importance of participants' views, the context and the meaning participants hold regarding issues (Creswell 2013). The researcher used interpretive paradigm as the interest is to learn and understand how individuals experience and interact with their social world and the meaning it has for them (Creswell 2013). Paton (2002) sees the interpretive view as considering different contexts, life experiences and, expectations of the informants in any research.

According to Creswell (2013), key to an interpretive research is a socially constructed meaning, with individuals interacting with their world and thereby uncovering `existing multiple constructions and interpretations of reality. For Strelitz (2005), an interpretive paradigm emphasises the need to see the world through the eyes of one's subject and to understand behaviour in its social context.

### ***1.7.2 Research Approach***

Based on the qualitative paradigm, this study examined social phenomena in their natural context through a verbal description and analysis of complex data such as interviews, documents, field notes and images (Suter, 2012). In qualitative research, the researcher closely examines the social phenomenon under study, and then develops better understanding of such a phenomenon (Creswell 2007). For Babbie and mouton (2003), a qualitative research aims at discovering the meaning events have for the individuals who experience them and the interpretations of the meanings by the researcher.

### ***1.7.3 Research Design***

This study adopted a case study design. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) state that, in a case study, a particular individual, a programme, or event is studied in depth for a certain period of time. Rakotsoane's (2012) case study established a clear understanding of what is being studied while Salkind (2012) studied a unique way of capturing information about human behaviour for various reasons. For example, case studies focus on only one individual, for example, a person or a school district for data collection for any study. Therefore, this study explains how psychosocial challenges faced by OVC are addressed in schools.

### ***1.7.4 Participant Selection***

The study used convenience and purposive sampling techniques to select participants and schools. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling that involves the sample being drawn from that part of population that is close to hand (Lavrakas, 2008). On the other hand, Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) explain convenience sampling as non-random sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity and willingness to participate are included for the study. Schools were selected conveniently as they are closer to the researcher's work environment.

Participants were selected purposively for understanding the issues in the study. Purposive sampling is the deliberate choice of participants due to the qualities the participants possesses (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). Purposive sampling is used in qualitative research to identify and select the information-rich cases for the proper utilisation of available resources. This involves individuals or groups of individuals that are proficient and well informed with a phenomenon of interest (Lavrakas, 2008). With purposive selection of participants, I purposefully choose the elements that we wish to include in my sample, based on a set list of characteristics (Bezuidenhout, Davis & Cilliers, 2014). In this case, teachers from each school were selected purposively to allow the researcher to select participants on the basis of the belief that they can contribute as they know children who are vulnerable at their schools. Creswell (2012) states that purposive selection of participants is directed by the researcher who understands the problem and the research question. I chose two schools in Berea involving ten participants including two principals for the study.

### ***1.7.5 Data Collection Instruments***

Data was collected using semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the participants. The interview schedule was used with open ended questions intended to elicit views and opinions

of the participants (Creswell, 2012) about how the psychosocial challenges of orphans and vulnerable children in schools influence their participation and achievement. All interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded.

### ***1.7.6 Data Analysis***

On completion of data collection, results are analysed and interpreted in order for them to be useful and to contribute to any research conclusion (Zikmund, Quinlan, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013). In this study, the researcher opted for thematic analysis as it is one of the most common forms of analysis in qualitative research. It emphasises pin-pointing, examining and recording patterns or themes within data (Alholijailan, 2012). Thematic analysis can be used to analyse qualitative information and to systematically gain knowledge and empathy about a person, interaction, a group, a situation, an organisation or a culture. It helps researchers to move from a broad reading of data towards discovering patterns and framing a specific research question (Hernandez, Luciano, Bricker, Roales-Nieto & Montensinos, 2009). I transcribed data from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, the data were analysed, categorised and coded. Categorising is the process of coding and labelling sections of the transcripts or images into themes. The researcher read the transcribed, recorded interviews and field notes in order to analyse them so as to gain an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of the participants. Coding was also used as an interpretive technique that organises data and provides a means to introduce the interpretation thereof into certain qualitative methods (Creswell, 2014).

Data that appear in written-up field notes or transcription was selected, simplified and transformed. In this case, the researcher organised and sorted data into codes or categories in order to look for patterns or relationships between the categories (Alholijailan, 2012). After coding all the materials, the researcher abstracted themes from those codes to represent common, salient and significant themes. Then the data were displayed using tables on which and the conclusions were drawn.

### ***1.7.7 Trustworthiness***

In qualitative research, data trustworthiness is evidenced by credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability (Merriam, 2009). Credibility refers to the match between how respondents construct reality and how it is presented in the study. This can be grown by staying in the field until data saturation takes place, triangulation and considering the data

from different standpoint. Dependability refers to assurance that if the study were to be repeated in the same context with the same respondents, the responses would be similar. Transferability which refers to the extent to which findings can be applied to different context was established by providing thick descriptions. Conformability is the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of inquiry and not the biases of the researcher. This was established through a conformability audit trial by reflecting on raw data, data analysis and the development of themes. The data were also preserved to create an audit trail, thus dates of interviews, letters to schools seeking permission for teachers to participate in the study.

Furthermore, member-checking, detailed transcription and coding were considered to ensure the rigour and trustworthiness of the data. Creswell (2013) states that in qualitative research, member-checking is a technique employed by researchers to improve the accuracy, credibility, validity and transformability of a study. Member-checking helped with the co-constructed knowledge; therefore, the researcher will provide the participants with the opportunity to engage with and to add to interview and interpreted data after their interview. Data will be returned to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

### ***1.7.8 Ethical Considerations***

Ethics approval is meant to protect participants from harm and ensure their right to privacy. According to Sarantakos (2005), ethical standards prescribe respondents as having not to be coerced to participate in a study; participation should be freely and fully informed about the purpose of the study before deciding to participate. Thus, the participants were assured of their right to participate in and discontinue from the study at any time without any penalty. Therefore, participants should know their free participation in a study based on correct facts. Ethical measures also include providing the participants with adequate information about the research and assurance of privacy (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

## **1.8 The Structure of the Study**

The study is organised into the following chapters: Chapter One has presented the background to and the statement of the problem of the study. The chapter has also presented the research questions and the objectives as well as the rationale for the study. Chapter Two reviews the theoretical framework and literature related to the study. Chapter Three presents the research design and methodology, thus examining the sample, data collection techniques

and procedures, ethical considerations and data analysis. Data analyses and the findings of the study are examined in Chapter Four, thus showing how the objectives of the study are addressed. Chapter Five summarises and discusses the findings, drawing on the theoretical and empirical literature underpinning the study. The chapter also ends with conclusions and recommendations of the study

## **CHAPTER TWO: PSYCHOSOCIAL BARRIERS TO LEARNING DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the bio-ecological model as the lens through which to study child vulnerability. Looked at it holistically, the bio-ecological model sheds light on any factor contributing to child development various contexts. The literature also reviews child vulnerability as a barrier to learning and development. As a result, general psychosocial support offered by education systems, particularly the Lesotho education system, is further discussed.

### **2.2 The Bio-ecological Model on Child Vulnerability**

This first section of the literature review critically reflects on a model which explains child vulnerability and how child vulnerability affects child development. As such, the study used the bio-ecological theory for understanding child vulnerability and its influence on a child's academic development. Donald, Cheser and Sorensen (2010) view the bio-ecological model as a conceptual tool for understanding classroom teachers' practices, schools and families that is an interactional system within the broader social context. The theory further enables teachers to understand the complex influences, interactions and interrelationships between learners and their environment and ways in which a context impacts child development (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). This model explains how we should understand the education of vulnerable children in various contexts. The theory suggests that child development is the product of a variety of critical dimensions such as context, process, the individual's attributes and time.

#### ***2.2.1 Basic Principles of Bio-ecological Model***

The bio-ecological model acknowledges that a child's academic development is influenced by a myriad of issues, including biological and physical health of an individuals, as well as availability of nouritional food for the body. Added to these are social socioeconomic aspects of an individual and the family. Finally, individuals' state of emotional wellbeing should be from various support networks that surround them. Nel, Nel and Hugo (2014) state that bio-ecological model sees children's development as taking place through interaction between a set of properties and the environment to produce consistency and change in the character of a person over the course of life.

This model acknowledges the continuous interactions between individuals' "biological" or innate characteristics and unique "ecological" or environmental influences (Johnson, 2008). The interactions have effect if they are constant and on a one-to-one basis amongst the parent-child, child-child and teacher-learner relations (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This means that whatever happens in one system will affect or be affected by other systems (Nel *et al.*, 2014). Thus, different role players in a child's life act independently in various contexts called microsystems such as schools, family, peer group, and what happens in a microsystem, such as home where the child lives, could influence what happens at school (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Krishnan, 2010). For example, a child who is emotionally abused at home may find comfort in the support provided by teachers and develop normally (Mosia & Lephoto, 2015). So, an education system working within a child-friendly model should enhance schools to bring desired effects.

Parents, guardians, caregivers and siblings directly influence a child's socialisation within the microsystem as it interacts with the family face-to-face (McGukin & Minton, 2014). The family influences all aspects of a child's development including language, nutrition, security, health and beliefs. On the other hand, children develop their first relationships with adults outside their family at school (Mwoma & Pillay, 2016). Thus, it can be argued that the relationships that affect a child's development at home and at school should be purposely facilitated as they become critical in its overall positive development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Central to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory are four interacting dimensions that should be considered in order to understand human development or any other changes in context (Landsberg & Swart, 2016). They are processes, person characteristics, systems/context and time (PPCT) (Nel *et al.*, 2014). These dimensions are key to defining properties or assumptions of the bio-ecological perspective. PPCT includes four concepts the interactions of which form the basis for the theory.

### **2.2.2 Processes, Person and Context**

Proximal Processes are face-to-face interaction with objects, symbols and other individuals which actively and consistently stimulate genetic potentials for effective psychological functioning (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1999). This means that the interactions ensure active engagement of children in activities for their development (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). It is through this proximal process that children comprehend the world and their places in it, develop skills, knowledge and abilities and then play their part by changing and fitting in it



(Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Enduring a pattern of proximal processes can be found in parent-child and peer-peer, group or solitary play, reading and learning new skills (Nel *et al.*, 2014). For example, Bronfenbrenner (1994) identifies group and solitary activities such as playing with other children or reading as mechanisms through which children come to understand their world and formulate ideas about their place within it. However, processes function differently from people to people and different contexts.

Moreover, Bronfenbrenner (1994) acknowledges the role that personal characteristics of individuals play in social interactions. These include three personal characteristics which can significantly influence proximal processes across the life span, namely demand characteristics, resources characteristics and force characteristics. These characteristics are seen as instrumental in shaping the course of future development through their ability to influence the direction and power of proximal processes (Kruger *et al.*, 2016). Rosa and Tudge (2013) view personal characteristics as resulting from interactions between the environment and the person.

Demand characteristics such as age, gender or physical appearance, hyperactivity and passivity set processes in motion acting as stimuli to the environment on its first contact (Kruger *et al.*, 2016). They have capacity to provoke or discourage reactions from the social environment that either foster or disrupt psychological processes of growth. Resource characteristics as explained by Rosa and Tudge (2013) are not immediately recognisable and include emotional and mental resources such as past experiences, intelligence and skills as well as material resources such as access to housing, education and responsive caregivers. Resource characteristics do have critical influence in an individual's development and shape one's ability to effectively engage in proximal interactions.

The force or disposition characters are forces which can mobilise proximal processes and sustain their operation, limiting their occurrence. These relate to differences such as impulsiveness, aggressions and violence, a feeling of insecurity shyness. and are characteristics that influence proximal processes (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). For instance, learners who are highly motivated are persistent in their learning and have potential of yielding positive outcomes (Darling, 2007). Bronfenbrenner (1999) notes that even when children have equivalent access to resources, their developmental courses may differ as a function of characteristics such as drive to succeed and persistence in the face of hardship.

The influence of the contextual factors is substantial on later psychological development of children. An individual's context is made up of some nested structures which are based on Bronfenbrenner's original model of ecological system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

### **2.3 Influence of the Model's Nested Systems**

Child development is influenced by different layers of social contexts to which a child belongs. Each of these contexts or social systems either directly or indirectly effects how a child develops as shall be discussed below.

#### ***2.3.1 Influences at the microsystem level***

A microsystem describes an immediate environment (physically, socially and psychologically) where proximal processes are played out face-to-face with significant others (Kruger et al., 2016). It is the child's immediate context which has specific qualities that influences daily interactions at a microsystemic level and these interactions play a vital role in influencing emotional, social, cognitive and moral development (Tudge *et al*, 2009).

Further, Kruger *et al.* (2016) indicate that interactions at the microsystem level should support the child's feeling of belonging, love and support and these subsequently act as a protective factor. This means that children need support from both families and schools as systems where proximal processes occur. They either closely interact with parents and siblings in the families and/or with teachers or other learners at schools. However, in the case of vulnerable children and orphans, things may be different as family support may be lacking due to death of one or both parents. This may result in a child having socioeconomic challenges which negatively affect educational outcomes. Mwoma and Pillay (2016) note that, orphans and vulnerable children experience challenges such as lack of concentration, submitting schoolwork late and not doing their homework. As Aviles, Anderson and Davila (2006) explain, schools have potential to nurture learners' emotional development and affect academic achievement positively. According to Bronfenbrenner (1999), what happens in a microsystem such as home where a child lives, could influence what happens at school and vice versa.

Krishnan (2010) puts an equally important element such as a school, which is neighborhood. The three have the earliest influence on the child's development. Therefore, in the case of vulnerable learners these systems are different because some children come from child-headed families. Pillay (2011) indicates that learners from child headed households lack

support and mostly have negative experiences in their homes resulting from poverty. Pillay further states that, such children are often sad, depressed and angry which negatively affect their academic performance. This goes to show that parental influence is very important in child's development as Bronfenbrenner (1979) identifies home as the microsystem where children are socialised to learn how to interact with other social agents in society. Sund (2006) notes that supervision of children by parents ensures that children become responsible and are not rendered vulnerable by to the law by becoming violent to other children or by destroying property. Because of lack supervision for orphans and vulnerable children at home, such children sometimes behave strangely. Mwoma and Pillay (2015) also point out that supervision at home could help children with home/schoolwork, observe personal hygiene, with parents co-operating with teachers to ensure that orphans attend school regularly.

### ***2.3.2 Influences at the Mesosystem Level***

A mesosystem reflects a continuous interaction of microsystems with each other (Nel *et al.*, 2014). At this level the family, school and peer groups interact with one another, helping each other. The relationship between the family and the child's school or peer group is an example of mesosystem. Nel *et al.* (2014) further indicate that in the mesosystem a person's microsystem do not function independently, but they are interconnected and influence one another. These interactions have an indirect impact on the individual. In the case of learners, a teacher and a parent may meet to talk about issues affecting a child.

A child whose mesosystems work together is affected positively. Kruger *et al.* (2016) points out that learners from an unsupportive home environment such as orphans and vulnerable children may not receive support that comes from this collaboration thus placing them at risk of developing possible barriers to learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1992). However, Mughan and Cicchetti (2002) found that children from dysfunctional families develop coping mechanisms to deal with harsh home conditions, but fail to adapt to other environments such as the classrooms or a peer groups because they have inadequate social skills. In this study, mesosystem interactions are viewed as the extent to which the interaction between the parents and the teachers help in the development of learners. However, OVC may not have such development due to the challenges they go through both at home and in school that are likely to impact negatively on their education. As such, requiring educational interventions would enable them to overcome these challenges (Mwama & Pillay, 2016).

### ***2.3.3 Influence at the Exosystem Level***

The exosystem describes events that have indirect but important influence on child development. This layer defines the largest social system in which the child does not function directly but the structures in this layer impact the child's development by interacting with some structures in their microsystem (Berk, 2000). Parent workplace schedules or community-based resources are examples of situations in which a child may not be actively involved, but which equally have either positive or negative forces involved with interaction with his own system (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

The exosystem, as explained by Hannaway (2012), consists of the interaction between two or more settings which do not contain the developing person. For instance, Paquette and Ryan (2001) point out that the children may not be directly involved at this level, but they do not feel the positive or negative force involved with the interaction with their own system. Tudge *et al.* (2009) further state that an exosystem affects a child at the micro and mesosystems, thus a member of the child's microsystem belongs to and is influenced by such a system. In this study, the exosystem emphasised the context in which a child do not participate directly, but which has an impact on the teaching and learning of orphans and vulnerable children.

### ***2.3.4 Influences at the Macrosystem Level***

The macrosystem describes the broad culture in which individuals live underpinned by attitudes, beliefs, values and ideologies (Nel *et al.*, 2014). The macrosystem has an impact on the nature of interactions of all the other levels, thereby providing the structure and content of the inner systems at a given moment in time (Kruger *et al.*, 2016). Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, and Karnik (2009) state that the macrosystem also encompasses the culture and subculture of a particular region or a group passed on as a set of beliefs to a developing child through daily activities and interactions with the immediate environment. It is through this process that children learn the societal expectations, their roles and appropriate activities within the society (Tudge *et al.*, 2009). A macrosystem also generates the context that determines the goal, risks and practices in raising children (Sontag, 1996).

Malimi (2009) shows that traditionally caring for an orphan was the responsibility for extended families, clans and/or the community to intervene and secure orphans within their kinship system. Research further shows that relatives care about their own children and only help orphaned children if they benefit from property left by the deceased (Bless, 2005). So, if

orphans do not have anybody to care for them, some of their school needs cannot be met, thus affecting their performance at school. According to Rosa and Tudge (2013), values, norms and traditions in a macrosystem should be active at least in one of the microsystems and their being active allows the learner to consistently and frequently interact with the cultural phenomena until it is fully woven into the fibre of an individual. The laws and policies of a country are part of the macrosystem as they provide a blueprint of how orphans and vulnerable children should be supported. For instance, in Lesotho the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NPOV) (2006) articulates that Government in collaboration with community-based and Non-Governmental Organisations endeavour to empower the family as the basic unit for the growth and development of orphans and vulnerable children. Rosa and Tudge (2013) state that policies which are planned within the bio-ecological context are likely to positively impact children's development. According to this study, if policies are well planned, they are likely to enhance OVC's education positively.

### ***2.3.5 The Influence of Chronosystem***

The chronosystem is defined as the system that encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to an individual's environment including a family structure, a socio-economic status, living conditions or stress and ability in everyday life (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Elements within this system can be either external, such as the timing of a parent's death, or internal as the physiological changes that occur with the aging of a child (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Bronfenbrenner includes a chronosystem in his model as an important component in the way that people and environments change. It is made up of environmental events and transitions which occur throughout a child's life course, as well as socio-historical circumstances (Santrock, 2002). This system consists of all personal experiences during in their lives (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). For this study, a chronosystem involves the timing of the death of a parent in relation to age of a child and the role of support networks in psychosocial shock.

## **2.4 Implications of the Theory on Challenges facing Secondary School-going Learners**

In the bio-ecological model, there are five levels that surround the individuals. As mentioned earlier, there are complex interactions that take place on multiple levels and there are interactions between each level (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Bronfenbrenner's model perceives

individual's development within the context of a system of relationships which constitute his environment (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The ideology behind the model shows the impact that relationships and interaction which each level has upon an individual child (Sheppard, 2012). In the case of a child who attends school, the relationship and interaction between the school and the family and the teacher and the child are important as well as how government regulates and ensures implementation of child support policies is important. Sheppard (2012) points out that children and adolescents spend most of their time in four main locations; with family, with friends, a school and at work or in play setting. Steinberg (2005) asserts that the changes, shifts and interactions within the family system affect a child's psychological development. As a result, school setting plays a major role in child development coupled with a larger role of educating the child.

Similarly, social interactions are crucial for a child's success in school (Krishnan, 2010). Thus, the feelings children have towards friendship and classmates may affect their mental health. A positive attitude toward making friends and interacting with others may cause children to engage in prosocial behaviour and have a constructive outlook towards school (Sheppard, 2012). Furthermore, Sheppard (2012) states that feelings of little or no support from friends and acquaintances will further foster negative emotions towards school and increase the risk for antisocial behaviour and put a child further at risk.

Furthermore, the bio-ecological model has direct implications for the practice of teaching and the need for teacher development. Knowing about the breakdown occurring within children's homes is necessary for schools and teachers to provide environments which can buffer home deficiencies and create stable, long-term beneficial relationships with learners (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The model is the most appropriate theoretical point of departure for this study as it explains the interaction and mutual relationship between various systems which affect a child, and in this case, a vulnerable one (Hannaway, 2012). According to Bronfenbrenner (1996) the interactions are reciprocal with a child influencing the systems and each system having an effect on the child.

According to Paquette and Ryan (2001), the bio-ecological model perceives an individual's development with the context of the system of relationships which constitutes their environment. Explaining the premise of the bio-ecological systems model, Allen (2010, p. 10) puts, "All individuals are part of interrelated systems that locate the individual at the center and move out from the center to include all systems that affect the individual".

Therefore, an individual does not operate in a vacuum but is shaped by surrounding circumstances, events, timeframes and so forth which link with the suggestion of Bronfenbrenner (1995) which states that human development is the product of an interaction among process, person, context and time (Hannaway, 2012).

Futhermore, Lewthwaite (2011) sees the bio-ecological model as providing a framework for identifying and conceptualising the multi-system factors for development. It goes beyond identifying forces within the individual and microsystem levels influencing an individual's development and considering an individual's topology, that is their setting and the way in which an individual and external forces interplay to influence development. Most importantly, it attempts to underscore the processes and dynamics of these processes that might influence development. The model emphasises proximal processes usually within an individual's microsystem - those patterns of activation closest to the individual that drive or thwart stability and change over the lifespan (Lewthwaite, 2011).

## **2.5 Understanding Child Vulnerability as a Barrier to Learning**

Although there are several factors that may cause child vulnerability and act as barriers to learning and development such as ill-health, especially chronic illness, disability, this study focuses on vulnerability of learners at secondary education level resulting from orphanhood and effects of HIV/AIDS. Research explains how orphanhood and child vulnerability negatively influence a child's educational outcomes. This section reviews literature to explain these influences and how they can be mitigated. First, it is crucial to the concept of child vulnerability.

### ***2.5.1 Child Vulnerability and Educational Outcomes***

Mohlakoana (2013) indicates that child vulnerability connotes inability to cope with problems which impact negatively on one's life. Child vulnerability may affect individual's life. These may include physical, psychological, social or spiritual development (Olowokere & Okanlawn, 2016). In addition, Chesnay, Anderson and Learning (2008) state that anyone can be vulnerable at any given point in time as a result of life circumstances or response to illness or events. In the case of orphans, the loss of one or both parents through death may result in child vulnerability while some children can become vulnerable through desertion. Olowokere and Okanlawn (2016) observe the following as factors for vulnerability: severe chronic illness of a parent or caregiver, poverty and food security, inaccessible services such

as education and health and factors specific to the child including disability, emotional problems and chronic illness of a child. Each of these factors is briefly explained below.

The challenges facing OVC also face teachers in their classrooms. Barman's (2010) study conducted in India confirms that orphans are doubly disadvantaged when compared to non-orphans with regard to school attendance. Some OVC go home to an empty house and do not have any one who can assist them with their homework and support them with their educational needs like uniform and school learning equipment. Wood and Hillman (2008), assert that OVC often perform poorly at school and the dropout rates are usually signified by an increase in number of OVC. However, it is reported that in comparing the performance of OVC with other children, teachers view them as favourably competitive. Sometimes OVC perform better (Mbangwa, 2013). Teachers have noted challenges facing OVC on their homework.

The increase in the number of OVC in classroom makes it untold demands on teachers, many of whom are not equipped to deal with the special psychosocial and economic needs of orphans (Lehlaha, 2011). Theron (2012) sees teachers are deeply affected and traumatised by the challenges OVC bring to classroom contexts. The problems experienced by some of them are difficult to solve and this consequently creates feelings of helplessness among teachers. As a result, this impacts negatively on teachers' morale (Wood & Hillman, 2008). Furthermore, the teachers' productivity in the classroom is affected by the fact that they spend more time attending to traumatised and grieving learners with different challenges. These challenges which affect both teachers and OVC in teaching and learning may affect OVC work negatively.

Some orphans and vulnerable children are forced to live on their own without any adult advice, care and supervision. Although there are some OVC who live with adults in foster care or with parents who are sick or negligent, their survival needs are not well managed. This thus leads to many life challenges which OVC in their day-to-day lives. Among these challenges are child-headed families, child labour, starvation and abuse (Lehlaha, 2011). The UNICEF (2010) states that orphans and vulnerable children are more likely to live in temporary households, moving from place to place and this disrupts their schooling. They are less likely to attend school or frequently miss it so it is vital for teachers to maintain consistency within their schooling and educational needs. Mbangwa (2013) notes that many



orphans and vulnerable children are at risk of abuse, being easy targets, from members of families and local communities. The UNAIDS (2013) state that rape and sexual violence amongst orphans and vulnerable children is on the rise within countries fuelled by increasing poverty and the education of children who experience all these is likely to be affected negatively. For example, a child may be physically abused by being exploited as free labour in the commercial and agricultural sector, domestic services, street vending and/or the sex industry (Mbangwa, 2013).

Generally, vulnerable children are likely to perform badly at school and sometimes drop out of school as they may not have enough time for school work. For Gumede (2009), parents protect their children by giving them extra attention, support and guidance. In the absence of parents to provide these, orphans' psychosocial support may be compromised. Mbangwa (2013) points out that the overcrowding by household taking in orphans can lead to increased psychosocial stress and greater risks of abuse, especially if adults and teenage girls and boys are sleeping in the same room. Such children may give up schooling. In the case where the household is overcrowded, orphans may be restricted from doing their work properly, thereby affecting their performance at school (Mbangwa, 2013). The experiences orphans and vulnerable children go through at home and in school may influence how they concentrate and do their school work (Mwoma&Pillay, 2016). A study conducted by Guo, Li and Sherr (2012) in China found that Orphans and vulnerable children performed poorly in their studies compared to those without psychosocial challenges. They have difficulty concentrating on studies due to the experience of stressful events, resulting in psychosocial problems and lowering their school performance (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield & Karnik, 2009). Within Sub-Saharan Africa, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS has played a major role in rendering many children vulnerable.

### ***2.5.2 Child Vulnerability due to Effects of HIV/AIDS***

Orphanhood is the most visible and measurable impact HIV and AIDS has on children's lives. The number of orphans in the world would be declining if it were not for HIV/AIDS (UNICEF, 2017). Children suffer long before they lose their parents, especially girls as they are often the first ones to be given the responsibility for caring for the sick (Mutiso, 2018). Orphaned children may be forced to relocate and lose their social networks and the community they are familiar with (UNICEF, 2015). While dislocation comes at a later stage after death, children are traumatised long before they become orphans. Children from AIDS

affected families undergo emotional strain, worrying about their sick family members or the family's financial situation (UNESCO, 2017) which leads to only few children able to start or complete their schooling if experiencing it (UNICEF, 2015). For instance, if the bread winner of the family is taken ill, some children should engage in income-generating activities to keep the family economy at a minimum level (UNAIDS 2017). These create undesirable conditions for learning. Additionally, Mafumbate, Makoalle and Magano (2013) established that orphans have limited time to study and socialise after leaving schools as they have to perform domestic chores including raising money for food and school fees. Vulnerable children may also experience social exclusion that can depreciate their emotional well-being which may interfere with learning (UNAIDS, 2017). In a high-destiny community in Zimbabwe, nearly 72% of children affected by AIDS were not at school compared to 29% of children not affected by AIDS (Kembo, 2010).

Vulnerable children are children who belong to high-risk groups with a lack of access to basic social facilities. For example, in Malawi, the study participants whose parents were HIV- positive were less likely to have attended secondary school (Joint Learning Initiative on Children and Girls as caregivers. Similarly, it was reported that 26% of children in the study conducted in Uganda, whose parents were HIV-positive said their attendance worsened and 28% showed that their performance at school worsened because of their parents' illness and the consequent responsibilities and stress placed upon them (JLIC, 2008). The JLICA (2008) further reports that in high HIV-burden settings, gender inequalities have been manifested. For parents who are sick and home-bound, girls often become caregivers and for girls, who have been orphaned by HIV, increased responsibility for younger siblings is common. These increased responsibilities often result in girls dropping out of school (JLICA 2008). The USAID (2009) reports that with chronically ill parents or guardians, children often forgo education for work or household duties to support themselves and family members. The JLICA (2008) states that, with a lower level of education, girls and young women have fewer choices and opportunities and subsequently become dependent upon their male partners for economic support.

Furthermore, there are many children, who, though not orphans, are vulnerable as a direct or indirect result of HIV and AIDS. When parents fall sick, particularly in poor families, children come under intense stress that may continue in different forms for the rest of their lives (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015). In Senegal, children from affected families reportedly missed

classes frequently due to involvement in domestic duties (Niang & Ufford, 2007). A study conducted in Tanzania revealed that children from certain foster households attend school less often than non-orphaned children (Berk, 2000). Orphans and vulnerable children may become caregivers themselves or even heads of households. Sometimes such children become increasingly vulnerable to malnutrition, ill-health, abuse and exploitation (JLIC, 2008). However, children whose parents are infected with HIV but still living may also face obstacles that prevent them from enrolling at school, succeeding and completing cycles.

Ebersohn and Eloff (2002) observed that following the death of parents and close relatives from HIV/AIDS, families have been disrupted causing an increase of destitute and abandoned children in South Africa. The traditional structure of households has been changing in affected communities, leaving vulnerable children to adapt to non-traditional families and poverty (Mwoma & Pillay, 2016). These arrangements may negatively influence the schooling status of affected children as the UNICEF (2009) indicates that when the number of OVC grows, communities become less and less capable of addressing all their ability to go to school. Guo *et al.* (2012) add that children affected by HIV/AIDS have difficulty concentrating on their studies due to stressful events, resulting in psychosocial problems. For Sheppard (2012), being faced with limited resources, foster households favour their biological children over foster ones, thereby denying orphans proper access to basic needs such as health care, nutrition as well as education.

### ***2.5.3 Poverty and Food Security***

According to Coombe (2003), OVC in child-headed households have limited food supply, so they have to struggle for food consumption. In this case, older orphans would be caring for younger siblings, supporting them with food and looking after them when they are ill. Mafumbate, Makoelle and Magano (2013) found that learners from parent-headed families learn as they have access to learning materials such as textbooks and have their library fees paid by their parents. Thus, the family environment strongly influences child's intellectual wellness. In the case of orphans, they may be likely than non-orphans to live in poor households, with credit constraints and lower household wealth which may reduce investment in schooling (Mafumbate, 2011). After the death of parents, factors such as loss of household incomes, treatment costs for illness to HIV and then funeral expenses often leave orphaned children impoverished (Coombe, 2003). As a result, children's needs such as school fees, food and clothing are not met. Lack of food may impact on the child's health since a hungry

child may not have energy to play and participate in his/her learning (Mwoma& Pillay, 2015).

The problem of starvation also exists amongst orphans. The increasing number of OVC deepens poverty and illness which are caused by malnutrition (Lehlaha, 2011). Moreover, children who are orphaned are more likely to have detrimental health and nutritional outcomes and are more likely to be stunted compared to non-orphans (UNICEF, 2015). Therefore, orphans perform difficult duties which are not equivalent to their age such as caring for young siblings, supporting them with food and looking after them when they are ill. This indicates that orphans are at risk of growing up without proper nutrition (Lehlaha, 2011). Property grabbing also undermines the livelihood of orphans already weakened by the death of parents (Coombe, 2003) as orphans' social and legal status as minors denies them property inheritance rights through dispossession (Bless, 2007). Therefore, orphans can feel tortured and their school needs may not be met as they are denied property inheritance rights. Vulnerable children are also children whose parents are delinquent and/or children who cannot be supervised by their parents or guardians (NPOVC, 2012). For example, lack of care is exacerbated by the fact that most of the extended family heads, caring for such orphans lack adequate resources (Mfumbate *et al.*, 2013). Family heads may be the elderly whose role is primarily to fend for such orphans or engage in strenuous work in order to earn the living. The UNAIDS (2017) report indicates that the extended heads looking after orphans are usually grandmothers and facing challenges in caring for orphans, as a result most of the orphans are forced to engage into the selling of vegetables and sweets in streets. Studies of households with orphans in Tanzania and Burkina Faso found that 21% and 22% of households could not meet food needs (International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), 2006). The USAID (2013) report states that households with orphans and vulnerable children have low agricultural productivity and low purchasing power and therefore such children and families are at risk of malnutrition from inadequate food supply.

## **2.6 Effects of Childhood Vulnerability on Education in Lesotho**

Children who are vulnerable in Lesotho suffer the same fate as their counterparts elsewhere. The psychological trauma experienced by orphaned children begins way before their parents' die of AIDS. Because of prolonged parental illness and the death of one or both parents, children experience trauma (Ntaote, 2011). An impoverished child may have difficulty attending school with some of their school needs not met (Nyabanyaba, 2009). Every child

has the right to education coupled with challenges facing OVC's which tamper with their rights to education. Globally, education is viewed as remedy to poverty (Lehlaha, 2011). Free and compulsory education is generally accepted as a hallmark of society's development and emphasizes a basic right and entitlement for all children by the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child. Similarly, in Lesotho education is free and compulsory for all primary grades (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2010). Consequently, all children including OVC have to attend school. Even though education is compulsory, OVC drop-out either temporarily or permanently (UNICEF, 2015) due to various psychosocial challenges they face.

### ***2.6.1 Policies on Child Vulnerability***

Lesotho has adopted some policies to address and resolve vulnerability of children. Some of these policies include: The National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NPOVC), (2017); The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MHSW, 2006); the National Standards and Guidelines for Care for Vulnerable Children, (2014); and the Ministry of Social Development, 2014). The NPOVC aimed to ensure the prevention of orphan hood and vulnerability, protection, care and support and development of orphans and vulnerable children. Through these policies, the government shall ensure that all orphans and vulnerable children have access to quality education from ECCD to tertiary education. The NPOVC shall also ensure a protective school environment that provides for the special needs including psychosocial care and support of orphans and vulnerable children (NPOVC, 2017). The HIV and AIDS policy was further put in place. The policy addresses a comprehensive range of HIV-related topics such as the provision of care and support to HIV-affected children at schools.

Apart from the policies in place for OVC, the government enacted the Children's Protection and Welfare Act 2011 to protect their welfare by providing a Child Grants' Programme. The programme targets poor households which provide care to children (National Policy on social Development, 2015).

In general, the government provides bursaries to the needy, orphans and vulnerable children at secondary schools in response to the impact of HIV and AIDS. This is also stipulated in the Education Act 2010 Section 13 (1) b) which reads:

*The minister of MOET may after consultation with the minister responsible for finance, provide bursaries or scholarships to qualified learners in independent and special schools in Lesotho and outside Lesotho as he or she may find appropriate.*

The MOET (2012) also indicates that there is provision of textbooks and stationery for all students at primary level and textbook rental scheme for secondary education. The government of Lesotho further introduced a rationalisation of school fees for all public secondary schools in 2012. The intention was to lower tuition fees and to prohibit public schools from charging learners more than what the government stipulated.

Despite the policies in place as shown above, studies indicate that orphans and vulnerable children still struggle to attend school and others even drop out (JLICA, 2008; Nyabanyaba, 2010). Research on school support to vulnerable children indicates that available support is mainly material and less psychosocial and as a result vulnerable children suffer unsupported and may drop out (Mosia & Lephoto, 2015).

### ***2.6.2 Psychosocial Support for Vulnerable Children in Lesotho***

Orphans and vulnerable children need psychosocial support which can be defined as an on-going process of their physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs. All these are considered to be essential to positive human development (Ntaote, 2012). The support goes beyond the provision of physical or material needs. Several studies in Lesotho point to deep involvement of extended families in providing care and support for orphans (Bryne, 2002; Kimane, 2004; MOHSW, 2001). Family care is a preferred method of care for OVC in Lesotho. The care is often driven by compassion and socio-cultural norms. For instance, Kimane (2004) notes an extended family as having to care for orphans lest they offend ancestors, thereby inviting ancestors' wrath. In addition, Makepe (2008) establishes that there are formal and informal institutions which offer support to vulnerable children. Formal institutions include non-governmental organisations, religious organisations, community members with grants and many more. Informal institutions include extended family members as mentioned earlier and older siblings. Makepe further states that some of formal and informal institutions provide permanent homes, extensive support and counselling and orphans visit their relatives when necessary. It should be noted that the support mechanisms discussed could be helpful to OVC in coping in their studies. However, for the MOHS (2001), children orphaned due to AIDS in

Lesotho are more likely to lose rights to family property. The MOHSW further indicates that where any property is left behind, it often gets misappropriated and abused by relatives.

### ***2.6.3 School Drop-out by Vulnerable Learner***

Socio-economic challenges facing orphans and vulnerable children in Lesotho include a high rate of school drop-outs due to the lack of funds for school fees (USAID, 2012). Nyabanyaba (2009) highlights several challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children in Lesotho school. He states that unemployment, poverty and HIV have impacted on both the demand and supply issues within education in Lesotho. The socio-economic challenges are making it extremely difficult for parents to keep their children in school. So, for orphans and vulnerable children is even worse due to the fact that they do not have anyone to supply them with money for their schooling. Family background contributes in orphans dropping out of school. Despite the fact that poor children, especially orphans are sponsored in terms of fees and books and sometimes uniform and shoes, many still miss school and even drop out. The reason being that such assistance does not cover basic needs particularly food. The child who is hungry cannot concentrate in class; as a result, the child is not likely to perform well in school (Nyabanyaba, 2009).

Similarly, Hlojeng's (2014) study found out that orphan and vulnerable children academically underachieve at secondary school level. Nyabanyaba (2009) attests to the role of poverty in the underachievement of orphans. Hlojeng's (2014) study further reported orphans as being so poor as being unable to make contributions for school funerals, farewells and fund-raising, with some of them never coming back to school when owing the school. Besides, orphans fail because they lack basic needs for such education as pens and others (Hlojeng, 2014). Similarly, the environment at orphans' homes contributes in their performance; they live in congested accommodation that has excessive noise (Hlojeng, 2014). This implies that it is very hard for orphans to read and do assignments at home; so they obtain poor marks. There are some learners who progress in their studies despite their challenge; however, resilience has been perceived to be more characteristic of boys than girls (Mosia & Lephoto, 2015)

## **2.7 Summary**

Vulnerability posed challenges to learners at secondary schools because orphans and vulnerable children experience some challenges in their day-to-day life. They lack some basic needs because of having no care; as a result, their learning becomes disrupted. In the absence of parental care and guidance, learners lack concentration, fail to submit school work late and

sometimes do not do their homework at all. The bio-ecological model has informed this study, by suggesting that a child's development derives from varied critical dimensions such as context, process, attributes and time. The model has also shown that children's development takes place through interaction between a set of properties and the environment to produce consistency and change in the character of a person over a course of time.



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

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research methods and methodology employed in this study in order to answer the research questions. First, the chapter discusses a paradigm which underpinned the study, and is followed by research approach. The research design, selection of participants, methods of data collection and analysis and ethics followed to conduct the study are discussed.

### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

This study is underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm which emphasises the importance of participants' views, the context and the participants' meanings about issues (Creswell, 2014). Wijesinghe (2011) explains that interpretivists listen and allow participants to express their own needs, interests and expectations as human behaviour should be understood within a setting in which it occurs.

Interpretivist researchers interact with the subjects of a study to obtain data and are aware of inquiry changes of both researchers and the subjects (Wijesinghe, 2011). Myers (2009) states that interpretivists attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them. Similarly, Creswell (2014) points out that the key to interpretive research lies with the fact that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world and that there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time. Creswell (2011) further points out that, researchers adopting an interpretive paradigm, are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular time. Learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world, with its meaning is considered an interpretive qualitative approach.

An interpretive paradigm enhances the need to see through the eyes of one's subject and to understand behaviour in its social context (Crowe *et al.*, 2011). It allows researchers to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants. In seeking to address the aim of the study, I followed the interpretive paradigm to understand experiences as expressed by data gathered from participants (Chowdhury, 2014). Similarly, this paradigm allows researchers to give meanings to the understanding of individuals (Chowdhury, 2014).

An interpretive paradigm was perceived suitable for the current study which is intended to explore the lived experiences of teachers dealing with orphans and vulnerable children in schools.

### **3.3 Research Approach**

The current study adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is concerned with exploring and describing the phenomena of interest through the way people perceive and understand it (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2010). The qualitative approach informs this study as it uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in a context-specific setting without attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest and how people perceive and understand the world (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2010). Creswell (2014) further indicates that in the natural setting, the researchers have a face-to-face interaction, often over time with the participants. Thus, qualitative researchers tend to collect data from research participants' experience the problem under study (Creswell, 2014). Crossman (2019) took the issue further stating that qualitative research allows one to investigate the meaning that people attribute to their behaviour, actions and interactions with others.

Myers (2009) notes that qualitative researchers go directly to the particular setting in which they are interested to observe to collect data. As a result, the researcher is instrumental in data collection and analysis. In this regard, Creswell (2014) states that qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behaviour or interviewing participants. Furthermore, qualitative research aims to create understanding through looking closely at people's words, actions, beliefs history and records within a given context (Creswell, 2012).

Qualitative researchers gather multiple forms of data such as interviews, observations, documents and audio-visual information rather than rely on a single data source (Creswell, 2014). Myers (2009) states that qualitative data sources include observation and participation observation (fieldwork), questionnaires, text and the researcher's impressions and reactions. This is corroborated by Crossman (2019) who points out that data derive from direct observation of behaviours, from interviews, from written opinions or from public documents.

Qualitative approach also allows the researcher to investigate the meanings that people attribute to their behavior, actions and interactions with others (Creswell, 2014). In Fleming's

(2015) opinions, qualitative research aims to explore and discover issues about the problem at hand because little is known about such a problem. In this study, the impact of orphanhood and vulnerability on children at secondary schools was investigated and how those learners are supported in their education.

### **3.4 Research Design**

This study uses a case study design. Crowe, Creswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery and Sheikh (2011) explain that a case study helps a researcher to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. Additionally, Yin (2011) defines case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context when the boundaries between a phenomenon and a context are not clearly evident where multiple sources of evidence are used. Macmillan and Schumacher (2010) view a case study as answering the research questions and offer a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Furthermore, case studies strive to portray particular situations, close-up realities and thick descriptions of participants' lived experiences of thoughts about and feelings about situations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This study captures a case of teachers and principals at two secondary schools in terms of their understanding of child vulnerability and how it influences educational outcomes as well as how schools are positioned to support such learners.

### **3.5 Selection of Participants**

Two sampling techniques such as purposive and convenience sampling were used to select participants for the study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) indicate that in purposive sampling the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative of or informative about the topic of interest. Rule and John (2011) point out that purposive sampling is a technique used by researchers where participants are deliberately chosen because of their suitability in advancing the purpose of the research. Creswell (2014) points out that purposive sampling of participants is directed by the researcher who understands the problem and the research question.

Selecting two schools was purposive in that selected schools are known in the area to accept learners with diverse needs; the Education Act (2010) mandates schools to ensure that all children at both primary and secondary levels access deserving education in Lesotho. Purposive sampling was also used to select 20 research participants. Ten participants from

each secondary school were chosen as a sample, including principals from both schools. The participants were chosen for various desirable qualities. For instance, both teachers and principals dealt with the learners directly and their experiences were central to rich data and the willingness of the teacher to participate and teachers' availability.

Convenience sampling, on the other hand, is a type of nonprobability or non-random sampling where members of the target population meet the following criteria, amongst others, accessibility, geographical proximity, availability and willingness to participate in the study at a given time. The two schools were selected on the basis of geographical context, that is being close to my work place with readily available teachers for participating in the study in Berea (Battinglia, 2008; Zhi, 2014).

### **Description of participants**

The following tables represent the distribution of participants

**Table 3.5. 1: Description of Participants (School A)**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Grades taught</b>	<b>Years' experience</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
T1A	Female	Grade 8 –12	25	HONS.ED
T2A	Female	Grade 8 –12	20	B.ED
T3A	Male	Grade 8 –12	22	B.ED
T4A	Female	Grade 8 –12	6	B.ED
T5A	Female	Grade 8 – 10	15	S.T.C
T6A	Female	Grade 8 – 12	18	B.ED
T7A	Male	Grade 8 –10	6	Dip
T8A	Male	Grade 8 –12	4	B.ED
T9A	Female	Grade 8 –12	11	B.ED
T10A	Female	Grade 8 – 12	7	B.ED

**Table 3.5. 2: Description of Participants (School B)**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Grades taught</b>	<b>Years' experience</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
T1B	Female	Principal	22	M.ED
T2B	Female	Grade 8- 10	6	Dip
T3B	Male	Grade 8- 10	3	Dip
T4B	Female	Grade 8- 12	10	B.ED
T5B	Female	Grade 8- 12	15	B.ED
T6B	Female	Grade 8- 12	16	B.ED
T7B	Female	Grade 8- 12	6	B.ED
T8B	Male	Grade 8- 12	4	B.ED
T9B	Female	Grade 8- 12	9	B.ED
T10B	Male		22	B.ED

### **3.6 Data Collection**

This study used individual interviews and focus group discussions for data collection

#### **3.6.1 Interviews**

Individual semi-structured interviews are used to explore a lived reality of people and research-sensitive topics where participants may not want to talk about such issues in a group Bell (2010) indicates that interviews are used in research to gather data directly from participants and allow for a wide range data to be collected through follow-up questions which delve deeply for details. Creswell (2012) asserts that a qualitative interview is the art of asking one or more participants general, open-ended questions and recording their answers. Twenty participants were interviewed from two schools. From each school, six participants were part of the focus group which was interviewed. The group thus included teachers of the selected schools, while the other four teachers came from individual interviews involving the principal. All the selected individual teachers were teachers who were already dealing with the OVC under student welfare committee as indicated by some of the teachers. Interviews which were conducted at lunch time lasted for sixty minutes. All interviews were recorded.

### **3.6.2 Focus Group Discussion**

Focus group discussion is a tool for qualitative research where a group of people are selected and asked about their opinions or perceptions about a particular topic (Dilshad, 2013). Hennink (2007) concurs that a variety of information is collected with this type of interview. Dilshad (2013) further explains that in focus group discussion, the environment is interactive as the participants are free to discuss with each other. Discombe (2007) states that a focus group discussion provides setting from the relatively homogeneous group to reflect on the questions asked by the interviewer. Focus group discussions also provide a more natural environment than that of individual interviews as participants are influenced by others because of interacting in a real-life context (Casey & Krueger, 2000).

Focus group interviews were used with research participants at both schools. I used focus group interviews with teachers who were all available at lunch time and did individual interviews with participants who were already dealing with OVC at the schools. Participants teach from Grades 8-11. Hennink (2007) notes that a focus group involves a group of 6-12 people who come from similar cultural background or have similar experiences or concerns. In this state there were six participants who took part in the focus group interviews held at both schools. Two focus group interviews were conducted. One was done at school A and another at school B. All interviews which were conducted at lunch time lasted for sixty minutes. As a socially oriented procedure, a focus group is relatively of low cost, and it has high-face validity (Nachmais & Nachmais, 2008). For both schools A and B interviews were conducted in depute principals' office. All interviews were tape-recorded.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Merriam (2009) describes data analysis as the process of making sense of data. In this view, data analysis involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting data to determine some order and pattern to enhance understanding and interpretation. Macmillan and Schumacher (2010) explain qualitative research analysis as a process of organising data into categories as well as identifying patterns among such categories. As such, thematic analysis (TA) was adopted for this study. The purpose of thematic analysis is to identify patterns of meaning across a dataset that provides an answer to the research question being addressed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). They further indicated that patterns are identified through a rigorous process of data familiarisation, data coding, and theme development and revision (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **3.7.1 Data Analysis Process**

I used coding to establish key findings from the data collected. TA has six steps which according to Braun and Clarke (2006) are as follows: **1.** Familiarisation with the data, this involves reading and re-reading the data to become immersed and intimately familiar with its content. **2.** Coding which involves generating succinct labels (codes) that identify important features of the data that might be relevant to answering the research question. It involves coding the dataset, followed by collating all the codes and relevant data extracts together for later stages of analysis. **3.** Generating initial themes. This is examining the codes and collected data to identify significant patterns of meaning (potential themes). **4.** Reviewing themes, this involves checking the themes against dataset to determine that they tell a convincing story of the data and one that answers the research question. In this phase, themes are typically refined which sometimes involves them being split, combined or discarded. **5.** Defining and naming themes, this is about developing a detailed analysis of each theme. **6.** Writing up, this involves weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts and contextualising the analysis in relation to existing literature.

I started transcribing the audio-recorded interviews from the focus group verbatim, and then the individual interviews were transcribed word for-word. I then familiarised myself with the data from the interviews, thus making the preliminary notes on the left-hand margin first, and then proceeding to abstract thematic titles afterwards. I then indicated initial notes and the emerging themes were noted on the right-hand margin. Similarities and differences were therefore identified in the process.

Coding was used in this study to generate labels and to identify important features of the data that might be relevant to answering the research question. I coded the entire data and then collated all the codes and relevant data extracts together for latest stages of analysis to deal with it latter. In this study, I generated and constructed themes from all the data. The method was inductive and the process was to analyse the data into key themes (Merriam, 2009). I tabled the lists of themes as emerging from the participants' responses establishing structures which illustrate the relationships between the themes. This helped me to organise coded data to be traced right through the analysis from initial codes on the transcript, initial clustering and thematic development into the final structure of themes (Bezuiden *et al.*, 2014). The interpretation of the results was the final written account as the final stage is to translate the analytic themes into a narrative (Chowdhury, 2014).

### **3.8 Measures for Trustworthiness**

Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007) outline four criteria for the trustworthiness of research studies, namely that the data should be credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable. In this study the four aspects were employed to ensure trustworthiness.

#### ***3.8.1 Credibility***

Credibility is about how confident qualitative research is in the truth of the findings of the study (Merriam, 2009). It involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are believable from the perspective of the participants in the research (Ransburg, 2001). In addressing credibility, researchers attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented (Shenton, 2004). The purpose of qualitative research is to describe and understand the phenomena of interest from the participants' eyes. Thus, the participants are the people who can legitimately judge research credibility to demonstrate that the object of the study is accurately identified and described based on the way in which the study was conducted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

According to Babbie and Mouton (2003), member-checking entails returning the transcripts to the participants allowing them to confirm that what has been deduced and written presents a true and valid reflection of their responses. Therefore, I sent the collected and transcribed data to participants for member-checking and verifying to confirm whether the transcribed data reflected their experiences, and thus offset any prejudice in transcribing the data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). This gave the participants an opportunity to validate the data generated through their interview (Creswell, 2014).

#### ***3.8.2 Transferability***

Transferability is also important to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research. It is concerned with neutrality in the research study findings. The findings are based on the participants' responses and not on potential bias or personal motivations of the research (Chowdhury, 2014). On the other hand, Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that transferability refers to a degree to which the results can be generalised or transferred to other situation, contexts or settings. Therefore, transferability is the applicability of the results of the research in one context to another similar contexts and the extent to which the study invites readers to make connections between elements of the study and their own experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).



I provided a detailed description that involves the researcher elucidating all processes from data collection context of the study to production of the final report so that any future research can follow the same procedure (Shenton, 2004). To allow transferability, researchers provide details of the context of the field work for a reader to be able to decide whether the environment is similar to any other familiar situation and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to other settings (Shenton 2004).

### ***3.8.3 Dependability***

Dependability is the extent in which the study could be repeated by other researchers, with consistent findings (Merriam, 2009). It is concerned with the extent to which the findings are replicable in the same context with the same participants. Researchers should, at least, enable future investigators to repeat the study (Shenton, 2004). Dependability was achieved by using external audit; thus, I shared with my colleagues with a master's degree, the findings of my study, along with transcripts to read and comment on them as a result of which I reviewed certain aspects.

### ***3.8.4 Confirmability***

Confirmability is also important to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research. It is about neutrality in the research study findings. Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results of an inquiry could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Bowen, 2009). The findings are based on the participants' responses and not on potential bias or personal motivations of the research (Myers, 2009). The researcher showed every step of data analysis which is made to provide a rationale for the decisions made. Field notes, memos and personal notes were used. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others. As a way of ensuring confirmability, an audit trail which included the dates of interviews, the names of participants and schools at which the research was carried out, letters to the selected schools seeking permission to carry out the research were used to enhance the confirmability.

## **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Whenever a researcher is conducting any research study, it is a professional responsibility for the researcher to observe ethical principles throughout the research process. In this study, the researcher considered the following research principles; permission to conduct the research, an informed consent, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality (Mafumbate, Makoelle & Magano, 2013).

### **3.9.1 Permission**

Before the research began, I sought permission to conduct study from the Ministry of Education and Training offices, Teyateyaneng in Berea District. I was permitted to conduct the research. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) indicate that the researchers should ask for permission from the authority in order to gain access to information pertaining to them. Permission was granted on the condition that official programmes and classes were not disrupted. Then, I visited the schools' principals to make an appointment with the letter of approval from the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET).

### **3.9.2 Informed Consent**

Flick (2009) states that a researcher cannot demand access to an institution or a school to carry out a study. This implies that even if the school has allowed the researcher to do the study, this is nothing if the participants are not well informed. It is, therefore important for the researcher to explain to the participants the purpose of the study, explain that participation is voluntary, that is they may withdraw from the study at any time (Clasquin-Johnson, 2011). Bray (2007) takes the point further seeing participants as having to be guaranteed a clear explanation of the purpose of the research and a clear choice on participating based on a full knowledge and understanding of what is involved. I explained the purpose of the study to allow the participants to decide on participation.

### **3.9.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Another way of protecting a participant's right to and role in the study is through the promise of confidentiality. The researcher has to assure that the information given by the participants will not be disclosed (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Creswell (2014) explains that one issue to anticipate about confidentiality is that some participants may not want to have their identity remain confidential. By doing this, the researcher allows the participants to retain ownership of their voices and exert their independence in making decisions. The participants were told that data will be confidential and anonymous. The participants' names, identity and the research sites were not revealed in the report findings. Codes were used to conceal the names of participants; for example, they were addressed as T1A, T1B and T2A. The codes were also used so that any person reading the report could not identify or link the responses to a particular participant.

#### ***3.9.4 Limitations of the Study***

The findings of the study cannot be used to form the whole picture (generalisations) about educational challenges posed by orphanhood and vulnerability at secondary schools. This is because the researcher conducted the study at only two schools within Sefikeng Area, in the Berea district. Another limitation was in the methodology since the study depended on interviews. The information provided by participants may be distorted for fear of face-to-face contact with the researcher.

#### **3.10 Summary**

This chapter has presented of the methodology adopted within for data collection and analysis for the study. A qualitative approach and case study design were used for the study. Data were collected by means of interviews and focus group discussion and an audio recorder was used to capture participants' views. The data were analysed through the use of thematic analysis. Finally, several mechanisms were used to ensure that the results of the study are trustworthy, and based on ethical principles so as to protect participants of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter Four presents the findings of the study. Data are presented according to themes generated from individual and focus group interviews with teachers. Documents were also analysed to provide deeper understanding of the phenomena studied. The findings describe practices and policies in place to facilitate educational support for OVC, challenges experienced by the students which negatively affect their learning outcomes and suggest ways in which educational practices and policies may be improved. Participants responded to the following four questions which guided the study.

- a) What are the psychosocial challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children in schools?
- b) What mechanisms are put in place by schools to support orphans and vulnerable children?
- c) How do teachers view their training to support OVC?
- d) How can orphans and vulnerable children are best supported to stay and progress in their studies.

There are three themes with sub-themes generated from data and presented in this chapter. The first theme reflects on child vulnerability and its effects on school performance. The second discusses support mechanisms for OVC, while the third reflects on teacher training for education support on OVC. The themes were derived from data generated from 10 interviews with teachers from two schools: School A and School B. Data presentation reflects numbering of participants as Teacher 1A (T1A), T2A, T3A, T4A, T5A, T6A, T7A, T8A, T9A, T10A all from one school while participants from the second school are labelled Teacher 1 B (T1B), T2B, T3B, T4B, T5B, T6B, T7B, T8B, T9B, T10B. This complies with the ethical considerations of anonymity and confidentiality.

### **4.2 Child Vulnerability and its Effects on School Performance**

The findings of the study below describe ways in which teachers identify learners for their vulnerability. The findings also perceive challenges of orphan-hood and child vulnerability as well as the effects of learner-vulnerability on academic outcomes.

#### 4.2.1 Learners' Identification and Documentation

In responding to the psychosocial challenges facing OVCs, the study first sought to establish if schools had any formal mechanisms of identifying and documenting information about learners' vulnerability. Various responses from the teachers at School A and School B are given below:

School A	School B
<p>When class teachers fill in the registers, they find out if a child is an orphan or not...whether the child is vulnerable and needs assistance. Class teacher should know their learners... (T10A).</p>	<p>We identify OVC from the register. The register itself has columns designated for parents or guardians of the child. It is from this information that we identify those who stay with relatives; who are not well taken care of and those who still stay with their own biological parents albeit being needy and vulnerable. There are records from the bursaries and other institutions which help us with school fee for them at school; and which assist as reference for the identification of these learners. It is also from these records kept that we are able to locate the omitted OVC (T1B).</p>
<p>Children who are vulnerable are identified during registration by the school. The list or record of such OVC is kept to assist in recommending any form of assistance such as scholarships, assistances from various institutions that might come seeking to help OVC (T8A).</p>	<p>I cannot say there is a record because some vulnerable children were not able to be identified...some are very neat and do not show signs of vulnerability unless one is tipped off and does his or her thorough investigations on such a child (T2B).</p>
<p>Sometimes we see them just by appearance they might not have good school uniform, putting on tekkies that are very torn and worn out, then one realises that this one is having a problem. Even those that might have school uniform, it is not properly put on as there is</p>	<p>... If you are very close to them you can easily identify them by their appearance – untidy look or torn clothes. (T2B).</p>

lack of guidance on how to be neat. (T1A).	
Some do not come to school because of poverty; they do not have anything to eat (T6A).	... the attire will always tell you even if you are not a class teacher when you go regularly in that class you will always identify vulnerable children (T5B).
...she or he is not active, she or he stands while others are busy playing, that child who has problems and poor looks lonely, bored or even sitting alone- isolated (T3A).	Sometimes a child does not attend school regularly. There is that problem of absenteeism... when such learners are followed up, teachers in most cases find that they are dealing with other chores at home to respond to life needs... but reality is they keep on missing classes (T10B).
We visit our students in their residential areas. Sometimes, when we identify students' problems; we work towards solving such problems. We even go to an extent of calling the parent or guardian to come for discussing and solving the problem. Having found the root cause of the problem, we counsel the child (T1A).	OVC come to school having eaten nothing, as a result they do not concentrate in class...They sometimes become dizzy in class and less participative due to hunger. Hence the Sesotho idiomatic expression which says " <i>Lela le lapileng ha lenatsebe</i> " (children who are hungry cannot concentrate in their studies) (T3B).
	Here at school we do not provide students with lunch, so that is a problem to OVC as they spend most of their time here. Some come to school without lunch boxes and this makes it hard for them to concentrate in class while they are hungry. Although the government provides them with school fees, it is not enough because at home OVC do not have food and other needs (T8B).

	In class vulnerable children are passive, they do not want to do the work, and even if they are to work with other students they do not want. Again, some of them have anger issues, most of the time the child is very angry, and that particular child keeps fighting others because he or she has anger inside. (T5B).
	Once I identify that a particular child seems to be having a problem, I personally approach the child and seek clarity on his or her status; find who she or he stays with, whether or not parents are working etc. I then use the gathered information to help the child. Again, These OVC are assessed at their respective homes through the assistance of the local chief and neighbours and opened files at the MOSD to get the package or the money and or both (T8B).
	Such students are easily identified as attention seekers; they are destructive in class (T9B).

The findings of the study highlight several ways in which schools identify orphaned and vulnerable children. Some of these methods are formal and mandatory, especially to teachers identified as class teachers who should fill in class registers that detail learners' biographical details. For example, T10A puts it as a requirement for class teachers to fill in the class register with details required to assist them to identify such learners.

Moreover, T8A notes that such information is used to seek financial support for OVCs. Some participants say that orphaned and vulnerable children can also be identified through their appearance. This form of identification, unlike the first, which has one teacher assigned to do, depends on individual teachers' vigilance for and interest in the learners. Several teachers note that such learners can be observed through physical appearance, absence from school, going to school on empty stomachs. Two teachers, namely T1B and T3B, used a Sesotho

idiom, “*Lela le lapileng ha lenatsebe*” loosely translated as children who are hungry cannot concentrate on their studies. This shows that children vulnerability affects their studies. T8B further notes that government bursaries pay only school fees which are insufficient as the need for basic amenities can prevent the child from benefiting fully from such support.

It should be noted that the informal methods of assessment are not given. There are no teachers assigned for such identification. As such, some teachers may ignore the responsibility. One teacher, T2B, refutes the idea that class registers work as a formal record and that learners can be observed physically. For example, T2B states one has to be tipped on or be close to the learners concerned to identify their vulnerability. However, another teacher in school T5B seemed not to be aware of any school records kept specifically for OVC. Vulnerable learners are also reportedly identified through display of their emotions such as anger, passiveness and attention seeking. However, some contradictory statements were noted amongst teachers from the same school. For instance, T1B indicated that there were OVC bursary records kept in the school office, while T2B seemed not to be aware of any school records kept specifically for OVC.

Although the findings on identification are to a large extent the same, that is teachers from both schools generally agree on most of the issues. The salient differences between the schools with regard to effects of hunger on learners can be expected as one of the two schools offers one meal to the learners. Although some teachers started talking about challenges of OVCs in an attempt to describe identification methods, they were asked to show how the OVC status affected a child’s academic performance.

#### ***4.2.2 Psychosocial Challenges of OVC and Effects on Academic Outcomes***

When asked to reflect on challenges facing orphaned and vulnerable learners, teachers at both schools reported on similar challenges affecting learners’ education. However, there were differences from one respondent to another. The following are some of their responses:

<b>School A</b>	<b>School B</b>
OVC come to school having eaten nothing; as a result, they do not concentrate in class (T9A).	... We do not provide food here at our school and our learners spend most of their time here but most of OVC come to school without lunch boxes. In this situation of hunger children do not participate as



	expected in class (T1B).
Orphans and vulnerable children sometimes do not come to school because they do not have food to eat; they decide not to come to school due to lack of some toiletries like soap for bathing and washing school uniform (T2A).	Orphans and vulnerable children are always occupied in their minds and hence not focused; they are always some miles away while in class... (T3B).
The way they dress is not good because they do not have proper school uniform; for those who have, it is torn. This hinders their learning because when they realise that they are not like other students, they isolate themselves even during group work (T4A).	...They are in most cases staying in overcrowded extended families and so they are unable to study well. Guardians that assist OVCs also ill-treat them and do not give enough time to do their school work but rather burden them with home chores... (T8B).
OVC do not come back if they are sent home for little money for contribution such as fund raising, farewell, or any other contribution. In most cases, they are the late ones to pay or never turn up at all (T7A).	Most of the OVC seem to be raising themselves; "self-raising" because they come to school whenever they feel like or even when they come they are always late for classes. Most of them are stubborn and unruly. This regular absenteeism leads them into missing a lot of content taught which leads to their failure and drop-out (T9B).
... In most cases, if home-work is given to all learners, one finds that OVCs come not having done the home work. In cases where they have the home-work done, it has a lot of mistakes, an indication that they were not assisted or guided. (T9A).	Orphans and vulnerable children lack confidence; for instance, if they are asked to present their work in front of the class, it is a great problem, they shy away, and they cannot join or work with other students. In most of the time they isolate themselves from other students, so this influences their work negatively (T4B).
... OVC are experiencing very painful things. One learner at our school was raped several times by her own uncle, who promised to	There is a girl in my class; she hardly comes to school for a week. I once asked her why she is always absent; she said she was taking

<p>provide certain things she needed. The first time when she was in Grade 7, she was bought a pair of school shoes, and when she was in Form C, she was bought the full school uniform and promised a cell phone which was never given to her and at the same time she could not demand it [T2A].</p>	<p>care of her sister who was sick T9B.</p>
<p>... Most of the OVC are made to perform family chores before coming to school. Some of them change times of coming to school for they have to provide for their siblings... they come today the next day they are at some 'piece jobs' so that their siblings could have something to eat ... It's a heavy load that definitely affects their performance at school (T5A.)</p>	
<p>There is a rate high of absenteeism amongst OVC. When they are not at school teachers do not wait for them, they continue teaching. When they come they find other topics being taught during their absence (T2A).</p>	
<p>... one of the most hurting issue is that guardians often burden these OVC with a lot of home chores to an extend that some release their helpers during school holidays since they would now be having free labour, forgetting totally that OVC as students should have time for books...but at the end of the year when OVC do not pass to the next grades they are blamed for being so wasteful since the money paying fees is not theirs and many other bad words which they do not deserve (T4A).</p>	

Teachers from both schools A and B indicated that OVC experience different challenges in their learning. Generally, inability to meet basic needs such as access to meals was found to affect their studies negatively. They are passive in class, lacking in concentration in class and being truant to an extent that they fail and drop out of school. The other most prominent barrier noted from both schools was that they are not given enough time for their studies because guardians assign them too many home chores.

On the other hand, there are different views between the schools. For instance, T9B states that OVC develop stubbornness because they grow up without parental guidance. They are also reported to be lacking self-confidence due to disadvantageous environment to which they are exposed. For example, in T2A reports that one learner experienced some painful moments such as being raped. This can certainly affect the child ability to develop normally like others and impair her self-concept. Schools also seem insensitive to the OVC situations as they are expelled for contributions leading to some not turning up soon after suspension or dropping out of school for good. Lack of consideration is also shown when T2A who states that teachers never compensate for the time OVC lost for being absent from schools. This indicates that the school lacks a policy on how to accommodate learners' diversity.

#### ***4.2.3 Effects of Orphanhood and Vulnerability***

Several negative outcomes of orphanhood and learner vulnerability were noted by various participants. The following are teachers' responses:

<b>School A</b>	<b>School B</b>
Orphans and vulnerable children sometimes fight other students for really no valid reasons. This unbecoming behaviour has let us do regular search for all our students at no specified times and we check student's school bags with the intention to find out weapons. Weapons are in most cases found in OVCs bags (T10).	Most of them are sponsees of the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) and their fees are paid in full, but they still drop out of school because some cannot come on empty stomachs every day to school. It is devastating (T1B).
As they are orphans, they capitalise on that to the extent that they need special attention, if they are not granted that attention, they forcefully seek for it. They tend to absent	Some dodge classes and involve themselves in drugs and substances abuse T10B

<p>and isolate themselves from classes, even if they are present, that is, they do not participate in class, they distract others (T4A).</p>	
<p>OVC resist some kind of assistance provided by teachers and fellow colleagues. When being assisted, they sometimes do not respond positively (T7A).</p>	
<p>I remember one student, who was not happy after she was given the jersey which was bought by the school. It was as if she was saying ... Am I the poorest of all the students... She did not want to accept it because she was afraid that other students would laugh at her (T2A).</p>	

Teachers from both schools indicated that vulnerability has a negative impact on OVC. Generally, lack of parental care and love seems to influence students' behaviour. T4A stated that OVC need special attention, if not granted they destroy other students and absent themselves from school. T10B explained that some of them dodge classes and involve themselves in drug abuse. While T1B is aware that the Ministry of Social Development provides OVC with sponsorship that covers the cost of their education; this is not enough for them as they have other needs such as food. Inability to have some needs makes them reject any help provided to them. In this case they remain vulnerable, which affects their school work.

T10A stated that vulnerable children fight other students and have been found in possession of weapons at school which may lead to their suspension or expulsion from school. This suggests lack of moral guidance due to absence of parents. Vulnerability possesses various burdens on OVC's performance in schools. The challenges which they face not only affect them emotionally, but they also affect them psychologically, with some of them sometimes resorting to acts of aggression. Given these challenges, teachers were thus asked about their intervention strategies, to which we turn in the next section.

### 4.3 Support Mechanisms for OVC at Secondary Schools

Teachers were asked to reflect on the mechanisms and strategies employed to support orphans and vulnerable children in their schools. Teachers at both schools mostly agreed that there are mechanisms and strategies in the form of policies for OVC nationally; but their schools do not have specific policies on OVC. The following are some of their responses:

School A	School B
<p>We do not have a school-based policy on how to support OVC. But there are national policies that we once come across that are talking about vulnerable children and we support them by referring learners to the Ministry of Social Development for either home packages or sponsorship (T1A).</p>	<p>...there are some policies at national level to address OVC's challenges experienced in everyday life. For instance: The Lesotho National Plan of Action for OVCs 2006-2010, the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NPOVC, 2006), the National OVC Strategic Plan 2006-2010, the National Standards and Guidelines for care for vulnerable children, 2014 (T1B).</p>
<p>Some of the OVC come to secondary schools already having sponsorship from the government through an initiative of NISSA. Some are identified as they arrive at secondary school that is where they require some kind of assistance...so that they may proceed with their education (T7A).</p>	<p>I do not remember hearing or laying my eyes on any OVC policy here at school, but the office and teachers help out of their goodwill the OVCs in need by school fees. However, there are bursaries which do not include everybody, provided by Government through MOSD, which are meant for double and single orphans, needy, abandoned and vulnerable children (T3B).</p>
<p>The Government provides books to all learners at lower secondary level (JC) at a reduced price of M220,00 a set of 15 different books as per each school curriculum. The same amount is also paid for the core subject at higher classes: Forms D and E, where English Language, Physical Science, Mathematics and Biology are provided to learners. The rest of the books</p>	<p>There are some companies which help OVC with food, school uniform, shoes and some toiletries. Some of these local companies we are reliably informed that they even provide some piece jobs for the OVC during school vacations so as to assist them with some little money to address some of their needs (T5B).</p>

<p>remain guardians and parents' responsibility to purchase (T1A).</p>	
<p>Some of the OVC are supported by international organisations and non-governmental organisations such as World Vision, Royal Queens' trust fund, Red cross, Ithuteng Basetsana Educare Association (IBEA) by paying school fees (T6A).</p>	<p>Our school has no policy on OVC support but as teachers we do help them, giving them some needed things like food, shoes, and uniforms. The government on the other hand, pays fees for them and nowadays there are some who are provided with some money to buy things at homes. I have also</p>
<p>We even go to an extent that we call that parent or the guardian to come to school so that we talk about the problem and work together towards solving the child's problem (T3A).</p>	<p>learnt from some of my students that there are some food packages and money they get once in three months' time from MOSD (T8B).</p>
<p>We do not have a specific policy at our school which deals with OVC's support; however, the government through MOET has that policy. It pays school fees and books for OVC (T8A).</p>	<p>Government has the policy on OVC because it pays fees for them. Also there is book rental for all learners OVC inclusive, at both levels: Junior Certificate (JC) and Lesotho General Certificate in Secondary Education (LGCSE) where parents and guardians only</p>
<p>Orphans and vulnerable children change positively when they are counselled by teachers. They tend to accept themselves and do the work and some perform well (T5A).</p>	<p>pay a subsidised little amount of M220.00 for all sets of books at JC level and the same amount for core subjects in Forms D and E. (T10B).</p>
<p>We volunteer to help our needy and vulnerable children individually. We sometimes agree as staff members to identify those we see desperately need assistance and agree on how to help them (T9A).</p>	<p>If I find that there is nobody pays for their fees, I have to take responsibility. For instance, there is one who was abandoned completely by the mother, who had gone to RSA for a long time and she was just staying with the relatives.... I had to look</p>

<p>There is not much follow up on children's live at home, unless a child has a specific problem that is outstanding (T4A).</p>	<p>for a place where this kid could stay. When I failed, I gave the family something in terms of food so that the child actually stays with that family peacefully (T1B).</p>
<p>Teachers buy materials OVC need and have class teachers help them with most needy students in their classes. Sometimes the school itself buy the materials for that student who is orphan or vulnerable from the collection made in the school's tuck shop to respond to such needs (T2A).</p>	<p>We discuss OVCs with other students when they are not around...They will suggest what they could do to help... for example, one may suggest: my sister or brother has uniform which she/he is no more using... Other students would give some clothes and uniforms which they do not use. Secretly these clothes are offered to the OVC so that they may not feel belittled (T8B).</p>
<p>Some of our learners especially the OVCs get support from teachers here at school. We have in our mist lay counsellors that were trained by MOET some years back to provide counselling to such students. Class teachers being people nearer to their students, whenever they realise problems from their learners, these class teachers refer them to the said lay counsellors for assistance (T7A).</p>	<p>We sometimes ask students to come to school on private clothes upon payment of M1.00 or whatever money that would have been agreed upon. This is done normally on Fridays of month-ends when most of the guardians and parents have received their salaries. That money is used to buy food and some needs for the needy children (T3B).</p>
<p>... even the class may consider that so and so needs some assistance, so they contribute in order to help such a student... the School also offers assistance to some who always take care of school property by paying fees for them. However, although we do implement this as a norm, we do not have a specific policy for the practice (T5A).</p>	<p>As it has been noted that the OVC do not have the basic learning materials, we sometimes contribute and buy exercise books for OVC (T6B).</p>

<p>We have Lay counsellors here and they are the ones who talk to children who seem to have problems. Then they will bring the results with them to the office and we discuss and solve any problems for such a that child (T1A).</p>	<p>A subject teacher usually invites class teachers as the most appropriate guardians here at school into situations where they fail... in very few incidences parents and/or guardians are invited to school to discuss the matter related to learners and make recommendations for the attention of the MOET or MOSD (T9B).</p>
<p>... in an attempt to implement some of the Government policies, we have an established students' welfare committee in our school, though we do not have a written policy on it. Among its duties is to identify needy and vulnerable students and recommend prompt action to address their challenge (T9A).</p>	<p>The support provided to OVC does not help them psychosocially. Most of the needs addressed are physical like providing them with food, some clothes or shoes. These material things do not appeal to their psychosocial needs (T3B).</p>
<p>The food packages OVC get helps to a certain extent since they would have no worries of food; OVC's minds get stable and concentrate on studies (T6A).</p>	<p>Sometimes, OVC respond positively to counselling which mostly eases their emotional tension. Counselling for OVC here does not only ease their emotional tension but also provides them with sense of belonging. That's why they find themselves a new home in school. They become happy (T5B).</p>
<p>The support provided do focus on learners' psychosocial problems because if the child has no trouser or shoes he does not accept himself but once he has been helped with school uniform he accepts himself and do the work. The unwanted idle, withdrawn behaviour disappears (T8A).</p>	
<p>For some learners whose parents had been called to school to address challenges, the support helped a lot. There was a child who was abused by the father, so when he was called to school, the father explained himself thoroughly and the child understood</p>	



<p>and forgave the father. They went home happily father and son (T1A).</p>	
<p>Some OVC do not respond positively in that they assume that other students know that the uniform is bought by the school or teachers. They are even afraid to put it on. I remember one student who was not happy at all after she was bought the jersey by the school; it was as if she was the poorest among other students (T2A).</p>	

It seems that teachers from both schools are aware of some government policies, and acknowledge the combined role of the government, non-governmental organisations and local Basotho companies in providing scholarships to OVC at secondary schools. They are also aware that the MOSD provides support to OVC with food packages. Although there is sponsorship for OVC, it should be noted that it covers every child who is orphaned or vulnerable. As T3B indicated, bursaries provided by the government do not include everybody. Besides, participants such as T10B noted book subsidies provided by the government to both Junior Certificate and LGCSE. However, some vulnerable learners may not be able to buy remaining LGCSE books as not all books are provided.

The findings of the study indicate that teachers accommodate orphaned and vulnerable learners. Generally, teachers support children with material needs like food, clothes and money for fee. Although participants talked at length about national policies it is not clear how they do support OVC psychosocially so as to make it easy for them to continue with their learning; it appears support is done voluntarily. Only few participants do mention counselling even though it appears evident that most learners have many psychosocial challenges. Teachers apparently work together with guardians in relation to OVC education because they even invite parents or guardian to discuss students' problems. However, T9B notes that the engagement of parents is limited.

Teachers were also asked to evaluate efficiency of their support initiatives and the findings are mixed. While some teachers feel that giving school uniform and shoes immediately resolves learners' self-concept problems; it is also revealed that the support dents some learners' esteem terribly. Teachers also engage in fund-raising activities to support vulnerable learners, but the fundraising activities may undo some of the gains in support for the learners. For example, when teachers speak of a needy learner to others in his or her absence, this makes him or her vulnerable to bullying by the same learners who are asked to help. Again, when students are asked to wear private clothes of Fridays to raise funds for vulnerable learners, their destitute may be exposed as they may not have decent clothes and money to pay for that day. As one teacher noted, some learners feel humiliated when support gifts handed to them.

#### 4.4 Teacher Training for Education Support

Given teachers' mandatory interaction with OVC and their declared support, they were asked about the extent to which they felt sufficiently trained for supporting such learners. The following were their responses:

School A	School B
There is no specific training to support OVC provided to teachers. However, during our pre-service training as teachers, most of us enrolled for some courses in psychology which dealt with child development and changing behaviour. Some of us have also undergone in-service training where we were equipped with some life skills to impart to our learners. Some workshops have also been held on drug abuse and lay counselling (T7A).	At our school, we may say we have some sort of training as there is 'Touch Roots Africa' programme provided by one Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) where most of our teachers are trained on psychosocial support; how to identify OVC, how to care for them, train them on the soft skills or the life skills such as being assertive, problem solving, critical thinking to combat any challenge they come across in life (T1B).
There is no specific training given on how to support OVCs. I cannot specify such an area of training throughout all my schooling (T10A).	There is no training provided to teachers for supporting the OVC. Some teachers have done psychology at school so they can easily see if a child has some problems (T7B)
At a tertiary level, there was a counselling programme offered to me on how to help	Some of the teachers at our school attended a workshop by Touch Roots Africa on

<p>them in different situations. I did not take the course seriously then, since there were even less cases of OVC at schools at the time, but believe me, it is essential now. We are teaching children who are so challenged and vulnerable (T8A).</p>	<p>psychosocial but it is not enough (T5B).</p>
<p>Most teachers import from the knowledge they gained in other courses: professional studies, psychology, guidance and counselling either from the Lesotho College of Education (LCE) or the National University of Lesotho (NUL). They apply techniques they gained in these courses and address OVC's challenges here at their place of work (T9A).</p>	<p>From tertiary schools, teachers should be trained on how to deal with children who have psychosocial problems especially orphans and vulnerable children.</p>
<p>Counselling programmes should be introduced so that teachers can help orphans and vulnerable students in their respective schools (T5A).</p>	<p>There is a need for training of teachers on OVC's support (T8B).</p>
<p>Training in support of OVC is essential lately at schools especially for school teachers, since schools have changed from simple organisations to complex institutions, where all teachers should be equipped with the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, the soft skills, psychosocial support skills, to counsel learners on handling those with special needs like OVCs (T1A).</p>	
<p>Teachers should also be trained on psychosocial support so as to help OVC in their learning at schools. Some of the students are traumatised because of having witnessed their parents' deaths after they had taken care</p>	

of them while they were chronically sick. Some of the students have been angry because of being abandoned. As such, they should be handled with care (T3A).	
All teachers should be trained on life skills programme, including those specifically trained for teaching LBSE as a subject. The training would help all teachers to guide and support the OVC at our school (T9A).	

The findings of this study show that teachers were introduced to one or two courses in psychology and counselling in their preservice training. Some have received in-service training, but think more needs to be done to gain adequate skills for supporting vulnerable learners. Based on the information given by teachers at both schools, there is a need for teachers to be trained on how to deal with the OVC in the day-to-day interaction and effective learning.

#### 4.5 Suggested Means of Supporting OVC

Teachers were asked to reflect on how OVC at schools can be supported for their learning to be effective and productive. Generally, teachers asserted that the current support for learners should be beefed up. Participants put it as thus:

School A	School B
The government has already done something which is best for OVC, like paying a tuition fee for them. Most of OVCs are sponsored by the Ministry of Social Development; but, they should also be provided with food and other things to use on a daily basis (T2A).	Inviting someone from the community outside the school to counsel students can help some OVC to open up and share their challenges (T2B).
They should be counselled (professionally) so as to cope with the situation. More training is needed, especially life skills to help those students to know themselves and be able to face challenges in life (T8A)	Children who are vulnerable should be cared for and loved by relatives, schoolmates and the ambient community at large. This not only helps them to feel accepted, but it also boosts their morale (T8B).

<p>Some of the children are family headers, if the government can give them something per month in the form of money, such children can accept themselves and concentrate at school. They also need more counselling (T5A).</p>	<p>Have a place to invite them and talk about life skills. There should be some courses for them. The clubs like the Scripture Union should be organised at schools (T1B).</p>
<p>If there can be special funding given to schools to cater for such students who come to school without having eaten anything... but if there is such funding we would be able to identify them, give some food packages to those who qualify (T3A).</p>	<p>The government should provide more help. Instead of assisting with school fees only, there should also be some packages for OVCs to be used at home as they are impoverished. There should also be counselling sessions for such students, weekly, monthly or quarterly (T10B).</p>
<p>They should be sponsored even if they fail a class; after all they are working under pressure in their lives. Everybody needs a second chance (T6A).</p>	<p>The Ministry of Education and Training should be more supportive with learning materials to support OVC. There should be no time when they are skipping classes because of having been expelled for learning material (T10B)</p>
<p>They should open up, and discuss their situations with other people. They should be trained on life skills as in counselling sessions and on emerging issues related to HIV/AIDS (T1A).</p>	
<p>The schools should raise funds through projects so as to help and sponsore such children. Such learners should also be given piece jobs at weekends to address their different needs. It is the teachers' social responsibility to liaise with local business owners to ask for assistance for such learners (T8A).</p>	

Generally, teachers are of the view that vulnerable children need more assistance. They view current sponsorship as inadequate for social protection; including learning materials. Teachers also think counselling of students should be intensified if the learners are to live with what they have. They should also be taught life skills incorporating participation in clubs to promote resilience in their day-to-day challenges. T5A is aware that counselling is important because if offered, OVC turn to accept them and perform well. It is important to note that schools seem to be overlooking OVCs challenges by delaying interventions, resulting in some students failing, forfeiting their sponsorship and withdrawing from school.

#### **4.6 Summary of the Findings**

It has been found that vulnerability has negative impact on children's education. Learners facing such challenges as poor performance, dropping out of school, lack of concentration in class because of low socio-economic background at their homes. For instance, some are exploited by their relatives, thus restricting them from their studies. Teachers find it difficult to help orphans and vulnerable children because of lack of policies on how to support learners because they have not received any training. Despite mechanisms to help learners, they face challenges as their needs are not met. Therefore, this study suggests that there is a need for psychosocial support for orphans and vulnerable learners.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents discussion of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The chapter starts by briefly describing the theoretical frameworks of the study, the lenses used to discuss the findings. Findings of the study are discussed using themes identified and presented in the previous chapter. Then conclusions for the study are drawn and recommendations made for policy development. The chapter then ends with suggestions for further studies.

### **5.2 Theoretical Framework**

The study adopted the bio-ecological model as the lenses to guide the study. The bio-ecological model advocates some nested systems which play an important role in the developing child. Bronfenbrenner conceptualised the child's environment as having different interconnected layers nested together with agents that influence the child's development with varying degrees of directness (McGuckin & Minton, 2014). Thus, primary caregivers such as parents or guardians, teachers and peers, who interact closely with learners, have a direct influence on child's development. At this level, the children interact with others on a proximal level (Mwoma & Pillay, 2016). What happens in a microsystem, such as home where a child lives, could influence what happens at school (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). The environment in which the child lives plays a critical role in ensuring the child's basic needs. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory argues that the ecological systems surrounding the child directly or indirectly influence his/her development. The systems represent the family, the school, the government and the culture, each of which plays a role, directly or indirectly, in child's education. However, orphans and vulnerable children's microsystem representing a family or guardians is non-existent. As a result, development of vulnerable learners can be disturbed because of their destitute.

### **5.3 Child Vulnerability and its Effects on School Performance**

The results in this study are discussed in six subsections, namely learner identification, psychological challenges of orphans and vulnerable learners and effects on academic outcomes, effects of orphanhood and vulnerability, support mechanisms for OVC in

secondary schools, teachers training for educational support and suggested means of supporting OVC.

### ***5.3.1 Learners' Identification***

In responding to ways in which teachers identify vulnerable learners, findings of the study highlighted several ways in which schools identify orphaned and vulnerable children. For example, teachers at both selected schools indicated that they use the register which is filled in by class teachers. The register provides information to identify learners who are vulnerable as it has biographical details of learners. The information from the register helps schools when seeking financial support for learners. The physical appearance of learners also helps teachers to identify the child is vulnerabiliy. For instance, most of OVC do not have proper school uniform and/or have been found to be loking untidy, sometimes wearing wragged uniform. However one teacher indicated that other learners may be vulnerable but not easily identified as they may be neat. In this case, teachers should be tipped off so as to find out about that particular learner. The study also revealed that not all teachers care for learners and their vulnerability, most of them concentrate on their main teaching tasks. It was not noted that absenteeism seemed to be high among vulnerable learners because of socio-economic factors such as performing home chores to address life needs. These findings echo Nyabanyaba's (2009) study that an impoverished child finds it difficult to attend school due to unemet basic needs. The umet biological needs such as the need for food greatly affect chances of learners succeeding in their studies. The findings do not show a systematic whole-school approach to identifying and addressing learenrs' needs as only the class teacher's work with biographical information of learners. Some teachers were not forward about such identification. Thus, a school context, which is supposed to provide supporting as teachers' environment for a learner who is vulnerable and buffer their challenges seems disorganised to do so.

Furthermore, teachers at both schools indicated that some orphans and vulnerable children often portray unacceptable behaviour. They are passive, and seem to be preoccupied with other things because of the challenges they are afced with back home. These findings concur with Guo Li and Sherr's (2012) research which revealed that learners who are orphaned by AIDS have been disadvantaged at school, compared to those who did not experience AIDS-related death in their families. They lack confidence, and cannot join or work with other students. They isolate themselves from other students so this influences their work



negatively. Orphans and vulnerable children were also identified as learners with anger. They have been found in conflicts, and fighting other learners for no valid reasons when their cases are dealt with. The teachers in both schools indicated that these kinds of learners are attention seekers. Teachers' observation that learners are attention seekers and full of anger seem to indicate more of teachers' lack of skills to identify and support learners than learners' problems. It seems they are reactive rather than being able to prevent problems.

### ***5.3.2 Psychosocial challenges of orphans and vulnerable learners and Effects on Academic Outcomes***

Lack of basic needs such as food affect learners' education negatively. The findings reveal that children in both schools come to school on empty stomachs and such learners do not concentrate in class become passive, and such learners' minds get occupied with other things. The findings align with research elsewhere. Mwoma and Pillay (2016) found that lack of food at home may have negative impact on OVC's academic performance. Learners' minds are always occupied with different things than school work. The fact that, some OVC is caring for their sick parents and or finding means of survival for their siblings they are distracted from school work. The study by Ntho (2013) also showed less concentration of OVC in her study which revealed that learners, whose basic needs such as food and proper clothing are unmet, are likely to be preoccupied with survival means instead of studies. The environment in which the child lives plays a critical role in ensuring that the child's basic needs are met as the bio-ecological model establishes that the ecological systems surrounding the child, directly or indirectly influence their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The family is the microsystem for learners, and in the case of OVCs, their contexts disadvantage them in their school work.

The findings further revealed some orphaned and vulnerable learners as lacking in morals because of parent's absence as the child's family influences the behaviour of the child. Lack of parental care or parent figure in the family, has influenced OVC's behaviour negatively. Such learners were found to be missing school as they pleased. Teachers at both schools indicated that this bunking off school, results in learners with low self-confidence and low self-esteem. Their academic performance is affected as most of the topics are treated in their absence. These lead to their failure and repeating of classes. Such learners become stubborn and unruly thereby giving teachers problems in dealing with them such behaviour. Similarly, Mwoma and Pillay (2016) found that orphans and vulnerable children are often sad,

depressed and angry which negatively affects their concentration and academic performance. Given the view that there are social values that operate at macro level and parents are embodiment of these social values, once they pass on and there are no guardians, learners would lack skills and values for good morals. Hence the need for teachers to act as parents away from home so as to address such needs, but this may not happen in a situation where schools do not systematically identify and intervene.

Traditionally, caring for orphans was the responsibility of extended family clans (Malimi, 2009). In this study, orphans and vulnerable children have been found in most cases staying in overcrowded extended families without being able to study well. Guardians in these extended families burden the OVC with household chores, giving them little or no time at all for studies. Other teachers in this study even indicated that during school holidays there were some guardians who went to an extent of releasing their helpers and, claiming to save their money by over working OVC under their care. Mbangwa (2013) argues that the overcrowding by household taking in orphans can lead to increased psychosocial stress and abuse, especially if adults and teenage girls and boys sleep together in the same room. Orphans and vulnerable children are found as family headers, raising themselves, which has become hectic for them. As Coombe (2003) points out, the OVC struggle for food for consumption, usually with the older orphans having to care for younger siblings, supporting them and looking after them when they are ill in child-headed households.

### ***5.3.3 Effects of Orphanhood and Vulnerability***

The findings indicate that vulnerability has negative impact on learners' performance. Vulnerable learners lack some school needs like stationary, textbooks. This affects their learning because they cannot do school work as expected. They are in most cases found to isolate themselves from other students. During group work they do not want to mix with others due to impoverishment. If they are accommodated in the groups, they fear to present the group work due to their low self-esteem. Lack of parental care influences OVC's work negatively. This study found that when homework is given, vulnerable learners do not do it properly or sometimes it is not done at all because they lack guidance. Mwoma and Pillay (2016) states that OVC are reported to be relocating from relative to relative while others could not do their homework indicating that they lack supervision and support in their home. Orphaned and vulnerable children also have a tendency of dodging classes and engaging in

alcohol and drug abuse. McGuckin and Minton (2014) state that the environment in which the child grows up, plays a critical role in shaping their development.

Teachers report that due to vulnerability, OVC drop out of school because of the challenges they are faced with. The findings are similar to Wood and Hillman's (2008) study which found that OVC often perform poorly at school and the drop-out rates usually increase in areas where there is a high number of OVC. The findings also echo Nyabanyaba's (2009) research which revealed that children's basic and school needs create challenges that lead to drop out. However, there are some unique results to this that show some learners' pride intact despite being destitute because they resist some kind of assistance provided by teachers and peers. That is, they sometimes do not respond positively. The findings revealed that learners who are vulnerable do not accept themselves and they isolate themselves from others. The rejection of support from others and isolation may reflect the likelihood of a poor approach or insensitivity from teachers who would have organised the support from peers. Thus, teachers must evaluate how they initiate engagement with vulnerable learners.

#### ***5.3.4 Support Mechanisms for OVC at Secondary Schools***

At the exosystem level, the Ministry has adopted the HIV/AIDS policy designed to help teachers to support OVCs at schools. The findings indicate that schools do not use this policy and neither is there a policy that guides them on how to support learners in their emotional challenges. Their responses particularly hint at the following policy documents: The Lesotho National Plan of Action for OVCs 2006 -2010, National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NPOVC, 2006), the National OVC Strategic Plan 2006-2010, and the 2014 National Standards and Guidelines for care for Vulnerable Children. The participants further acknowledged the help as in fees and books, which are rented to vulnerable learners by the government with the parents having to meet them half way. The results indicated further that participant teachers claimed not know any policy which specifically talks about psychosocial support of vulnerable children at schools. From the bio-ecological theoretical perspective, vulnerable learners' social network is not enhanced by a sound policy and practice within schools. Even though the Ministry has developed a policy, it seems to have not followed it up with implementation for making both the school and home mutually supportive of it.

### ***5.3.5 Teachers Training for Education Support***

Given a mandatory interaction between teachers and OVC in their support for the latter, the teachers were thus asked about the extent to which they felt sufficiently trained to provide such support for vulnerable children. The findings of the study indicated that at both schools teachers claimed not to have any training from tertiary level intended to equip them on how to offer support on orphans and vulnerable learners. However, there are some workshops attended by some teachers on drug abuse and lay counselling. It has also been found that during their pre-service training, teachers registered for some courses in psychology, with a focus on child development and behavioural changes. The Findings further revealed that at one school, teachers are trained by a certain Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) known as 'Touch Roots Africa' which trained teachers on psychosocial support; how to identify OVC; how to care for them; and train them on the soft skills or the life skills such as being assertive, problem-solving, and critical thinking, to combat any challenges facing them in life. However, available training seems ineffective because it appears that the education system in Lesotho does not enforce psychosocial support and even the life skills education is not followed by counselling and mechanism meant to ensure that vulnerable children survive. This finding concurs with the findings of Mosia and Lephoto (2015) which showed that the impact of life skills education is minimal, with teachers feeling insufficiently trained to support learners.

### ***5.3.6 Suggested Means of Supporting OVC***

The study also attempted to find how OVC can be supported for their learning to be effective and productive at schools. Teachers stated that the support provided to learners as of now needs to be beefed up. They acknowledged the support provided by the Government and some NGOs to OVC they pay for OVC tuition fees, provide textbooks to all learners through textbook rental scheme (TRS), and some food packages to some identified OVC. The teachers, however, expressed their views that the support provided is not enough as it does not appeal to OVC psychosocial needs. They therefore, suggested that initial teacher training should include courses on psychosocial support for every student teacher since most learners are vulnerable in the country. These teachers also suggested that schools should have policies in place for the support of OVC at schools. The teachers encourage engagement of counsellors at schools for supporting OVC. They further appeal that sponsorship for OVC that fail classes should not be terminated at once, but rather they should be given the second chance because they, in most cases, work under unfavourable conditions. The teachers further

indicated that if schools could have clubs where learners share their problems and successes, these would encourage them to open up.

## **5.4 Conclusions**

Conclusions for this study are drawn in line with the objectives of the study and discussion of research findings.

### ***5.4.1 The First Objective of the Study***

Regarding teachers' views on psychosocial challenges facing orphans and vulnerable children at schools, this study found that teachers know that psychosocial challenges facing vulnerable children affect their academic work negatively. Most orphans and vulnerable children have not completed their secondary education; they have dropped out of school. The study concludes that teachers do not address learners' psychosocial challenges, nor are they mandated to do so.

### ***5.4.2 The Second Objective of the Study***

The second objective of the study was to explore mechanisms used by teachers to address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children at schools. Despite the government's and some NGOs' support for individual learners, some teachers seem to provide counselling. However, this study concludes that the support observed is not organised and has minimal impact and may therefore not be effective.

### ***5.4.3 The Third Objective of the Study***

The third objective examined teachers' views on their training on supporting vulnerable learners. The participant teachers mentioned a few courses done at a pre-service level and sporadic in-service training. This study concludes that there is not training either preservice or inservice that seems to empower teachers to support orphaned and vulnerable despite Lesotho having such high number of OVCs.

## **5.5 Limitations**

The current case study focussed on two secondary schools sampled from approximately 400 secondary schools in Lesotho. However, the findings of the study may not be generalised beyond the schools from which the data were collected.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

Recommendations for this study are made for implementing two areas of focus, namely research and policy.

### ***5.6.1 Recommendations for Further Research***

This study has focussed only on educational challenges posed by orphanhood and vulnerability at two secondary schools in the Berea district, Lesotho. Therefore, there should be a further study using a more representative sample, probably involving all if not most secondary schools in the country to shed more light on or have a better picture about the phenomena. In this way, any such a study could broaden perspectives of teachers on the educational challenges posed by orphanhood and vulnerability at secondary schools in the country.

### ***5.6.2 Recommendations for Policy Development***

This study recommends that there should be a national policy on how to support orphans and vulnerable children at schools beyond the current HIV/AIDS policy which teachers (particularly in this study) have to date not found mandatory.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: LETTER FROM THE DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGER



Ministry of Education and Training - Berea

24/01/2019

The Principal

\_\_\_\_\_

Berea

Dear Sir/Madam,

Introducing a Research student from the National University of Lesotho

This letter serves as confirmation that **Maneo Moteuli** has been granted permission to visit selected schools in the district. The purpose of the school visit is to collect data for her MEd. Study. Her topic is "Exploring Educational Challenges posed by Orphanhood and Child Vulnerability in Secondary schools."

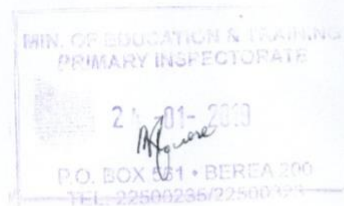
I therefore call upon your assistance to ensure that there is minimal disruption of classes but maximum amicable cooperation to make the researcher succeed in her study.

Your support will be highly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Neo Mhese (Ms)  
District Education Manager - Berea



P.O. Box 561, Berea 200 Tel: 22500323 / 22500235

## APPENDIX 2: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

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

I have read (or had it explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

I have been assured that I will receive a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Name & Surname of participant (print)

Name & Surname of researcher

**MANEO MOTEULI**

Signature of participant

Signature of researcher

Date:

Date:

Names of Witness in Full (In case a student is blind):

Signature:

Date:

## APPENDIX3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

### FOCUS GROUP, INDIVIDUAL AND PRINCIPAL'S INTERVIEWS

1.
  - a) What do you find as the most common challenges of orphans and vulnerable children in your school.
  - b) How do those challenges affect OVC's school work?
  - c) How does the school identify vulnerable children?
  - d) Is there a record of the number of vulnerable children per class or in school generally?
2.
  - a) What policies do you know at the national or at school level that promote support for OVC?
  - b) How does your school implement them to support OVC?
  - c) How far does the support focus on learner's psychosocial problems?
  - d) To what extent do teachers examine home influences on the learner's lives at school?
3.
  - a) To what extent are you trained to support OVC?
  - b) What kind of training do you still need to do your work efficiently?
4.
  - a) How can orphans and vulnerable children be best supported?