THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE OVC BURSARY SCHEME IN ENHANCING ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LESOTHO

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this dissertation has been read and approved and meets the requirements of the Faculty of Education, National University of Lesotho for the award of the Master's degree in Educational Management, Leadership and Policy Studies.

Co-supervised by

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DECLARATION

I, Mampho Ntsekele-Matśela, declare that unless otherwise stated, the research reported in this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree or examination at any other university.

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on assessing the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in enhancing access and retention of orphans and vulnerable learners in secondary schools. The success and development of any child depends significantly on quality education and a nurturing environment involving various stakeholders such as the government, NGOs, community members, parents, guardians and the children themselves. The study used a social-constructive research paradigm and was inspired by the Ubuntu philosophy. It followed a qualitative approach and used a case design. To gather the necessary data, the study employed semi-structured interviews and document analysis and selected participants through purposive sampling. The target participants included school principals, teachers, orphans and vulnerable learners both supported and not supported by the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 and guardians or parents of these learners.

During the data analysis process, I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews verbatim. These transcriptions were then translated from Sesotho (the language used during interviews) to English. The inductive approach was used to code the interview responses, meaning that themes emerged from the data itself rather than being predetermined. The findings highlighted several challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable learners, which had a negative impact on their school participation and ultimately led to school dropout. One of the main challenges identified is the unmet basic needs of the learners, particularly the lack of food. The availability of breakfast, lunch and supper was found to be crucial for these learners to actively participate at school. Additionally, the study revealed that the absence of hygiene items such as soap, toothpaste and toiletries affected learners' self-esteem.

Based on the findings, the study suggests a series of recommendations. Among other recommendations, the government should review and strengthen support through the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, establish additional financial support programmes, and develop monitoring mechanisms for OVC recipients. The government is also advised to conduct a comprehensive review of the policy, make it more holistic, establish parental support programmes, implement home visitation programs, and provide appropriate support to schools. The study concludes by suggesting that future research should focus on assessing the factors that

impede the effective implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 and promote access and retention of OVC in secondary schools.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BOS	Bureau of Statistics
CGP	Lesotho Child Grants Programme
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSP	Community School Principal
CST	Community School Teacher
DEM	District Education Manager
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
FPE	Free Primary Education
GP	Guardians/Parents
GOL	Government of Lesotho
GSP	Government School Principal
GST	Government School Teacher
HIV and AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
MOGYSACSD	Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports, Arts, Culture and Social Development
MODP	Ministry of Development Planning
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOFP	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MOHSW	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
MOSD	Ministry of Social Development
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NISSA	National Information System for Social Assistance
NSDP I	First National Strategic Development Plan 2012/13-2016/17
NSDP II	Second National Strategic Development Plan 2018/19-2022/23
NSPVC	National Strategic Plan for Vulnerable Children 2012–2017
NUL	National University of Lesotho
OSISA	Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children

SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEBF	Secondary School Education Bursary Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YPLA	Young Peoples Learning Agency

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In all countries around the world, a large portion of the national budget is devoted to education. The reason behind this commitment is that education is universally recognised as a form of human capital investment. An investment in education benefits the country economically and contributes to its labour force. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (1960) declared access to education as a human right and recognises the possession of basic education for all citizens of a country as a human right. Ndung'u, Mbeche and Obae (2019) indicate that education is a vehicle for bridging the gap between the poor and the rich and reducing the levels of social inequality. Education is also a key catalyst for human capacity development and poverty eradication.

Education is widely seen as one of the most promising pathways for individuals to realise a better future as well as productive life. It is one of the primary drivers of national economic development (Ndung'u *et al*., 2019). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989, to which Lesotho is a signatory, provides for education as a basic right for every child and declares that no child should be discriminated against, marginalised or excluded. Again, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) advocate quality education for all by 2030, and Lesotho's National Strategic Development Plan 2018/19-2022/23 has identified education as one of the drivers of economic development. This calls for intensified and deliberate efforts to increase access, retention and transition of education for all at all levels. This implies that a person with education reaps benefits, therefore, the provision of education to the population increases the country's economic growth. It has been observed that secondary education promotes democratic institutions and public engagement. Therefore, a country needs to invest in secondary school education for the benefit of its people (Kwoko, 2012).

In an effort to provide quality education for all, in 2000, the Government of Lesotho established the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 for secondary school to enhance access and retention, and

ultimately reduce dropouts. It was intended to lessen educational wastage and decrease disparities and inequalities in the provision of secondary education. In particular, the bursary policy is targeted at Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000). Despite government efforts to enhance the retention of OVC and reduce school dropouts through the secondary education bursary scheme fund, the policy seems to be twofold as its selection is need-based, while its implementation is found to be performance-based. This prevents the attainment of the policy objective of enhancing access and retention of OVC in secondary schools until the circle is complete. The number of OVC dropouts in secondary schools signifies the unfulfilled objective of the bursary policy. For every dropout, the country loses the potential workforce. Concerns have been raised about how orphans and vulnerable learners are still unable to access secondary education, and even those who managed to access it through the support of the policy failed to complete secondary education (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2019; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2017).

1.2   BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The government of Lesotho, like other governments globally, has fully implemented free primary education to enhance access to quality education for all (Nyabanyaba, 2009). The focus is now shifting to the exploration of the benefits of secondary schooling. The reason is that secondary schools face several challenges which constrain attainment of access to quality education for all, especially for the OVC. These challenges include a high rate of dropouts, which leads to reduced retention rates. The escalating dropout rate at the secondary level continues to be a concern to policymakers and educational practitioners worldwide (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2019). For a smooth transition from primary schools to secondary schools, the government of Lesotho established a secondary school policy known as the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy in 2000. This bursary scheme is intended to enhance access to quality education for OVC. It is also aimed at ensuring that these learners are retained in school after enrolment (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000).

According to Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) (2014), the introduction of a bursary scheme led to a significant increase in the enrolment rate in secondary schools. Specifically, the enrolment rate rose from 21% in 2001 to nearly 37% in 2012. This suggests that the bursary

scheme had a positive impact on encouraging more students to attend secondary school. There is a noticeable socioeconomic disparity in secondary school attendance. In 2009, only 11% of children from the poorest quintile attended secondary school, while a much higher percentage, 61%, from the richest quintile did so. This highlights a significant gap in access to education based on economic status. The dropout rates among poorer learners, especially boys, were high. In 2004, the dropout rate was above 5% for learners in the lowest quintile, whereas it was below 1% for learners in the richest quintile. This indicates that Learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to drop out of secondary school compared to their wealthier counterparts (MOSD, 2014).

This is supported by Lesotho Education Fact Sheets 2021, which shows that in 2019, about 80 percent of children completed primary education, with only 33 percent completing lower secondary education and 14 percent completing upper secondary education. The lower completion rate in lower secondary schools is due to OVC dropouts. The results of these fact sheets show that 61 percent of children from the richest quintile complete secondary education, while only 4 percent of children from the poorest quintile complete secondary education. This shows a growing socioeconomic gap between children realising educational attainment (UNICEF, 2021).

It does not make sense to have a policy in place to support education for OVC but when they fail to proceed to the next class, the policy disregards the status of the beneficiaries, which was the basis for selection. The reason is that if a learner supported by his/her parents fails, the said learner has an opportunity to repeat a class under the support of his/her parents. However, in the case of the bursary scheme policy, these children's bursary is stopped when they fail to proceed to the next class (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000). This study, therefore, investigated why the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 implementation disregards a second chance for OVC.

1.3   PROBLEM STATEMENT
Access to quality education is a critical factor affecting the well-being and opportunities of both children and society at large. Enhancing access and retention of disadvantaged learners requires a strong educational policy commitment backed by practical actions. As noted by Nyabanyaba

(2009), the Lesotho government has introduced a number of initiatives aimed at increasing access to quality education for all as a commitment to international declarations. The most significant initiative is the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2000. Although this initiative is seen as a great success in improving access to and retention in primary education, a larger than usual number of learners have experienced entry into secondary education severely straining the already limited educational access to secondary education in the country. This huge influx of learners into secondary education leads to an alarming rate of dropout for orphans and vulnerable learners due to the inability to bear the school-related costs (Nyabanyaba, 2009).

In an effort to address this issue, the Lesotho government introduced an educational scheme bursary policy in 2000 to ensure access and retention of OVC in secondary education. This policy is designed to ensure that these learners are taken care of when it comes to school fees and other school-related expenses. This was done to reduce the number of orphans and vulnerable learners who drop out of secondary school due to a lack of financial support for education. Therefore, the government found that the lack of school fees in both primary and secondary schools is a serious problem for orphans and vulnerable children (MOSD, 2012). Despite the government's efforts to improve access to and retention of OVC in secondary schools, several OVC are still out of school because they cannot pay school fees after failing to progress to the next grade. This shows that the implementation of the policy ignores the fact that the academic achievement of these learners is hampered by several challenges. Specifically, it has been established that household socio-economic status is a powerful predictor of school achievement and the likelihood of learners' drop-out (Ong'injo, 2010). Akengo (2007) adds that poor performance among orphans and vulnerable learners is due to indiscipline cases leading to suspension, expulsion and poverty at the household level.

Therefore, it is against the above background that the purpose of this study is to investigate why there are still many OVCs who are out of school despite the implementation of the policy. It is important to note that increasing OVC access and retention in secondary schools will result in increased labour productivity. This will have a significant impact on the country's growth and development.

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1.3.1 THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

The study is guided by the following main question:

How effective is the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in enhancing OVC's access and retention in selected secondary schools of Leribe?

1.3.1.1 SECONDARY QUESTIONS

Based on the main question above, the study aims to respond to the following subsidiary questions:

1. What are the challenges encountered by the OVC in their secondary school education?
2. What are the criteria and procedures used to identify the recipients of the OVC Bursary Scheme?
3. To what extent does the OVC bursary scheme promote access and retention of the OVC through the Lesotho secondary schools?
4. What support mechanisms can be recommended to enhance the educational success of the OVC?
5. How can the bursary scheme be improved to meet the changing needs of OVC in Lesotho secondary schools?

> **Comment [A1]:** Dr Tlali is this correction necessary?

1.3.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to assess the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme in enhancing the OVC's access and retention in selected secondary schools in Leribe.

1.3.2.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Based on the above purpose, the study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify the ~~challenges~~challenges, the that the OVC face at secondary education level.
2. To find out the criteria and procedures used to identify the recipients of the policy.
3. To assess the extent to which the policy promotes OVC access and retention through secondary schools in Lesotho.
4. To identify the support mechanisms that need to be put in place to improve the OVC's educational success.

1.4   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a strategy that outlines the process to be followed when conducting research. This includes research design, data collection and data analysis. Therefore, research methodology in this study outlines why the proposed study was worth researching, how the research problem was addressed, the methods of data collection used, and the data analysis method employed (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

1.4.1   RESEARCH PARADIGM

When deciding to conduct a study, it is a prerequisite to select a research topic and a paradigm that reflects the framework of beliefs and values for investigating that topic. The research paradigm is defined as a collection of assumptions or concepts that guide a researcher's inquiry (Mamba, 2019). The social constructive research paradigm was employed in this study. The paradigm is helpful for better understanding of the nature of the study since it gives a clear conceptualisation of the entire world of research (Mamba, 2019).

1.4.2   RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopted qualitative research approach where participants verbalise their responses when asked questions. It allows participants to openly provide the answers to research questions in their own words. The data collection techniques used under this approach are group interviews, projective techniques and in-depth interviews (Kothari, 2004). The main rationale for using a qualitative research approach for this study is that it enables a more comprehensive understanding of the issues inherent in the research problem. This was achieved by having a relatively small but focused sample size (Michael, 2002).

1.4.3   RESEARCH DESIGN

The selection of a research design follows logically from the formulation of the research problem. This shows that the problem statement determines the choice of the research design to be adopted. The research design provides guidance and instructions needed to address the research problem. It makes it easy to anticipate research decisions that would be appropriate in such a manner that the validity of the findings of the study is maximised. The research design is the plan used in conducting the research (Mouton, 1996). After identifying the problem, it was

discovered that there is a lack of previous studies addressing the issue of out-of-school OVC due to inability to pay their school fees after failing to proceed to the next class. Therefore, the aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the OVC bursary scheme in attracting and retaining learners until they complete their secondary education.

This study employed a qualitative case study design. According to Creswell (2014), a qualitative case study is defined as the process of evaluating time-limited data based on in-depth data collection using different data sources in a specific context. Crowe *et al*. (2011) define a qualitative case study as the process by which a researcher closely examines a specific case in its natural setting. According to Gammelgaard (2017), qualitative research means an investigation of concepts and their meaning and interpretations in specific research contexts (Gammelgaard, 2017). Qualitative research uses data that is in the form of words rather than numbers (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020). This research design is located within the social constructivism paradigm. This paradigm is relevant in a study of this nature since the aim is to understand people's perceptions of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 to explore its effectiveness (Mats'ela, 2018; Mbatha, 2015).

1.4.4 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection methods in a case study vary depending on the type of case study and the research questions addressed. Case studies are in-depth, qualitative investigations of a specific phenomenon, context, or individual. For the purpose of this study, a triangulation data collection method combining semi-structured interviews and document analysis was used. The combination of multiple data collection methods helped cross-validate and improve the reliability and validity of the study findings. The data collection methods chosen are well tailored to the research objectives and the type of case. Data collection in a qualitative case study is the most important phase. This is because the richness and depth of what is ultimately known depends on the craftsmanship and effectiveness of the data collection method (Njie & Asimiran, 2014).

The findings and conclusion of the research largely depend on the full utilisation of both the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 and OVC access and retention in selected Leribe secondary

schools' data (Njau, 2013). The analysis of existing policies, strategies and guidelines on OVC access and retention in secondary schools was conducted to gather secondary data.

1.4.4.1 POPULATION

Population refers to the entire group of individuals, events or objects that share common observable and recognizable characteristics in a defined context. It refers to the population in which the findings will be generalised or a large group from which the sample is drawn. In this study, the population included the departments responsible for the bursary fund scheme, all head teachers, teachers, parents, guardians and OVC. The target population for this study was 14 participants which consisted of school principals, teachers, OVC who were supported and those who were not supported by OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 and guardians/parents. This population is considered suitable due to the high number of orphans and vulnerable children supported by the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in these three categories (Crowe *et al.*, 2011).

1.4.4.2 PARTICIPANTS' SELECTION

There are different ways of selecting participants. As the approach used is qualitative, the selection of the participants was based on the time and place of the research. In this study, the issue of sampling was dealt with when selecting the participants. The sample for this study involves participants who were purposively selected since the study employed a purposive sampling method. The term 'purposive' applies to situations where the participants are known regarding the study problem. The purposive sampling method helps researchers in pre-defining which types of participants or cases they need to include to cover all variations that are expected to be of relevance to their study (Busetto *et al*., 2020; Sahara, 2019; Mbatha, 2015; Mncube & Makhasane, 2011; Kalaba, 2010). Greenstein (2009) describes purposive sampling as a form of nonprobability sampling where cases are judged as typical, or some categories of cases are of interest to the research. Under this method, the participants were selected based on their relationship to the implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme.

1.4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Flick (2014), qualitative data analysis is a research method used to examine and interpret non-numerical data such as text, images, audio or video in order to understand the underlying meanings, patterns and structures of the data. The analysis of qualitative data attempts to realise and define topics in an environment and activities to attain generalisable declarations by comparing different materials. When analysing data derived from a qualitative research method, the process involves classifying and clarifying the participants' meaning attached in their reaction to questioning and presenting it in a logical manner (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

However, knowledge and comprehension of the text and idioms are important aspects to keep in mind when analysing qualitative data. Data analysis is about organising, interpreting and explaining data to generate meaningful insights and drawing conclusions. In qualitative research, data analysis starts at the beginning of the data collection process. It involves a complex and time-consuming process, reducing large amounts of data to a few themes (Creswell, 2014). All interview sessions were conducted in both English and Sesotho and tape-recorded, and transcribed interviews were analysed systematically through repeated reading.

1.5   VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

The Ministry of Education and Training, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development, plays a significant role in providing educational support to both orphans and vulnerable learners in the country. These two ministries could benefit from this study as the findings could guide them in the review and implementation of existing bursary policies to improve access and retention of OVC in secondary schools. The orphans and vulnerable learners who are the beneficiaries of this policy could benefit significantly from the study as the findings could provide the recommendations for improving the implementation of the OVC Policy 2000 for their own benefit.

Moreover, the findings of this study will contribute knowledge to the existing literature on the subject. Similarly, it is also hoped that the study will provide an impetus upon which other related studies could be anchored. Finally, it is hoped that this study will act as a source of

reference for all education stakeholders who have interest in orphans and vulnerable learners' education (MOSD, 2014). The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) plays a significant role in overseeing educational activities in the country. It is hoped that the findings of this study will be useful to the MOET. This is because by providing bursaries to many learners in secondary schools, higher literacy levels are achieved which fuels economic development.

1.6   DELINEATION OF THE RESEARCH AREA

The research area in which this study falls is Educational Management, Leadership, and Policy Studies. Based on the research topic and the problem statement, this study focuses on policy studies whereby the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 was assessed for its effectiveness in enhancing OVC access and retention in secondary schools. This study targeted orphans and vulnerable learners in Grades 8 to 11 who were supported by the bursary scheme policy and those who were not supported from selected secondary schools in the Leribe district. This district was purposively selected because it has a combination of government, public and church secondary schools with a number of OVC who are educationally supported under the OVC Bursary Scheme. This allowed for the collection of primary data easily in a short period.

1.7   INTEGRITY OF THE RESEARCH

The highest standards of integrity and ethics were maintained throughout the research. This research was aligned with the research integrity requirements espoused by the National University of Lesotho. The study abided by national and international standards of research integrity. These include honesty in all aspects of research, diligence, thoroughness and excellence in research practice, transparency and open communication, and caring and respect for all participants. In carrying out this research the researcher becomes the steward who carries accountability through taking personal responsibility for the integrity and empowering others to own the research process (Corea, 2017).

1.7.1   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics follow certain acceptable standards in carrying out research. This, in turn, means that all research should be ethical (Wisker, 2008). Ethical considerations were followed throughout this study. All participants were sensitised about the research as suggested by Collins

et al. (2000). This was done to make sure they understood what the research involved. As part of good research ethics, consent must be sought from those who are involved in a study. In the data collection process, the self-esteem and self-respect of the participants were given priority. They were assured of the confidentiality of their identity, especially when publishing the research findings. The information gathered from the participants was treated strictly confidential to protect their privacy. Participants were also treated equally (Collins *et al.*, 2000).

This is in support of Beauchamp and Childress (1983) who indicate that a researcher should consider the following ethical principles: (a) autonomy: respect for the rights of the individual, (b) beneficence: doing good, (c) non-maleficence: not harming and (d) justice: particularly equity. Permission to conduct collect data was requested from the District Education Manager (DEM) -Leribe, selected secondary schools' principals and guardians/parents in the case of minors. An introductory letter seeking the participants' permission to be part of the study was given to all potential participants. The names of the participants were not required for confidentiality purposes (Onuko, 2012).

1.7.2   TRUSTWORTHINESS

The trustworthiness of the research was ensured through the employment of several techniques to make the findings of the study worthwhile. Chowdhury (2015) argues that maintaining trustworthiness in research establishes a level of consistency that makes the findings of a study worthwhile. In pursuing and preserving the principle of trustworthiness, this study used the principles espoused by which involved the following two traits: (1) credibility in which the researcher is expected to maintain a systematic level of objectivity about the findings of the study and (2) transferability in which the researcher is expected to generalise the findings of the study in relation to other studies that were conducted in the same manner (Shendon, 2004). Therefore, a maximum degree of applicability of the study was maintained and the element of research dependability was conducted. This was based on ensuring that other situations are applicable besides the Lesotho context. Equally, several case studies during the literature review were taken into consideration and the conformability of the study was maintained to the general purpose accordingly (Mamba, 2019).

1.8 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

To understand the concepts and develop constructs used in the study, it is imperative to define the following terms: (1) Orphans and Vulnerable Children, (2) Secondary School, (3) Access to Secondary Schools and (4) Retention in Secondary Schools. The definitions of these terms are important for understanding the education and well-being of orphaned and vulnerable children, particularly in relation to their access to and retention in secondary schools.

1.8.1 ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Orphans and vulnerable children are defined as a category of children under the age of 18 who have lost one or both parents or face other significant challenges that put them at risk of harm, neglect or exclusion. These challenges may include poverty, abuse, exploitation, illness or other circumstances that affect their well-being (John, 2017; Jere, 2014; MOSD, 2014; OSISA, 2012; Tamasane, 2011; Ministry of Health and Social Welfare [MOHSW], 2006). According to Nkirote and Mugambi (2019), about 12 million learners in sub-Saharan Africa have lost one or both parents due to Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV and AIDS).

1.8.2 SECONDARY SCHOOL

Secondary school for the purposes of this study is defined as middle and high school that prepares learners for vocational or tertiary education. This is an educational institution classified as junior and upper secondary school and typically teaches learners from grades 8 to 11 in Lesotho (Ministry of Education and Training [MOET], 2016).

1.8.3 ACCESS TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Access to secondary school refers to students' ability to enroll in and attend secondary school. These include various factors such as the geographical proximity of schools, the affordability of education, admission policies, and the availability of necessary resources such as textbooks and school facilities. Ensuring access to secondary schools is crucial to promoting equal educational opportunities for all children (UNICEF, 2018).

1.8.4   RETENTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Retention in secondary school refers to the ability of students to remain enrolled and complete their secondary education. The focus is on preventing dropouts and factors that can cause students to leave school early. Factors influencing retention may include school performance, socioeconomic conditions, family support, and the quality of the educational environment. High retention rates are desirable because they are a sign that students are successfully completing their further education (UNICEF, 2018).

1.9   LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

This dissertation comprises of five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Orientation. This chapter discusses the background of the research, research problem statement, significance of the research, research purpose, research questions, the rationale behind the research, the methodology, and philosophical assumptions underlying the research. The ethical considerations are also briefly stipulated.

Chapter 2: Literature review. This chapter presents the literature review. This includes definitions of orphans and vulnerable children, bursary scheme policy and interventions. The theoretical framework within which the literature and the entire study are anchored is discussed. This includes research done locally and globally on the research topic and related topics.

Chapter 3: Research methodology and design. This chapter presents the research design, data collection, and data analysis methods used in the study. The research population is described, and the research sampling procedure is explained. The research method used is also explained.

Chapter 4: Presentation of the findings. This chapter presents the findings from the data analysis along with the interpretation of the data.

Chapter 5: Discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations. This chapter presents the findings of the study and conclusions and recommendations are drawn based on the analysis of the findings.

1.10   CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the introduction and background to this study including the problem statement, research objectives, research questions and ethical considerations. It also provided a clear road map on how the study was conducted through a research methodology. The research methodology discussed among others the research design, research approach, data collection as well as data analysis used in order to achieve the study objectives. The chapter outline of the entire structure of the study was also provided.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in enhancing OVC access and retention in selected secondary schools of Leribe, using the Ubuntu approach. This chapter presents the theoretical framework guiding the research which is Ubuntu theory. This was done by reviewing the relevant literature on Ubuntu. In line with the theoretical framework, the chapter discusses empirical literature on global support mechanisms to improve access and retention of OVC in secondary schools using the Ubuntu approach. This is followed by a discussion of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in Lesotho. The challenges orphans and vulnerable learners face in their secondary education from a global and local perspectives are discussed. Finally, an analysis of the educational support measures proposed by other researchers for orphans and vulnerable learners is done.

2.2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section discusses the Ubuntu philosophy as a theoretical framework and analytical tool used to guide this study. The section provides the rationale for choosing Ubuntu as a framework to assess the effectiveness of the educational bursary policy in enhancing access and retention of OVC in secondary schools. The Ubuntu philosophy is, therefore, relevant to this study as it advocates compassion, respect, reciprocity, social justice, harmony, dignity, and humanity, and

promotes the empowerment of the disadvantaged and the maintenance and strengthening of the community (Letseka, 2012). This framework represents a milestone in gaining valuable experience that paves the way for the development of an enabling environment for OVC in secondary schools to receive quality education.

2.2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND NATURE OF THE UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY

Ubuntu is an African philosophy that emphasises unity. In this regard, Ubuntu refers to a social philosophy that conveys the intrinsic connectedness of human existence. Ubuntu is committed to caring for and supporting each other. The Ubuntu philosophy is currently practised across much of the African continent, with roots found among the Bantu people of Southern Africa. The Ubuntu concept originated in Southern Africa between 1846 and 1980. However, the first documentation of the Ubuntu philosophy was created in 1846 (Bolden, 2014). Ubuntu is the Nguni word which is translated in Sesotho as "*Botho*". The term Ubuntu in Sesotho language is understood as *"motho ke motho ka batho,"* meaning a human is human because of other humans. Thus, Ubuntu philosophy can be translated as "I am human because I belong." There is a sense of community in this definition and similar translations into other African languages (Margarita & Abaunza, 2013; Letseka, 2012). Mahlatsi (2017) argues that being human means affirming one's humanity by acknowledging the humanity of others and building human relationships with them on that basis.

Ubuntu is a fundamental aspect of African culture, particularly in Southern Africa, and encompasses diverse values and practices that promote compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity within the community (Dube, 2021). Masondo (2017) argues that Ubuntu advocates harmony, empathy, compassion, sharing and caring which form the basis for unity in the African communities. Through its principles, Ubuntu creates a conducive atmosphere for orphans and vulnerable learners to connect well with other learners, teachers and their communities. The goal of the Ubuntu philosophy is to keep communities in a coherent structure by promoting peace, equality and justice for all. In Lesotho, the same philosophy is called Botho in the Sesotho language, which shares similar principles and values with Ubuntu. Botho also emphasizes the interconnectedness of all people and the importance of community, compassion

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and humanity, "*motho ke motho ka batho, matsoho a hlatsoana or lets'oele le beta pooho*" (Lephoto, 2021).

On the other hand, Mabovula (2011) points out that caring, humility, consideration, understanding, wisdom, generosity, hospitality, social maturity, social sensitivity, virtue and blessing are the core values of Ubuntu. Ubuntu can be understood as humanness. This is how one gains humanity by entering this relationship with other family members. Tarkang, Pencille and Komesuor (2018) point out that Ubuntu serves as a spiritual foundation for many African communities and cultures. These scholars add that Ubuntu is a multidimensional concept representing the core values of African ontologies such as respect for people, for human dignity and human life, collective participation, obedience, humility, solidarity, caring, hospitality, interdependence and communalism. Thus, Ubuntu can be viewed as a radical reflection of African humanity. It also has the universal appeal of traditional community values. Okoro (2015) adds that Ubuntu ideal sees all humanity as part of a single family, and as such, there is no discrimination in its practice.

Therefore, the establishment of humane relations is Ubuntu (humanness). Humane relations are understood in terms of a continuous relation of interdependence and interconnectedness of individuals in a community (Mahlatsi, 2017). Additionally, Mahlatsi and Ilongo (2019) view Ubuntu as an authentic African worldview that can be understood in terms of establishing a continuous relationship of interdependence and connectedness between individuals. Ubuntu's world view is characterised by the concept of connectedness.

According to Mugumbate and Chereni (2020), Ubuntu refers to a set of values and practices that black people of Africa or of African descent regard as authentic. Ubuntu is an African philosophy that emphasises the interconnectedness and interdependence of all people. It is often associated with African cultures, particularly in Southern Africa. Ubuntu reflects a holistic understanding of human existence in broader social, community, environmental and spiritual contexts. This shows that even if people live separately, their humanness and existence depend on others. Ubuntu empowers people to be welcoming, hospitable, warm, generous and willing to share. This is supported by Mankowitz (2018) who indicates that Ubuntu is about developing

one's fullness of being through the connectedness and relationship with others. It identifies people as beings with others and entails what being with others should be about.

Furthermore, Sekhu (2019) indicates that Ubuntu is built on the notion that an individual's humanity is trapped and bound in others. Ubuntu is a way of life that puts peoples' connectedness and humanity above their individual interests. This signifies that Ubuntu begins and thrives with individual self-awareness and social awareness. In line with this view, Motha (2010) reiterates that Ubuntu provides a guideline for how Africans should behave in their daily lives. Ubuntu advocates that a person depends on others as much as others depend on him/her, which are the underlying principles of interdependence and humanism in African life.

Ubuntu instills a culture of unity where people see themselves as one. The oneness is expressed through singing, mourning, celebrating and sharing together, and being compassionate to one another. This shows that the presence of Ubuntu leads to a collective responsibility within the community. A shared responsibility is the indication that Africans do not see themselves as individuals because of sharing (Msengana, 2006).

According to the Ubuntu philosophy, as noted by Johnson and Johnson (2009), learners like any other person belong to society as a whole and it is the community's responsibility to ensure that these learners are educated along their value systems. Learners become who they are because of the community they come from. This issue of community comes to the fore again when Venter (2004) points out that the environment in which children grow up shapes their personality. This is supported by Kanjandai (2018) who asserts that Ubuntu believes that even if a child is orphaned, their life should not be different from that of having one or both parents, as it is the responsibility of the community to ensure that the child has access to education.

Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013) further point out that using Ubuntu as an educational framework promotes friendliness, solidarity, courtesy, compassion, concern and respect among all learners. This shows that the introduction of Ubuntu into teaching and learning helps to restore and build the connection between teachers and learners. This is because it is the responsibility of teachers to cultivate humanity in all learners, regardless of their background.

Involving teachers in ensuring full participation of OVC in learning and other activities is very important. This leads to a decrease in OVC school dropouts. Anofuechi (2022) addresses this issue by suggesting that incorporating the concept of Ubuntu into teaching and learning will contribute to moral education and the adoption of fundamental values in individual learners, empowering them to become better people.

2.2.2   THE CORE VALUES OF THE UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY

Ubuntu is built on a set of core values revolving around intense humanity, caring, sharing, respect and compassion, all of which are essential to fostering harmonious and peaceful community life. Ubuntu goes beyond sharing as it embraces a broader set of values that emphasise the importance of respecting and valuing those around us. This emphasis on respect and appreciation of common humanity is a key factor in promoting harmony and peace within the community. It pleads for unity (Anofuechi, 2022; Matolino & Wenceslaus, 2013). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the following values of Ubuntu will be discussed in-depth in this section: Relatedness, Communalism, Spirituality, Collectivism and Holism.

2.2.2.1 RELATEDNESS

Ubuntu emphasises human relationships, and the notion that a person is only a person through those relationships with others. These relationships form the basis of societies. As a result, it is the responsibility of members of society to raise a child, and the neighbours' child is one's own. Ubuntu thus considers the individual as the primary unit of analysis and rather centres on the relationships between people (Chuwa, 2012). This is due to the understanding that individuals are part of the family, families are part of the community, and communities are part of the environment that is part of a larger community (Breda, 2019). Relatedness in Ubuntu demonstrates the importance of community in nurturing an individual child's future through care and protection. Interpersonal relationships are some of the important aspects of Ubuntu that express the essence of being human. They recognise that every human being is connected to others (Msengana, 2006).

According to Ngubane and Makua (2021), the existence of Ubuntu in the school environment signifies the presence of respect and peace among learners. It teaches learners to accept others' opinions and ideas that differ from theirs. The human ability to understand the dilemmas and challenges of others is compassion. Compassion promotes the sense of belonging and connectedness observed in African communities. It is a sense and feeling of caring, sympathy, and concern for another person, expressed through helping, sharing, and showing sympathy towards another. This is supported by Poovan (2005) who emphasises that Ubuntu values of respect and dignity are the basic social values in African cultures. Only when one respects others and treats them with dignity, can one gain respect and trust in return. Respect plays an important role in the development of young people in the African community as it promotes harmony and peace.

2.2.2.2 COMMUNALISM

Ubuntu is a concept that views humanity in terms of collective existence and inter-subjectivity serving as the basis for supportiveness, cooperation, collaboration and solidarity. It is also argued that it involves sharing and helping others. This helps Africans to function in relation to one another and their communal tradition to promote collective effort (Taole, 2016). The underlying principle of Ubuntu emphasises a community that clearly has an opportunity for inclusion of every member of the society (Shanyanana, 2016). The Ubuntu core value of communalism presents the individual as an extension of the group. Everyone in the community is interdependent and the group's interest has more power than the sole interest of an individual. Everyone's well-being depends on every other member of the community. The lifestyle and actions of each community member affect the entire group (Margarita & Abaunza, 2013).

Motha (2010) explains that Ubuntu represents a value system that puts the well-being of the community first. The philosophy of Ubuntu embraces communalism and interdependence, which is a fundamental cornerstone of the African philosophy of life. It is claimed that a person is not born with Ubuntu, but that it is a commonly accepted and desirable standard that a person acquires throughout life. Msengana (2006) states that an ideal person according to Ubuntu is the one who possesses the virtues of sharing and compassion. This is because such a person is

judged in relation to the relationship with others. People are not defined by natural property but by the relationship that exists between them and others. This connotes that it is the community that defines the person as a person. The understanding is that fostering working relationships between all people involved in the education of orphans and vulnerable learners invariably improves their access and retention in secondary education.

The importance of community in raising the OVC has been emphasised by Motha (2010) who points out that in the African society, the responsibility of raising a child lies not only with their biological parents but the community at large. This proves that in African society there has never been a distinction between biological and non-biological relatives when it comes to primary parental responsibilities. This, therefore, shows that in the absence of the biological parents, community members assume the responsibility of the upbringing of the OVC. This shows that in African societies that are guided by Ubuntu, "orphanage" does not exist as children could never live without an adult or adults who would socialise them into the practices of the community culture. This is in line with Lebona (2020) who points out that the majority of African communities still adhere to the belief that it takes a community to raise a child, meaning that every adult within a community must take part in ensuring appropriate inculcation of good values in every child, since an African parent is a parent of all children. This is the case in Sesotho culture, which advocates, "*Motho ke Motho ka Batho*."

2.2.2.3 SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality is an essential aspect of the African worldview. It encompasses a personal quest for understanding and seeking answers to profound questions about life, meaning and one's relationship to the sacred and transcendent. Spirituality is not just limited to religious practices, but also involves a deep connection with the broader metaphysical aspects of existence. Spirituality seems to play a central role in every child's upbringing. The issue of spirituality is essential in dealing with pandemics. Ubuntu emphasises that being spiritually responsible for the welfare of others is the African way of life (Chigangaidze, Matanga & Katsuro, 2022). According to Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, quoted by Mugumbate and Nyanguru (2013), Ubuntu symbolises the backbone of African spirituality. Tutu shows that Ubuntu has a deep

spiritual meaning due to the role that ancestors play in the life of an African. He says that Africans may not have contributed to the world economic stances but have a very important contribution in the social aspect of life. He argues that Africa managed to come up with the Ubuntu theory which has become the basis for many communities (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013).

2.2.2.4 COLLECTIVISM

Collectivism is based on the principle of African hospitality where people have the spirit of unconditional collective hospitality, dignity, acceptance and respect. It involves expressing the value of collaboration, cooperation and community. It focuses on the relationship between the individual and the community. In African life, the group is more important than the individual, and the group's success is valued higher than personal success. The Ubuntu principle is based on the spirit of African hospitality, where people have the spirit of unconditional collective hospitality. Collective unity is shown, but in selected survival themes such as collective labour this unity is strongest. People are allowed to be creative so that they can develop their full human potential (Msengana, 2006).

In African communities, much emphasis is placed on collective human value within the community as opposed to individual value. Collectivism is an African way of life and reveals the collective psyche of African people. Supporting the notion that African people live collective lives was Mbigi's five-finger theory, which indicates that Ubuntu has five key values, namely survival, a spirit of solidarity, compassion, respect and dignity (Poovan, 2005). Therefore, schools should adopt Ubuntu as an inclusive approach to improve OVC secondary school performance by encouraging learners to collaborate through sharing and engaging with others in the classroom. Learners who fully embrace and value humanism strive to treat others with a sense of Ubuntu, which means treating them fairly (Lefa, 2015).

2.2.2.5 HOLISM

Holism is part of Ubuntu which embraces all aspects of life. Epistemologically, Ubuntu perceives the individual as a holistic phenomenon. The holistic nature of Ubuntu implies that an individual cannot exist without others (Mankowitz, 2018). Holism emphasises unity and

inclusion of all parts. It is embedded in an ideology that connects individuals with extended the families and communities and is rooted in respect for custom. It cultivates strong respect and pursuit of the common good and the promotion and maintenance of harmony, peace and progress (Msengana, 2006). The understating of holism as viewed by Mankowitz (2018) and Chigangaidze *et al*., (2021), is that the individual is considered part of the entire community.

In reference to holism, educational leadership and management, teachers, families and communities should work together for the benefit of the OVC. This means that the approach to OVC secondary school participation needs to be approached from a holistic perspective drawing on all aspects of the individual learner, the educational as well as the socio-emotional and economic components. This includes understanding of the individual learner's emotions, the emotions of others, respect for the individual and for others. This could help OVC to be open-minded and actively participate in classrooms. It could further enable teachers and all the concerned parties to consider all aspects that may hinder OVC from accessing education and being retained in schools and come up with concrete solutions. It provides a better understanding of the life led by OVC (Chigangaidze *et al*., 2021; Mankowitz, 2018; Msengana, 2006).

2.4   EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS FOR OVC

Education is a fundamental human right for all children, as recognised by Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989). A child who has access to quality education has a better chance of succeeding in life. Access to secondary education for OVC is defined as regular access to learning and equal participation in classroom and progression through grades to the completion of the final grade (Jere, 2014). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Catholic Relief Service (CRS) (2008) indicate that attending school helps affected children regain a sense of normalcy and recover from the psychosocial effects of their experiences and disrupted lives. They found that schooling not only benefits orphans and vulnerable learners but the nation as a whole by developing a productive workforce.

Several studies emphasise the need for countries to provide educational support mechanisms to improve access and retention in secondary education for OVC. These studies show that the UK has introduced an educational grants policy known as the Young Peoples Learning Agency

(YPLA) (2011) grants scheme. The policy allows learners aged 16-19 from poor and rich backgrounds to access quality education and remain in secondary school (Oketch, Gogo & Sika, 2020; YPLA, 2011). The goal of improving access and retention of orphans and vulnerable learners in secondary education is inseparable from the level of bursary funds budgeted annually. The success of the bursary policy largely depends on the financing mechanisms in place and the way resources are allocated in secondary schools to achieve this intensification of OVC learning and participation.

In Zambia and Malawi, efforts to support orphans and vulnerable secondary school learners have had good results. In both countries, around 70% of learners nationwide receive educational support through the OVC scholarship programmes (Onuko, 2012). Of the 70%, 100% of orphans and vulnerable learners are supported. Although the scholarship is designed to improve access and retention of OVC in secondary education, these countries still have high OVC dropout rates. This is an indication that the scholarship does not cover all school expenses and other personal needs (Wambua, Shandrack & Simiyu, 2017). The eligibility criteria for beneficiaries of the Malawi Scholarship Policy involves assessing whether the applicants are genuinely in need and have already enrolled in a secondary school. Also, one should behave decently and not receive any other OVC educational support. Beneficiaries should also have a positive attitude towards education and have completed a scholarship application form. This ensures that students remain in their respective schools. These are the guidelines that guide the functioning of the grant policy (Oketch *et al*., 2020).

To ease the transition from primary to secondary school, the Kenyan government established the bursary programme known as the Secondary School Education Bursary Fund (SEBF) in 2005 with the aim of equalising educational opportunities for orphaned children and vulnerable learners. The policy supports orphans and vulnerable learners aged 6 to 17 (Njau, 2013; Onuko, 2012; Wambua *et al*., 2017). Njeru and Orodho (2003) state that the goal of Kenya's OVC scholarship policy is to improve and ensure access to quality secondary education for all Kenyans, especially OVC. However, they discovered that this policy faces several challenges, such as a lack of transparency, insufficient funding, inconsistency of funds, delays in approving payments and unreliable eligibility criteria. Furthermore, Oyugi (2010) points out that

inconsistent support is reflected in non-guaranteed continuation of educational support for the selected beneficiaries until completion of secondary education.

In 2003, the Cambodian government introduced the State Secondary School Bursary Policy to increase enrolment of orphans and vulnerable learners. This policy has received financial and technical support from various international agencies and organisations with partial contributions from the Cambodian government (Khan, Em and Nun, 2023). The same authors state that the bursary policy covers 86% for food, 43% for study materials, 38% for clothing and 29% for transport. This support by the government of Cambodia is very useful and improves OVC retention in secondary schools. However, Crowe *et al*. (2011) state that OVC still face the challenge of having to pay additional fees such as subscriptions and costs for school trips in Cambodia. This is unlike in Tanzania, where the Most Vulnerable Children Program supports OVC with school fees, school transport and the purchase of uniforms and books (USAID & CRS, 2008).

Lesotho is no exception to the situation outlined above as in 2000, the government established an OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 known as the Bursary Scheme Program which was under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000). The policy aims to improve access to quality education for all, increase enrolment and reduce dropout rates for OVC in secondary schools. It also aims to ensure that OVC remain in school after enrolment until they complete secondary education (Lekhetho, 2013; Ministry of Health and Social Welfare [MOHSW], 2005). Later in 2012, the Lesotho government established the Ministry of Social Development after abolishing the Social Welfare Department of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. After the 2022 elections, another change was made, and the Ministry of Social Development was amalgamated with other ministries to become a department under the new ministry now called the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports, Arts, Culture and Social Development (MOGYSACSD). The Department of Social Development has been tasked with overseeing the implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy with the aim of improving access and retention of OVC in secondary education. The policy makes an annual payment in the name of each bursary student directly to secondary schools. This is intended to cover tuition, registration, supplies and fees.

In 2004, the textbook rental scheme too was introduced in secondary schools. The budget for textbook rental is M120 million (US$6.4 million) annually. The beneficiaries of this policy are orphans and vulnerable learners under the age of 18 as well as other learners enrolled in secondary schools (Lekhetho, 2013; MOHSW, 2005; World Bank, 2020; UNICEF-Lesotho, 2021). For effective implementation of this policy, in 2011, the Department of Social Development adopted the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Minimum Package for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children and Youth. Eligibility criteria include family background, neediness, orphan status and vulnerability status. Therefore, the socio-economic family background is the most important aspect in the selection criterion and determining the beneficiaries of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. It is used to identify the neediest and most vulnerable learners (MOSD, 2014). At the beginning of the school calendar year, district scholarship administrators are provided with a quota of how many orphans and vulnerable learner would be supported in the upcoming fiscal year. This quota is usually determined by the available budget. The required documents are submitted to either local councils or the Ministry of Social Development by parents or guardians (African Union, 2013; Smith, Mistiaen, Guven & Morojele 2013; UNICEF, 2017).

After the evaluation of the applications is completed, the Ministry of Social Development gives the schools the lists of learners who qualify for educational support. The lists are accompanied by confirmation letters of every successful learner. The schools then complete claim forms that tabulate the names of the beneficiaries and their details and fee breakdown. Before payments are processed, a check is carried out to ensure that the beneficiaries on the lists are enrolled in schools. Payments are made to the bank accounts of the schools visited by the office based on the list of beneficiaries. Principals are expected to submit a performance report of every beneficiary twice a year in semesters (MOSD, 2014). However, the dissemination of information about the bursary scheme (beneficiary eligibility information, application procedures and application deadlines) is not accessible through other sources of information, including the Lesotho government website (www.gov.ls).

According to the adopted guidelines, information should be disseminated through different channels. This allows orphans and vulnerable learners to know about the requirements of the bursary scheme before the application process (MOSD, 2014). The African Union (2013) shows that constant budget allocation can lead to inadequate funding of educational support, which in turn lowers the retention rate of OVC. In some countries, the amount of funding lags behind tuition, resulting in a co-payment by the guardian. This causes learners from poor families to drop out of school, leading to rising dropout rates (UNICEF, 2017).

The OVC Bursary Scheme only becomes active when a learner advances to the next grade. Due to a large number of learners who apply and qualify for the bursary, some learners are not selected due to the quotas approved per district. In schools which charge more fees than the allocations catered by the Ministry of Social Development, parents and guardians should pay the balance. This puts a heavier burden on schools to cover their operating costs. This means that the current level of bursary funding can barely cover the number of orphans and vulnerable learners enrolled in secondary schools. This forces learners to drop out of school after failing to proceed to the next grade (UNICEF, 2017). As a result, this leads to financial problems in secondary schools owing to unpaid school fees due to the inability of parents or guardians to pay the fees after their children fail to proceed to the next grade for various reasons (Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa [OSISA], 2012).

In 2009, the Lesotho government, with the support of the European Commission and UNICEF, introduced a Child Grants Policy (CGP). The policy aims to improve the OVC's standard of living, reduce malnutrition, improve health and increase the OVC's school enrollment rate. This policy is also implemented by the Ministry of Social Development. It targets poor and vulnerable households, selected after a combined assessment of a proxy needs test and community validation, as the households fall into the National Information System for Social Assistance (NISSA) category 1 or 2 (and are therefore considered extremely poor) (MOSD, 2014). The beneficiaries of the policy receive money transfer which is made at the household level and the amount depends on the number of children in a household. The eligible household receives a flat rate between 360 and 750 maloti per quarter.

In March 2014, a total of 19,800 households with around 65,000 children were supported nationwide. This helped orphans and vulnerable learners with cash to cover the cost of school supplies and personal needs not covered by the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 (MOSD, 2014). Dietrich, Gassmann, Röth & Tirivayi (2016) indicate that households currently receive a quarterly transfer linked to the number of children they have, ranging from 360 million for households with one to two children to M600 for households with three to four children and up to M750 for households with five or more children.

In addition, the Lesotho government has adopted a national policy on orphans and vulnerable children that seeks to empower families and communities to provide quality care, support and protection to OVC. Care, support and protection involves providing basic physical, cognitive, emotional and psychosocial needs of OVC and their caregivers on a sustained basis. These include tackling homelessness, eliminating all forms of child abuse, exploitation, child labour, protecting OVC's inheritance rights and providing for the psychological impact of being orphaned and vulnerable (MOHSW, 2006).

In an effort to ensure safety and support for OVC, the government of Lesotho under the National Strategic Plan on Vulnerable Children (2012-2017), has committed to empowering families and communities with knowledge and skills to provide quality and comprehensive care and protection to OVC. This is because families and communities are the most immediate and direct safety nets for OVC. The plan envisages strengthening community systems to ensure that OVC participate effectively in community activities (MOSD, 2012). The Constitution of Lesotho, 1993 in Section 28 (a-e) also emphasises education as a fundamental right of every child. Therefore, the government needs to ensure that all OVC have access to quality education from primary to tertiary education. This is to be achieved by creating child-friendly schools that take learners' needs into account as well as learners with special, including psychosocial care and support for OVC (Kingdom of Lesotho, n.d.).

2.5   THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY THE OVC IN EDUCATION

As free primary education becomes more universal, the countries' focus is now shifting to exploring the benefits of secondary education. The ability of orphans and vulnerable learners to

attend and participate actively and constructively in secondary schools is affected by numerous challenges when it comes to attending school and acquiring quality education (MOHSW, 2005). One of the challenges facing the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is the high dropout rate for OVC. This is a serious issue which needs to be addressed as a priority for the policy to be more effective. This can help achieve the global education goal of increasing access to quality education for all (Herman & Nasongo, 2010).

2.5.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

Melody (2021) indicates that a high rate of school dropout in Tanzania, particularly among orphans and vulnerable learners is caused by mental health issues such as depression, loneliness and stress. This ultimately leads to declining school performance and early school leaving (Melody, 2021). A lack of psychological support mechanisms means that OVC spend most of their time and energy finding a source of order and security for themselves from unpredictable situations and struggling with their own identity issues (Ringson, 2020). Otieno (2010) points out that the psychological effects of being orphaned and vulnerable should not be underestimated. As such, events of high emotional intensity can be traumatising, particularly when experienced at a vulnerable moment in life (Otieno, 2010). Tamasane (2011) argues that the availability of mental health services remains extremely limited and inadequate to cope with the long-term psychological trauma caused by parental loss. This affects children's performance in school and increases their likelihood of dropping out.

2.5.2 UNMET BASIC NEEDS

Needs are necessities that are lacking in people's lives. The satisfaction of needs is a prerequisite for human survival and for people to be able to lead a decent life. The term 'basic needs' is difficult to define because human needs vary both in time and space. Human needs vary between individuals, societies and generations. What people perceive as needs is very much determined by their expectations and desires. Basic needs include adequate food, health, shelter, water and sanitation, education, and other basic needs. In developing countries like Lesotho, where most people struggle to meet their survival needs daily, it is relatively easy to identify and classify their basic needs. It is also worth noting that any opportunity for personal fulfilment depends on the choices available and knowledge of them (Mutie & Kibachio, 2018).

Moreover, Moteuli (2019) points out that the environment in which these orphans and vulnerable learners live contributes more to their academic performance. Some of them live in overcrowded extended families with no place to study. In this environment, these learners find it difficult to complete their homework, which is why they perform poorly. These students do not have enough time and space to do their homework. School uniforms are additional problems that cause orphans and vulnerable students to drop out of school. In some cases, these students are sent away from school for not paying money for fundraising, farewell and other school charges. This implies that these learners' academic performance is likely to decline, ultimately leading to failure that may eventually lead to dropout.

On the other hand, Mdugo (2018) emphasises that despite the introduction of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, the challenges for learners remained unresolved. Therefore, their participation in secondary education deteriorates. The unforeseen personal needs create additional stress for orphans and vulnerable learners. At home, these learners are prevented from concentrating on their schoolwork. They are overwhelmed by the responsibilities of their guardians. All of these prevent orphans and vulnerable learners from participating fully in education.

Orphans and vulnerable learners underperform in schools due to their vulnerable status which makes them suffer from emotional distress. This is mainly caused by a lack of basic needs such as parental support, food and school uniform. These challenges make it difficult for them to concentrate in class. Unmet basic needs discourage learners and make them less likely to perform well in class. Limited resources of people caring for orphans and vulnerable learners exacerbate the above situation (Githae, 2014; Hlojeng & Makura 2020). Melody (2021) states that the cost of education, both monetary and non-monetary, continues to affect OVC's school performance. A lack of school uniform discourages them from going to school.

A lack of educational support from parents/guardians has a direct impact on the OVC's educational performance. These OVC suffer from financial constraints that further disadvantage them as they cannot afford the cost of education-related materials. Needy children from child-

headed households are burdened with domestic and economic responsibilities, which in turn affect their educational participation in relation to school attendance and school success. A lack of educational support from parents/guardians directly impacts on how OVC perform in education (Mwoma & Pillay, 2016).

According to the findings of Mdugo (2018), most orphans and vulnerable learners face humiliation due to a lack of proper school uniform. This makes these learners to be embarrassed. This situation is made worse when they are sent home to dress appropriately, knowing that their caregivers cannot afford appropriate school uniform. A lack of parental care is another challenge emerging from the results. Orphans and vulnerable learners, like other learners, need parental care to actively participate in school. Some of these learners live with their guardians who believe that education is not a priority. Therefore, no educational support is provided. This discourages these learners from attending school, forcing many of them to drop out.

2.5.3   LACK OF PARENTAL SUPPORT

Some orphans and vulnerable children are forced to live alone without any adults' advice, care or supervision. Although there are some OVC living with adults in foster care or with ill or neglectful parents, their survival needs are not well managed. This leads to many life challenges that OVC encounter daily, including heading families, child labour, hunger and abuse (Lehlaha, 2011). UNICEF (2017) notes that orphans and vulnerable children are more likely to live in temporary households, move from place to place, which disrupts their schooling. They attend school less often or miss it frequently, so it is crucial for teachers to maintain consistency in their academic and educational needs. In general, OVC are likely to do poorly in school and sometimes drop out as they may not have enough time for schoolwork.

According to Moteuli (2019), in the absence of parents, the psychosocial support of OVC is compromised. Parents play a crucial role in shaping a child's social interaction patterns. This is supported by Mushayi (2013) who points out that children living with their parents can develop social skills and peer relationships with others. The same scholar goes on to point out that parental support contributes to children's emotional development as it takes into consideration their feelings, wants and needs, and interest in their daily activities. It also includes respecting

their views, expressing pride in their accomplishments, and providing encouragement and support during times of stress.

McGuckin and Minton (2014) add that the environment in which a learner grows up plays a crucial role in shaping their development. This is also supported by Mwoma and Pillay (2016) who point out that an increasing number of OVC makes it hard for communities to care and support them with school necessities. A supportive learning environment has a direct impact on learners' academic performance. This does not apply to orphans and vulnerable learners because of the challenges they face both at home and at school. The results of the study on the rights of orphans to access educational support in selected public secondary schools conducted by Melody (2021) showed that the guardians who take care of the orphans and vulnerable learners are unable to cover the costs of other school-related materials. They also pointed out that those supported by grants are uncertain about the continuity of their support. They fear that if they fail, the support will be withdrawn. The implication for rewarding orphans and vulnerable learners who perform well is to motivate them to work hard. All learners deserve equal treatment, so orphans and vulnerable learners deserve a second chance. This, therefore, requires special treatment to help them get back on track.

2.5.4   POVERTY AND LACK OF FOOD SECURITY

Poverty is a condition in which the basic needs for decent human life and health are not met. It is measured by a poverty line which is used to separate the poor from the non-poor. A poverty line is constructed according to the value of income or consumption necessary to maintain a minimum standard of human nutrition and other basic needs (Kalaba, 2010). Most OVC who drop out of school are below the poverty line and cannot meet their basic needs such as clothing, food and other necessities to continue their education. This is supported by Mhongera (2012) who emphasises that poverty affects children's developmental trajectories and exposes them to a variety of risks. The educational impacts of orphanages and vulnerability include increased school dropout rates, disrupted school attendance, poor concentration and performance at school, and behavioural disorders. Food security is essential for each learner to actively participate in school. Having daily meal improves the learners' ability to concentrate and effectively participate in class (Humphreys, 2009; USAID & CRS, 2008).

According to Nyabanyaba (2009), unemployment, poverty and HIV have affected both demand and supply of education in Lesotho. This makes it extremely difficult for parents to keep their children in school. It is even worse for OVC because they have no one to provide them with money for their education. The cost of education, both monetary and non-monetary, becomes a big challenge for OVC to remain in school until they complete their secondary education. Massawe (2008) asserts that orphans and vulnerable learners leave school because of a lack of food at home. Even though these learners are supported with tuition, book fees and stationery, they still need food before they go to school, in the evening, and on weekends. They go to school on empty stomachs, which makes them suffer from psychosocial stress.

2.6   MECHANISMS FOR OVC EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

According to Mwoma & Pillay (2016), most sub-Saharan countries experience high rates of school dropout among orphans and vulnerable learners, particularly in secondary education. The authors state that the governments of these countries have developed strategies to address OVC's educational rights and needs. With the abolition of school fees in public elementary schools, many children are enrolled in secondary schools. Mwoma & Pillay (2016) also argue that the increase in the number of OVC poses significant challenges for communities, governments, and organizations responsible for managing and supporting their educational rights and needs.

2.6.1   SUPPORTING OVC WITH SCHOOL FEES

As reported by Melody (2021), governments should increase the budget for OVC bursary funds to enable them to complete their secondary education. This is because it has been discovered that the current support for orphans is inadequate, with some orphans and vulnerable learners not being supported. The bursary is also expected to cater for all the fees needed in schools. As much as countries provide educational support for orphans and vulnerable learners, as government resources dwindle, the need to expand the support system is still paramount.

According to Mohoebi (2013), the Lesotho government should invest in capacity building of its officials who implement policies. The scholar further stresses that this could improve the management of the bursary scheme funds to effectively meet the bursary scheme policy

objectives. Capacity building is essential for effective implementation of the grant. Therefore, the selection criteria for eligible orphans and vulnerable learners should be simplified so that they are understood by all parties. The government should develop a common management tool to track and report on supported learners. A regular performance analysis must be conducted to determine the number of orphans and vulnerable learners still in school. This could also help identify the reasons for learners leaving school.

2.6.2   PROVISION OF SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES

Several studies show that most OVC go to school without breakfast, suggesting they may be starving at home. Food and nutrition are important components for OVC's support (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2018). USAID and CRS (2008) note that school feeding programmes can provide children in general and OVC access to education by combating hunger and the need to work to survive. The findings from USAID and CRS (2008) reveal that although schools have feeding programmes, some OVC do not have meals in their homes compelling them to come to school without having breakfast. Children's nutrition is very important to ensure that they have energy to play and learn and are in good health. As such, Kathini (2014) states that in an attempt to address the issue of food insecurity faced by OVC, many countries including Lesotho have implemented school feeding programmes. This initiative is also aimed at improving the health, nutrition, and ultimately OVC participation in secondary school. Conversely, while school feeding is considered a vital safety net for school children, especially OVC, in Lesotho, this privilege is only provided to primary school children. This means that OVC at secondary level may be subjected to a lack of food both at home and at school.

USAID and CRS (2008) highlight that food packages positively impact OVC educational outcomes. According to their assertion, providing proper meals through take-out rations has been shown to have several benefits for OVC's participation, progression and retention in education. Therefore, providing food parcels to OVC is critical in ensuring that they do not go to school hungry.

UNICEF (2016) indicates that many sub-Saharan countries have introduced free lunch programmes in most schools intended to provide meals to needy learners. Due to the difficult

economic conditions and the breakdown of the traditional social fabric, many children, including OVC, report to school hungry with no hope of their next meal. This condition jeopardises their chances of a meaningful education. For instance, Maingi (2019) confirms that education not only provides a solid basis for lifelong learning but is also crucial for children's social integration and psychosocial well-being. Most OVC who attend school regularly regain a sense of normality and recover more quickly from trauma and the effects of their disrupted lives. School food provision for OVC provides a social safety net that greatly addresses issues of inequality and gender imbalance. Furthermore, keeping these children in school, especially girls, can reduce their vulnerability to sexual abuse and exposure to HIV, and provide access to vocational training, life skills education and entrepreneurship.

2.6.3 PROVISION OF CASH TRANSFER PROGRAM

Cash transfers have been used in many parts of the world to improve educational outcomes for OVC. The provision of cash transfers improves access to and retention in education for OVC. It plays a very important role in the life of the OVC as it motivates them to actively participate in school (Evans, Gale & Kosec, 2020; Wanyama, 2018). This allows OVC to fully participate in school activities like other learners. Providing cash transfers to OVC allows them to pay for other school-related expenses such as uniforms, school trips, groceries, toiletries, medication and additional fees that are not covered by the educational bursary scheme policy (Humphreys, 2009; Mugaisi, 2014). This type of support plays an important role as it helps to remove financial barriers which prevent OVC from staying in school until they complete their secondary education.

The cash transfers play an important role in helping OVC cover the cost of small daily necessities such as pens, pencils and math instruments. This money also allows OVC to access snacks like other students during school breaks. It allows learners to buy soap to wash their clothes and bodies. This reduces the stress of feeling embarrassed about dirty clothes and not having a deodorant and bad breath from a lack of toothpaste. It also allows OVC to fully participate in extra mural activities such as school field trips. Thus, their participation in class increases, leading to improved school performance.

2.6.4 SUPPORT FROM GUARDIANS/PARENTS

Support from guardians and parents is important to OVC as they feel safe and loved. Providing for the educational needs of OVC by family and community members enhances their educational performance. Capacity building for guardians and parents is a critical aspect that should not be overlooked in efforts to support OVC at home and at school. By providing parents and guardians with the necessary knowledge, skills and resources, they can play a critical role in improving the overall well-being and educational outcomes of the children in their care (Mwoma & Pillay, 2016). Both guardians and parents are the primary sources of support for OVC. Empowering guardians and parents to provide the nurturing, emotional and psychosocial support that OVC need contributes to their healthy development which leads to increased concentration in the classroom and improved academic performance. The primary responsibility of guardians and parents is to ensure that OVC do not feel lonely due to the loss of their parents. Having an older person allows OVC to have time for schoolwork and find someone to help with homework. This makes OVC put more effort into schoolwork as they know they owe their parents a good job as they have shown support throughout their educational journeys. Ultimately, these conditions give OVC the confidence to fully participate in school.

2.6.5 PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TO OVC

Orphans and vulnerable children need psychosocial support, which can be defined as an ongoing process to meet their physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs (Mwoama, 2015). Psychosocial support in this context refers to the care and support provided to OVC in order to participate effectively and efficiently in secondary school. All of this is seen as essential to positive human development (Maingi, 2019; Moteuli, 2019). Additionally, Marthe (2017) indicates that a child who has lost a parent lacks the family environment needed to develop positive self-identity and self-esteem. As such, the child experiences grief and loss that may not be adequately processed in an environment without psychosocial support.

According to Mwoma and Pillay (2016), teachers play a crucial role in providing psychosocial support to OVC, and this aspect of support is often overlooked, with material, economic, nutritional, and other physical needs being addressed instead. This is because teachers are on the front line to ensure OVC's psychological well-being. Mhongera (2012) points out that although

teachers are required to provide psychological support to OVC, many schools do not have the resources to provide comprehensive psychological support. Therefore, it is important that teachers are equipped with skills and knowledge to provide individual support to OVC, both psychologically and academically, which in turn will help reduce the likelihood of OVC dropping out. The results of the study conducted by Melody (2021) confirm that providing social counseling to OVC as part of psychological support has a positive impact on their behaviour and self-esteem. This researcher further shows that behavioural issues, low self-esteem and a lack of focus in the classroom, and poor communication are the top challenges OVC face on a daily basis.

2.7   CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the literature on the concepts of Ubuntu, its application and influence on orphans and vulnerable learners' access to and retention in secondary school education until they complete the school circle. It also reflected the educational support mechanisms for OVC, and the challenges they face in secondary school education. It further reviewed the measures in place to address the challenges facing OVC in secondary schools. The literature review revealed that despite efforts to improve access and retention of OVC in secondary school through the OVC Bursary Scheme, many OVC remain out of school. It further indicated that this policy does not cover all the educational and personal costs incurred by OVC daily.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

At the heart of every research project is the careful planning and skillful implementation of research design and methodology. These core components act as guides, guiding researchers on a journey to acquire knowledge, investigate questions, and gain deep insights (Cohen *et al*., 2011). This chapter is dedicated to clarifying the intricacies of research design and methodology and provides insight into the key decisions and considerations that shape the research project. Selecting an appropriate research design represents a cornerstone as it has the power to determine the overall structure of the study. This chapter delves into the field of research design and provides invaluable insights into how to seamlessly adapt it to research objectives.

The methodology depends on the careful choice of data collection and sampling methods. In this chapter, data collection technique will be discussed. Sampling decisions have a decisive influence on the quality of research findings. This chapter delves into discussions about the sampling method used to select participants and highlights the strategies underlying this crucial decision. Once the data is available, it must be carefully examined. Within these lines, this chapter presents a data analysis technique adopted. Ethical integrity forms the foundation of responsible research. We dedicate a section of this chapter to addressing ethical issues related to data collection, participant consent, and confidentiality, emphasizing the profound importance of ethical behavior throughout the research journey.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

When deciding to conduct a study, a prerequisite is to select a research paradigm that reflects the set of beliefs and values that underpin that particular study. Mamba (2019) define a research paradigm as a collection of assumptions or concepts that guide a researcher's inquiry. The study employed social constructivist research paradigm. This as it enables better understanding of the entire world of research and collection of rich data from which ideas can be formed.

The social constructivist paradigm requires the researcher to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied and to interpret the meanings that the participants place on the world around them (Knoblauch, 2020). The philosophical paradigm of social constructivism is based on the idea that individuals actively construct their understanding of reality through their experiences, interactions with others, and interpretation of information (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). Based on the above views, it is clear that access and retention in secondary school for OVC can be achieved when these learners are fully supported with their educational and basic needs.

3.2.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study used a qualitative research approach. The choice of this research approach was guided by the research questions and not driven by the preference of the researcher. The approach allows assessing the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in enhancing OVC access and retention in secondary schools, and to understand the challenges they faced with the bursary scheme in secondary schools. According to Michael (2002), qualitative research enables the examination of the problem in its natural setting, including the context in which it occurs or the perspectives from which it can be perceived. In the case of OVC, who were supported by the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, this approach enabled interaction between the researcher and the participants in their vicinity.

This approach was helpful for the collection of detailed information about OVC supported by the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 as it allowed flexibility, openness and responsiveness to the problem within the study. This approach enabled data to be collected and analyzed simultaneously. The approach also allowed participants to state the answers to interview questions openly in their own words (Kothari, 2004). The importance of the qualitative approach is emphasised by Busetto *et al*. (2020) who show that the qualitative approach provides the researcher with a platform to work directly with the participants during the interview process. A qualitative research approach helped in gaining more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by OVC and the educational support mechanisms that are in place for OVC in selected secondary schools in the Leribe district. This was achieved through a relatively small but focused sample size.

3.2.2   RESEARCH DESIGN

The selection of a research design follows logically from the formulation of the research problem. This shows that the problem statement determines the choice of the research design to be adopted. Research design provides guidance and instructions needed to address the research problem (Busetto *et al*., 2020). This approach makes it easy to anticipate what the appropriate research decisions should be, so that the validity of the study's findings can be maximized. The research design is a plan used to conduct the research (Mouton, 1996). According to Mouton (1996), research design is about intensive examination of an individual entity such as a person, a community, or an organization. It creates the opportunity to gain a deep holistic view of the research problem and can facilitate the description, understanding and explanation of a research problem or research situation.

After discovering that there were no previous studies addressing the issue of OVC staying at home regardless of the presence of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, the aim of the study was to assess the effectiveness of this policy in enhancing access and retention of OVC in secondary school. The reason for these learners staying at home is that they are unable to pay their school fees after failing to proceed to the next class. In order to address the identified research problem, this study employed a case study design. According to Creswell (2008), a case study is a process of evaluating time-limited data based on in-depth data collection using different data sources in a specific context. This is supported by McMillan and Schumacher (2006) who define a case study as the process by which a researcher closely examines a specific case in its natural setting.

A case study design is applicable in a situation where the focus of the study is to answer how and why questions. It can also be used in instances where the researcher cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study. A case study design can be used to cover contextual conditions because they are believed to be relevant to the phenomenon being studied. It can also be employed when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clear (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In a case study, a specific case or group of cases are selected to gain a deep understanding of the participants' experiences, perspectives and behaviours. The data collected in a qualitative case study is often analysed using thematic analysis or content analysis, which

identifies patterns or themes in the data. The goal of a qualitative case study is to produce rich and detailed descriptions of the phenomenon being studied, rather than generalising the results to a larger population. Based on the above definitions of a case study, the selected secondary schools and the surrounding community including the relevant policy documents were the unit of analysis for this study. The findings of the study provided insights into complex social processes, and helped generate recommendations for further research, and inform practical or policy decisions.

3.3   SOURCES OF DATA

To achieve the purpose of the study and answer the research questions, two types of data were used: primary and secondary data. The rationale for using secondary data was to incorporate and embed the results of the current study into the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 and improve access and retention in secondary schools relevant to the research problem addressed. According to Hox and Boeije (2005), secondary data is information that is already available because it was collected, analysed and interpreted by other researchers for purposes other than the current study. It is collected from relevant documents, as well as other publications. These scholars also define primary data as a set of data collected primarily for the purpose or analysis under consideration. It is defined as data collected and compiled specifically for the current study, using procedures that fit the research problem well. Mats'ela (2018) points out that the purpose of collecting this data is to gather up-to-date data on the research problem and get further clarification on the research questions directly from the target participants.

3.4   DATA COLLECTION

To gain insights into the study, especially about the variables and their relationship, there needs to be an appropriate data collection tool used to obtain answers to the research questions. Data collection is a process of gathering the necessary data information while covering the process of analysing the collected data and finding out useful information, suggesting conclusion and supporting decision-making in data analysis. Data collection in a qualitative case study is the most crucial stage. This is because the richness and depth of what is ultimately known depends on the artistry and effectiveness of the data collection method (Njie & Asimiran, 2014).

According to Yin (1994), data collection methods in a case study are direct observation, interviews, document analysis, archival records, physical artifacts and participant observation. These scholars further state that one or all the sources could be used depending on the relevance and nature of the case. This study, therefore, used two data collection methods namely, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The findings and conclusions of the research largely depend on the full utilisation of both the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 and OVC access and retention in selected Leribe secondary schools' data. The analysis of existing policies, strategies and guidelines on OVC's access and retention in secondary schools was conducted to gather secondary data.

3.4.1 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Document analysis is a data analysis method used to review both written documents and electronic materials. It requires data to be examined and interpreted to gain meaning and understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009). This usually refers to written documents that may take the form of textbooks, articles, notes, minutes of meetings and archives and may also include photographs, drawings, pictures, television programmes (Mohoebi, 2013).

The documents used for systematic assessment as part of this study were the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, 2006 and the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy, 2000. They were analysed to determine the extent to which the Lesotho government plans to improve access to and retention of OVC in secondary education. The analysis was important for evaluating the strategies under each policy document aimed at mitigating the challenges that impede OVC school attendance.

3.4.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

According to Mbatha (2015), a semi-structured interview is a data collection method in which participants are asked structured questions. It offers the benefit of flexibility and can provide detailed and up-to-date information that may not have been predicted or expected. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) point out that a semi-structured interview is the most common data collection method in qualitative research. It is the framework in which practices and standards are not only recorded, but achieved, challenged and even reinforced. This data collection method

consists of open-ended questions that must be answered by the participants. They are also based on a semi-structured interview guide, which is a schematic representation of questions to be explored by the interviewer. This guide helps interviewers collect reliable and comparable qualitative data.

Interview guides are valuable tools in the research process that enable researchers to use interview time effectively. Mohoebi (2013) astutely points out their importance by emphasizing their role in the participants' systematic and comprehensive exploration while ensuring that the interview stays on the desired path. These guides not only serve as roadmaps for researchers, but also contribute to the overall quality and reliability of the data collected during the interviews. The questions in the interview guide consist of the core question and many related questions linked to the central question, which in turn will be further improved through pilot testing of the interview guide. According to Jamshed (2014) and Busetto *et al*. (2020), to collect the interview data more effectively, recording the interviews is considered an appropriate choice, but it sometimes brings controversy between the researcher and participants. On the other hand, handwritten notes taken during the interview are relatively unreliable, and the researcher may miss some important points. Recording the interview makes it easier to focus on the interview content and verbal prompts, thus allowing a verbatim transcript of the interview.

To obtain rich data, the participants who could provide the best information for the research questions were identified. Ethical issues were considered throughout the interview process. This enables decision-making about the best ways to contact potential interviewees, obtain informed consent, and arrange interview times and locations that are convenient for both the participant and the researcher. The recording device was tested before the interviews could commence. The guiding questions were developed, supplemented by follow-up and probing questions that depended on the participants' answers. All the questions were open, neutral and clear. The languages used during the interview were English and Sesotho. During the actual interview, voice recording and note taking notes were done. This enabled a comparison of the voice recording and the notes after the interview for effective capturing of participants' responses. Semi-structured interviews for all participants were presented in numbers not exceeding 10 questions per category.

3.5   POPULATION

Population refers to the entire group of individuals, events or objects that share common observable and recognisable characteristics in a defined context. It refers to the population from which the target population is extracted or a large group from which the sample is drawn. In this study, the population included school principals, teachers, parents/guardians and OVC supported and not supported by the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. The population for this study is considered appropriate due to the significant number of orphans and vulnerable learners benefiting from the bursary scheme policy in selected public secondary schools in Leribe. This suggests that the population studied is large enough to provide a large and representative sample for research purposes (Crowe *et al*.,2011).

3.5.1   PARTICIPANTS' SELECTION

There are different ways of selecting participants. In this study, a purposive sampling method was used to select participants based on the time and place of the research. The term 'purposive' refers to situations where the specific people or events are already known and deliberately chosen for investigation. The goal of purposive selection is to select cases or participants that are likely to be information-rich in relation to the purpose of the study (Dube, 2021). The purposive sampling method helps in pre-defining the types of participants or cases that should be included so as to cover all variations that are expected to be of relevance to a study (Busetto *et al*., 2020; Kalaba, 2010; Mbatha, 2015; Mncube & Makhasane, 2011; Sahara, 2019). Greenstein (2009) describes purposive sampling as a form of nonprobability sampling where cases are judged as typical, or some categories of cases are of interest to the research. Under this method, the participants were selected based on their relationship to the implementation of the OVC bursary scheme policy.

Three secondary schools were purposively selected as they were known to have orphans and vulnerable learners supported by the OVC bursary scheme policy. These schools admitted learners with different educational needs. The sample for this study consisted of 14 participants who were purposively selected. Twelve participants from two secondary schools were sampled, consisting of two principals, two senior teachers, eight orphans and vulnerable learners who were supported and those were supported by the Bursary Policy and two guardians/parents.

Participants were selected based on their historical knowledge of the Bursary Scheme. For example, school principals and senior teachers were selected because they dealt with orphans and vulnerable learners daily and their experiences were central to the gathering of rich information. The willingness and availability of the principal and teachers were central to their participation.

3.6   DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is about the systematic study and interpretation of non-numerical data, such as text, images, audio, or video, to understand the underlying meanings, patterns and structures of the material. People attach meanings to their responses and that could be either subjective or social (Flick, 2014). Qualitative data analysis is the process of interpreting and making sense of non-numerical data such as words, images or videos. It is a key component of qualitative research and involves a systematic approach to organizing, categorizing and analysing data to identify themes, patterns, and insights. The analysis of qualitative data attempts to realise and define topics in an environment and activities to attain generalisable declarations by comparing different materials. When analysing data derived from a qualitative research approach, the process involves classifying and clarifying the participants' meaning attached in their reaction to questioning and presenting it in a logical manner (Cohen *et al*., 2011).

However, knowledge and comprehension of the text and idioms are important aspects to keep in mind when analysing qualitative data. Data analysis is the systematic process of organizing, interpreting and explaining data to generate meaningful insights and draw conclusions. In qualitative research, data analysis starts at the beginning of the data collection process. It involves a complex and time-consuming process, reducing large amounts of data to a few themes. For the document analysis, national policy documents, strategies and guidelines on OVC were reviewed to see how well they address the educational needs of OVC. All interview sessions were conducted in both English and Sesotho, and tape-recorded and transcribed interviews were analysed systematically through repeated reading (Creswell, 2014). All the responses collected in Sesotho were translated to English before they were analysed.

The interview responses were analysed using data analysis software NVivo. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software that processes large amounts of data with greater accuracy and

easier access to available resources (Jugder, 2016). When performing qualitative data analysis, the first step was to prepare data by transcribing audio recordings, organizing notes and making sure the data was properly tagged and stored. The interview recordings were transcribed word-by-word. The transcribed data was then translated from Sesotho to English. This was followed by data encoding, in which codes were assigned to different parts of the data. Codes were used to identify themes, concepts or patterns in the data. Therefore, the interview responses were coded to break down the data into meaningful units of analysis. Coding enabled the collected data to be broken down into manageable segments, allowing for quick access to relevant data when needed. To do this, data segments were created with symbols, descriptive words and category names. The inductive approach was used to code the interview responses. The data encoding consists of five steps. The first step in coding is descriptive coding where each transcript was read line by line, and concepts in the data were identified and coded. This is followed by a reasoning code that helped organise concepts, enumerate codes and look for relationships between codes. The codes were chosen by focusing on the main ideas identified. Both structured text data and unstructured text data were used (Schwartz, 2021).

The third step in data analysis was to categorize data which helped group the coded data into categories or sub-topics. This helped organize and simplify the data and made it easier to spot patterns and trends. The interview transcripts were initially categorized according to challenges encountered by OVC, countermeasures taken to address the challenges faced by OVC, eligibility criteria used to identify the beneficiaries, extent to which OVC Bursary Scheme enhanced OVC access and retention in secondary school, factors hindering effective implementation of the OVC Policy and mechanisms for OVC educational support. The fourth step is data interpretation, which helped to analyse the data to identify insights, themes and patterns. It is about looking for connections between the data and developing a deeper understanding of the underlying phenomena. The last step was to summarise the findings of the data analysis and draw conclusions from the findings.

3.7   INTEGRITY OF THE STUDY

There was an attempt to maintain the highest standards of integrity throughout the research. Thus, this research was aligned with the research integrity requirements espoused by the

National University of Lesotho. The study abides by national and international standards of research integrity. These include honesty in all aspects of research, scrupulous care, thoroughness and excellence in research practice, transparency and open communication, and care and respect for all participants (Corea, 2017). In carrying out research, integrity was ensured by paying attention to the relevant ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness.

3.7.1 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics, as defined by Dube (2021), is a branch of philosophy in which researchers are guided during the research process so that they know what is right and wrong, good and bad. The importance of ethics in research, according to Dube (2021), is that the results of ethical research provide a true picture of what happened throughout the research process and thus benefit both the researcher and the research participants (Dube, 2021; Wisker, 2008). Based on the above definition, ethical considerations were considered throughout this study as Beauchamp and Childress (1983) indicate that ethical principles should be considered. The rights of each participant were respected throughout the study. This included participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time if they felt uncomfortable. In conducting this study, care was taken to ensure that the research did not harm anyone, and the findings complement the information already available.

Permission to collect data was requested from the District Education Manager (DEM) - Leribe, The Manager from the Department of Social Development - Leribe, selected secondary schools' principals and guardians/parents in the case of minors. An introductory letter seeking the participants' permission to be part of the study was given to the relevant authorities. The names of the respondents were not required for confidentiality purposes.

3.7.1.1 INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent is a fundamental ethical and legal requirement for research involving human participants. It is the process whereby participants are informed of all aspects of the study that are important for them to make decisions. Obtaining consent includes informing the participants of their rights, the purpose of the study, procedures to be performed, potential risks and benefits of participating, the anticipated duration of the study, and the level of confidentiality of personal

and demographic data and the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time (Nijhawan *et al.*, 2013).

This is supported by Coffelt (2017) who asserts that conducting research in an ethical manner requires the informed consent and voluntary participation of research participants. Informed consent refers to the process by which a person is fully informed about the nature, benefits and risks of participating in the study and gives their voluntary agreement to participate. The person must be capable of making a decision, in the case of a minor (that is, a child under the age of 18), consent is sought from the guardians/parents and the consent must be given voluntarily, without coercion or manipulation. Informed consent was required to ensure that participants were aware of the purpose, risks and potential benefits of the study. It is assumed that well-informed participants voluntarily took part in the research because they felt their rights were protected.

The purpose of the study was fully explained to participants in the language they understood, and they were given the opportunity to ask for clarifications. As noted by Moteuli (2019), it is important to ensure that participants are well informed about the study. This enables voluntary participation. The details of the participants were treated confidentially, and their privacy was protected. During the interview process, participants were treated equally (Collins *et al*., 2000).

3.7.1.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

Coffelt (2017) states that confidentiality and anonymity are ethical practices aimed at protecting the privacy of research participants after they have provided the information for study analysis. This scholar defines confidentiality as a separation of the personal information provided by the participants from the data. Yin (2017) also defines anonymity as collecting data without receiving any personally identifiable information. Researchers therefore have an ethical responsibility to ensure that those participating in the research are not affiliated with the study or identifiable by name, address or date of birth.

In this study, participants were informed and assured that the information collected would be kept anonymous and confidential. This includes the names and identities of participants in the report's findings (Cohen *et al*., 2011). Pseudo-codes were used in place of names and identities.

This helps in preventing a person reading the report from identifying or linking the responses to a specific participant. This follows the advice of Creswell (2014) that the protection of participants' rights, their interests and wishes should be considered first when making decisions regarding the reporting of the data.

3.7.1.3 BENEFICENCE

Beneficence is ethical behaviour that refers to acting in a way that protects the rights of participants while promoting their well-being. Beneficence in qualitative research is a prerequisite for generating high-quality data. It emphasises the researcher's responsibility to act in the best interest of the individuals or communities involved in the study. Beneficence is one of the core principles of research ethics, along with respect for autonomy, justice, and non-maleficence (Eungoo & Hee-Joong, 2021). The participants in this study were informed about its purpose and were also told that it was a purely academic study, the benefit of which was to advance education in Lesotho. It is also important to clarify any possible misunderstandings about financial benefits. Informing the participants that they will not receive any financial compensation for their commitment ensures transparency and avoids misunderstandings. This helps to set appropriate expectations and underscores that their participation is voluntary and driven by their interest in supporting educational improvement.

3.7.2   MEASURES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is the criterion for assessing the quality of a research design. It makes the study results reliable and trustworthy. According to Oliver and Stew (2012), trustworthiness determines the degree to which the results of studies can be trusted. In this study, the four-trustworthiness criteria credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability will be employed. The proposed criteria will provide guidance on how to maintain trustworthiness in the research process (Cypress, 2017).

3.7.2.1 CREDIBILITY

Credibility is a trustworthiness criterion that deals with the correspondence of research findings with the reality constructed by researchers and research participants. Credibility refers to the extent to which data and data analysis are credible or authentic (Kivunja & Bawa, 2017). Oliver

and Stew, (2012) assert that credibility helps researchers to show the true picture of the phenomenon being studied. According to Moteuli (2019), credibility is the extent to which study results reflect the true picture of the problem at hand. The results are considered credible if they reflect the participants' answers. To ensure the credibility of this study, the data collected and transcribed was given to participants to confirm that what had been concluded and written was a true and valid reflection of their answers. This gave the participants the opportunity to validate the data generated by their interviews.

3.7.2.2 DEPENDABILITY

Dependability is the process of evaluating the quality of the data collection method and the data analysis tool. Dependability is the extent to which the study could be replicated by other researchers with consistent findings (McGinley, Wei, Zhang & Zheng, 2020). The dependability criterion relates to the consistency, coherence, logic and stability of the study process and data analysis over time and across researchers and methods. It is the strategy used to ensure that a study is reproducible and sufficient to determine the future. Oliver and Stew (2012) indicate that dependability of study results can be achieved by conducting an external audit by submitting the results for peer review. To ensure the dependability of the study findings, external audit was done by sharing the research findings with other colleagues to review and provide comments. In order to achieve dependability in this study, two data collection instruments, document analysis and semi-structured interview, were used for data generation.

3.7.2.3 TRANSFERABILITY

Transferability is the degree to which the research results can be applied in different settings. Therefore, transferability is the applicability of the research results from one context to another similar context and the extent to which the study invites readers to make connections between elements of the study and their own experiences. It is about the neutrality of the research results of the study as they are based on the responses of the participants (McGinley *et al*., 2020; Oliver and Stew, 2012). Therefore, the findings of this study will be considered to meet the applicability criterion if they fit into contexts outside of the study setting. A detailed description of all the processes involved in conducting the study has been provided, from data collection to the preparation of the final report, so that future research can easily follow. A detailed description of

the location where the study was conducted, names of participants, methods, and procedures for collecting and analysing data were not provided. This helps hide participants' confidential information for future reference by other researchers.

3.7.2.4 CONFIRMABILITY

To ensure confirmability, there will be reflexivity throughout the research process to avoid biases, assumptions and perspectives that could influence data collection and interpretation. A detailed audit trail documenting research findings has been maintained to enhance transparency and enable verification. Research methodology, including the interview process, data collection procedures, and analysis techniques have been clearly documented to increase transparency and allow others to understand and evaluate the research process and potentially replicate it. Different perspectives were sought, and participants were carefully selected to provide diverse insights and experiences related to the research topic. Two data collection methods were used to corroborate the findings. This includes semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Triangulation helps improve the confirmability of the findings by increasing the reliability and validity of the data. An audit trail was used to allow other researchers to assess the credibility and trustworthiness of this research. A detailed audit trail documenting the findings was maintained to improve transparency and allow for review (de Wet & Tracey, 2017; McGinley *et al.*, 2020).

3.8   RESEARCHER'S POSITION

In pursuing this study, guidance was drawn from the ethical considerations in order to maintain a professional relationship with the participants as well as the study. Knowledge of the ethical considerations helped me to understand the role that I had to play while conducting the study. This included ethical responsibilities in conducting research, such as ensuring that the participants were well informed about the study objective, their participation was voluntary, and they were free to withdraw anytime without asking for permission. Ensuring that participants were well-informed about the study objective and that their participation was voluntary proves that I respected their autonomy and ensured informed consent. Guaranteeing their right to withdraw from the study without seeking permission further upheld the ethical principles of voluntary participation. Treating participants' information confidentially and anonymously is

essential to protect their privacy and prevent any potential harm. This demonstrates that I was committed to maintain confidentiality and safeguard the participants' well-being. Thus, the participants were told that their information would be treated confidentially and anonymously to avoid any harm to them.

The knowledge and understanding of the main research objective guided the choice of the research design, data collection methods, and interpretation of the findings. Thus, semi-structured interview and document analysis were used to collected data, while thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. These methods allowed participants to express their knowledge and experiences while maintaining their anonymity and confidentiality. Thematic analysis of the collected data further ensured a systematic and unbiased approach to interpreting the findings.

Therefore, this research was approached with neutrality, and this was maintained by listening to participants' knowledge and experiences with the OVC Bursary Scheme. The analysis and interpretations made were solely based on the information from the participants supported by the literature. This was done to ensure that the study was free from bias or any preconceived ideas about the phenomenon being studied.

Being a teacher who deals with the OVC in secondary school, it was possible that this could influence data. As a result, during data collection I distanced myself as much as possible from the OVC Bursary Scheme in order to view it fairly from the diverse positions of the participants. I excluded my school from the selected secondary schools to ensure there were no personal relationships with the participants, except at a professional level. This decision ensured that the data collected and analysed was not influenced by personal connections, thereby contributing to the integrity of the study.

3.9   REALITIES OF THE FIELD

The research involved conducting semi-structured interviews with a total of 14 participants. These included two school principals, two teachers, eight orphans and vulnerable learners (four from each school) and two guardians/parents. The participants were selected based on their relevance to the research topic and their roles in the education of OVC. Initially, three secondary

schools were proposed for the study, including a government secondary school, a community secondary school and a church secondary school. However, only two schools (the government secondary school and the community secondary school) responded positively to the permission request to carry out the research. Due to time constraints, I decided to proceed with data collection with only those two schools. Although the originally proposed sample size was 22 participants, the final sample size of 14 participants did not significantly impact the richness of the data collected. The smaller sample size actually saved time during data collection and analysis. It is important to note that the quality of the data collected is more crucial than the quantity of participants in qualitative research.

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview approach which provides flexibility in the questions asked. This approach allows for questions, and in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences while providing some structure to guide the conversation. The study adhered to ethical guidelines when conducting the interviews, ensuring that participants' rights and privacy were respected. Obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality and addressing any potential risks or discomfort were addressed throughout the research process. During the interviews, it was observed that the participants, including the beneficiaries, showed enthusiasm for the study's findings and were eager to see potential solutions to the challenges faced by the beneficiaries. This positive response indicates that the research has the potential to make a meaningful impact on the orphans and vulnerable learners' education and well-being. One limitation of this study is that interviews with school principals, teachers and learners were conducted during lunchtime, and this provided limited time for engagement, hence participants may have felt rushed or had limited time to fully express their thoughts.

3.10   CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter dealt with the research methodology used in the study. Research methodology is an important section in research documents as it provides a detailed explanation of the methods and procedures used to conduct a study. The social constructive paradigm was used as a guiding tool on how to deal with the participants' views on the situation under study and interpret the meanings that the participants attached to the research problem. A qualitative case study design

was used in the study. Data collection methods used in this study were discussed and these are documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews supported by audio recordings which were used to capture participants' views. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. Finally, ethical considerations to ensure the trustworthiness of study findings and to protect participants were highlighted.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings obtained from 14 participants consisting of two school principals, two teachers, eight OVC both supported and not supported from two secondary schools (government and community schools) and two guardians/parents. It also presents the findings from the document analysis which was conducted to examine and analyse the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006 and the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in enhancing OVC access and retention in selected secondary schools of Leribe. The study is based on a social-constructive paradigm, which is underpinned by the qualitative research approach. For this reason, the data collected through the semi-structured interviews was analysed thematically. The findings are presented in various formats, including tables, figures, and paragraphs for a more organized and visually appealing representation.

4.2   PRESENTATION OF THE DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS

The previous chapter critically reviewed the literature on educational support mechanisms for orphans and vulnerable learners in secondary school. A thematic analysis was conducted to understand how effective the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is in improving OVC access to and retention in secondary schools. This was also done to expose certain silences and omissions within this policy that prevents the improvement of OVC's access and retention in secondary schools. Before analysing the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, I had to analyse the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006 as this policy is closely related to the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000.

Document analysis is the process of examining and assessing various aspects of a document to extract information, understand its content and generate meaningful insights. It involves a systematic review and interpretation of textual or visual documents such as written reports,

articles, contracts, historical records, images and other forms of written or printed materials. Document analysis can be performed for various purposes including research, legal investigations, historical studies, content analysis and business intelligence. The analysis typically involves several steps that can vary depending on the specific goals and the nature of the document (Cardno, 2018). In this case, the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006 and the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 will be analysed.

4.2.1 ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL POLICY ON ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN 2006

The Lesotho government's efforts to promote the welfare of orphans and vulnerable children are commendable. The government has recognised the importance of international and regional frameworks such as the Outcome Statement of the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV and AIDS 2001, the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children 2002, the Maseru Declaration of the SADC Summit on HIV and AIDS 2002, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. By ratifying these conventions and declarations, Lesotho has made a commitment to ensure the development, care, support and protection of its children. The Children's Protection and Welfare Act 2011 (currently under review) incorporates the principles set out in these instruments and provides a legal framework for the protection of orphans and vulnerable children in the country (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006).

In an effort to address the challenges posed by increasing poverty, the HIV and AIDS pandemic and food insecurity, Lesotho developed the National Policy on Vulnerable Children in 2006 which was meant to create an enabling environment in which orphans and vulnerable children are welcomed. In this environment, children receive appropriate care, support and protection and can exercise their rights and discharge their responsibilities (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006).

Lesotho, like other countries, has worked tirelessly to promote the welfare of orphans and vulnerable children. In mid-2003, the government conducted a nationwide survey among orphans with the support of the World Bank. This was followed in 2004 by the implementation of a Rapid Assessment, Analysis and Action Planning (RAAAP) for orphaned and vulnerable

children under the direction of the Department of Social Welfare in consultation with key sectors and civil society partners. The result was the development of a comprehensive and costed National OVC Action Plan. In 2004, the Department of Social Welfare, in collaboration with the Department of Local Government Birth and Death Records, developed a computerized database for registering orphaned children at the district level in all the ten districts of the country (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006).

4.2.1.1 POLICY, POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND POLICY ANALYSIS

Policy is a set of principles, guidelines or rules established by individuals, organizations, or governments to guide decisions and actions in a specific context. Policies are designed to address specific issues, provide direction and achieve desired outcomes. They can be formulated at different levels, such as national, regional or organizational levels, and cover a wide range of areas, including social, economic, environmental or governance areas (Hator, 2021). As stated by Ball (1993), policy is significant, but there are inherent problems in the analytical frameworks that researchers use to study it. Ball suggests that policy can be represented as either a written text or a discourse. From this information, it appears that Ball is drawing attention to the underlying assumptions and limitations on how policy is conceptualised and analysed.

Furthermore, Islam (2007), Howlett and Cashore (2014) and Rakolobe (2022) indicate that policy aims to address specific issues or problems and guide the actions of organizations or governments. They further state that policy provides a clear course of action or guidelines that must be followed to achieve desired goals in a specific context. Specifically, public policy encompasses the decision-making process by governments to take action or maintain the status quo on an issue. Additionally, public policies are the government's decisions to act or not to act in response to a problem.

Based on the above definitions of policy and public policy, the operational definition of the term 'policy' for the purpose of this study is the action taken to address a specific issue, while 'public policy' is the action taken by government to solve or not to solve a specific problem. These definitions underscore the problem-solving nature of policies and emphasise the role of

government in decision-making and taking action. This shows that from the OVC educational support perspective, public policy serves as a means to address the financial constraints OVC face in accessing secondary school, which is intended to be maintained through the completion of the final grade. According to Cardno (2018), the importance of education policy determines the resources devoted to educational efforts, and hence leaders will always be interested in the government-level policy decisions that enable equitable education provision. Having defined what a policy is, it is important to define what implementation of a policy means in order to be able to assess the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in enhancing OVC access to and retention in secondary schools.

Abdullahi and Nooraini (2020) define policy implementation as the process of putting a policy into action and translating its principles and goals into tangible results. The same authors assert that policy implementation involves executing activities, allocating resources and coordinating efforts to achieve the intended goals and desired outcomes outlined in the policy. In addition, they point out that policy implementation is a complex and multifaceted process involving multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, organisations, institutions and individuals. This shows that policy implementation requires careful planning, effective communication, and the mobilisation of both human and financial resources to ensure successful policy implementation. Efficient implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 will impact the scope of bursary support, increase OVC enrollment in secondary education and reduce school dropout.

With these definitions in mind, it is important to conduct a policy analysis to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the measures taken to address the identified problem. The European Training Foundation (2015, p.4) defines policy analysis as:

> *the systematic process of examining and evaluating policy to understand its purpose, effectiveness, impacts, and potential alternatives. It involves a comprehensive and objective examination of policy issues, including its formulation, implementation, and outcomes.*

Policy analysis is the process of dissecting policy phenomena and extracting relevant information to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of a policy. The ultimate purpose of policy analysis is to inform policy makers and stakeholders about the strengths and weaknesses of a particular policy. It also helps policy makers to make more informed decisions about whether to continue, amend, or end a policy. Effective policy analysis relies on a rigorous and evidence-based approach that often draws on diverse research methodologies and disciplines to provide comprehensive insights into policy performance and impact (Cahill, 2015).

For the purpose of this study, I will use the definition proposed by Cahill (2015) which states that policy analysis is the process of dissecting policy phenomena and extracting relevant information to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of a policy. This definition emphasises the evaluative nature of policy analysis and underscores its role in producing actionable information that can help policy makers to make informed decisions regarding provision of educational support to OVC. In adopting this definition, I will focus on evaluating the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 and generating relevant information to understand its strengths, weaknesses and potential improvements. This will allow me, through this policy, to provide valuable insights and recommendations to improve access to and retention of orphans and vulnerable children in secondary schools.

4.2.1.2 POLICY CONTEXT

According to Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry (1997), policy context refers to a set of circumstances, conditions, and considerations that affect policy development, implementation and evaluation. It encompasses the political, social, economic and legal factors that shape the policy-making process and influence the outcomes of policy actions. Furthermore, Cardno (2018) defines the policy context as the forces and values that drive the emergence of a policy. The same author states that the policy context refers to the socio-political environment and requires an understanding of the history of policy. I will, therefore, examine the political, social, economic, and legal factors that may have influenced the development of the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006.

I. POLITICAL CONTEXT

The political context as defined by Estoquia, Gordovez and Jayona (2022), refers to the specific political environment, structures and dynamics in which policy implementation takes place. The same authors state that political context includes factors such as the system of government, political ideologies, power dynamics, public opinion, interest groups and political processes. The political context influences the adoption of policies. The political environment can shape the political agenda and determine which actions are encouraged, supported or rejected. The political context influences the formulation of policies. They indicate that the political context has a significant impact on policy implementation. In the political context, the implementation of policies often requires the involvement and coordination of various stakeholders, including government agencies, advocacy groups, civil society organisations and the public.

Based on this definition, it seems that the political context is crucial in shaping the creation of policy documents and has a direct impact on the development, content and implementation of such documents. Political will, support and commitment are essential for effective implementation.

Regarding the policy context, the National Policy on OVC 2006 stipulates that:

> *The Government recognizes that political support and proactive leadership are fundamental to accelerating the national response to OVC issues. It has recognized the seriousness of the OVC situation in the country and has made commitments towards their protection and wellbeing* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006, p.8).

Based on the definition of the policy context and the National Policy on OVC 2006 policy statement, it appears that the Lesotho government recognises the OVC situation and commits to take action to create an enabling environment for OVC, so that they can lead a decent life. Political support and proactive leadership are essential to mobilise the necessary resources and ensure successful implementation of policies and strategies to improve the OVC's welfare. Understanding the policy context and its influence on policy production is critical to understanding the rationale, considerations and constraints that inform policy documents. It

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allows for a better understanding of how political dynamics and power relations affect policy development and implementation, particularly when addressing the needs of vulnerable populations such as OVC.

II.   SOCIAL CONTEXT

Social context refers to the broader societal factors, norms, values and dynamics that influence policy implementation. The social context includes aspects such as cultural beliefs, social structures, demographic characteristics, social inequalities and public attitudes. Policies are more likely to be implemented effectively when they are aligned with societal values, norms and expectations. The level of public acceptance and support for a policy can affect its implementation success. Policies based on cultural norms and practices are more likely to be accepted and integrated into society. Conversely, policies that conflict with cultural values may encounter resistance or challenges in implementation (Cowan, 2006; Estoquia *et al*., 2022).

The implication is that if policy makers do not take into account cultural values when developing a policy, they will face major implementation challenges. This is because the social context encompasses societal values, cultural norms and public attitudes towards specific issues (Rakolobe, 2017). It is in the government's interest to uphold and protect cultural norms. In other words, a social context plays a crucial role in the success of any policy, especially social policies like the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000.

Regarding social context, the National Policy on OVC 2006 states that:

> *One of the most significant traditional child-care practices among the Basotho is the extended family care for orphaned children. This is still regarded as the most viable model of support for the OVC. The Government is committed to strengthening these family structures so that the ties do not weaken. Since the majority of these caregivers are elderly people who are themselves very poor and have no adequate economic and other resources, basics such as food and medical services shall be extended to their families through the support of their Village Councils* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006, p.20).

As such, the National Policy on OVC 2006 acknowledges the extended family care for orphaned children as the most significant traditional child-care practice among the Basotho. This acknowledgment reflects the understanding that the extended family structure is considered the most viable model of support for orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) in the country.

III. ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The economic context refers to the overall economic conditions and factors that shape the environment in which policy implementation takes place. It includes aspects such as economic growth, inflation, employment levels, income distribution, fiscal policy, monetary policy and market dynamics. It helps determine the availability of financial and material resources for policy implementation. Adequate funding, infrastructure and human resources are essential for effective implementation. The economic context influences the financial capacity of governments, private sector investments and the availability of external sources of finance (Estoquia *et al.*, 2022; Leyland, 2020). This definition signifies that it is the responsibility of the government to regulate all activities related to OVC educational support for their best interest.

The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) Report of 2012 states that there are increasing numbers of orphans and vulnerable children in Lesotho, as in many developing countries, which affects the country's economic development. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that a significant proportion of the affected population, particularly children under the age of five, live in poverty. The findings of the Lesotho Multidimensional Child Poverty Report 2021 show that 45.5 percent of children aged 0 to 17 are considered multidimensional poor. This is the decline in poverty over the past fifteen years, with the overall national poverty rate falling from 56.6 percent in 2002 to 49.7 percent in 2017 and absolute poverty falling from 34.1 percent in 2002 to 24.1 percent decreased in 2017. This is the result of extensive social protection programs. This percentage highlights the need for further action to address the economic challenges faced by households caring for orphaned and vulnerable children (UNICEF, 2021).

In response to these economic difficulties, the Lesotho government has set out concrete measures to improve the situation, as promised in the National Policy on OVC 2006. As such, the National Policy on OVC 2006 states that:

> *The Government shall promote socio-economic interventions to empower OVC and caregivers. Empowering interventions that enhance individual and household coping mechanisms shall be promoted. The interventions shall include: safeguarding rights of OVC to livelihood, protection, inheritance, health care, education, information and child participation; improving household food production for care-giving households; promoting apprenticeships, vocational, life-skills and livelihood-skills training; establishing effective community-based mechanisms for monitoring the socioeconomic welfare of OVC; promoting micro-finance initiatives to benefit households caring for OVC; and child-labour prevention programmes* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006, p.11).

IV.   LEGAL CONTEXT

In the context of policy, legal context refers to the framework of laws, regulations and legal principles that govern the development, implementation and enforcement of policies. It sets the boundaries and procedures within which policies are formulated and implemented. Legal considerations play a crucial role in the design of policies to ensure they are consistent with existing laws and regulations and uphold the principles of equity, fairness and legality (Frankot, 2022).

Regarding legal context, the National Policy on OVC 2006 points out that:

> *The Policy shall operate within the broad spectrum of International and Regional instruments and shall be cross-referenced with existing National legislation and policies* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006, p.15-16).

The government has committed to implementing international instruments that it has ratified to ensure the protection, care, support and development of children. These instruments include the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ILO Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (1973), and ILO Convention No. 182 on the Prohibition of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999). Additionally, the government observes and implements the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the SADC Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children (2000). At the national level, the government ensures compliance with national legislation and policies that protect children, including the Constitution of Lesotho, Children's Protection Act, 2011, Sexual Offences Act No. 3 of 2003, National Social Welfare Policy 2003, and Gender and Development Policy 2018. Various government ministries and departments are responsible for OVC-related issues, and their policies are also considered within the legal context of the national policy. The next section analyses the national policies on OVC.

4.2.1.3 *CONTENT ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL POLICY ON ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN 2006*

Policy content analysis is a research method used to examine policy texts to gain insight into the underlying principles, goals and context. The process involves going beyond the superficial understanding of policy documents and delving deeper to uncover implicit meanings, potential biases, and connections to broader policy theories and frameworks. Policy content analysis can be used to assess not only what is explicitly stated in the policy, but also what is omitted or implied. It also helps to identify potential gaps, ambiguities or hidden intentions that may impact policy implementation and outcomes. This approach recognises that policies are not isolated entities but are influenced by various factors, including political, social and economic contexts (Cardno, 2018).

i. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

The scope of application of a policy provides information about the people who are directly and indirectly affected by the implementation of the policy and the area to which the policy applies. It is important for policy makers to clearly define the scope of application in policy documents to ensure effective implementation and avoid confusion or unintended consequences. A clearly

defined scope of application helps stakeholders understand the intended scope of the policy and allows for efficient resource allocation and compliance (Beale, 2016).

The National Policy on OVC 2006 states that:

> *The Government shall ensure that OVC participation in existing national programmes is intensified. They shall participate in identifying, planning, designing and implementing initiatives in collaboration with the Government and civil society that are aimed at improving their social, economic, physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006, p.18).

In relation to this excerpt, the scope of the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006 is for orphans and vulnerable learners enrolled in secondary school. It should be noted that the policy encourages the provision of bursaries to meet the educational needs of the OVC. It also encourages the introduction of mechanisms to provide learning materials to OVC and all learners.

ii.   POLICY GOAL

Goals in the policy context are the desired outcomes that a policy intends to achieve. Policy goals provide a clear direction and vision for policy and guide the development and implementation of specific strategies and actions. Policy goals are often formulated based on an assessment of the current situation or problem that the policy seeks to address. They represent the desired state or the state that policy makers hope to achieve through policy. These goals tend to be ambitious and may require sustained effort and collaboration between different stakeholders (Cerna, 2013; Petek *et al*., 2021).

The goal of the National Policy on OVC 2006 is:

> *....to ensure the prevention of orphanhood and vulnerability, protection, care and support and development of OVC. To achieve this goal, the policy shall align itself with the National Vision, the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) initiatives in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006, p.7).

The policy goal seems to recognize the need for comprehensive care for orphans and vulnerable children. The aim is to provide them with the support systems they need, including access to health care, nutrition, education, psychosocial support and legal protection. The goal of the National Policy on OVC 2006 appears to be clear on what it is intended to achieve, which is to prevent and reduce orphanhood and vulnerability among OVC.

iii.   GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The National Policy on OVC 2006 is a comprehensive framework designed to address the specific needs and challenges faced by children who have lost parental care or are in vulnerable situations. It serves as a guide for governments, organizations and stakeholders to develop strategies and interventions that promote the well-being, protection and holistic development of these children. Regarding the guiding principles, the National Policy on OVC 2006 is based on several principles. These are political engagement, the best interests of the child, promoting and protecting the rights of the child, strengthening families and communities, reducing vulnerability, non-discrimination and gender equality, strengthening partnerships, and improving access to quality services, information and resources.

a.   POLITICAL COMMITMENT

Political commitment is defined as a prerequisite for improving policy coherence. Policy coherence refers to the alignment and consistency of policies across different sectors and levels of government to achieve common goals and avoid conflict or contradiction. Political commitment plays a crucial role in promoting policy coherence, setting the policy agenda and prioritizing policy development. It promotes the cross-sectoral integration of policies and ensures that they are mutually reinforcing and do not pursue conflicting goals. The aim of political commitment is to break down silos and promote a holistic approach to policy development, where different policies are designed and implemented in a coordinated manner (Ypi, 2016). As defined by Baker, Hawkes, Wingrove & Demaio (2018), political commitment is the intent and sustained actions over time by societal actors to achieve the objective of reducing and eliminating the manifestations and causes of a specific issue or problem. It is the will to act and keep on acting until the job is done.

Regarding political commitment, the National Policy on OVC 2006 states that:

> *The Government recognises that political support and pro-active leadership are fundamental to accelerating the national response to OVC issues. It has recognised the seriousness of the OVC situation in the country and has made commitments towards their protection and wellbeing. (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006, p.8).*

The implication of the foregoing excerpt is that without strong political commitment, policy coherence can be undermined, resulting in fragmented, inconsistent or even conflicting policies. This, therefore, shows that the government's commitment to achieving desired policy outcomes is important. Based on the policy state, the government has recognised the severity of the OVC situation in the country and has made commitments towards their protection and well-being.

b. THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the best interest of the child principle generally encompasses the considerations that courts make when deciding what types of services, policies and orders will best serve a child and which people are best suited to take care of the children after the death their parents. Decisions in the best interests of the child are generally made taking into account a number of factors related to the child's circumstances and the parent or caregiver's circumstances, with the safety and well-being of the child being the paramount priority (Department of Health & Human Services-USA, 2020).

With regard to the principle of the best interest of the child, the National Policy on OVC 2006 states that:

> *The Government shall ensure that all actions concerning OVC, whether undertaken by public or private social institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies, take full account of the principle of "The Best Interests of the Child"* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006, p.9).

It seems that the policy recognises the importance of ensuring that the best interest of the child guides all initiatives aimed at the development and support of OVC. By highlighting the principle of the best interest of the child, the policy emphasises that the well-being, rights and needs of OVC should be at the forefront of decision-making processes and interventions. This principle acknowledges that children, including OVC, have the right to be protected, nurtured and provided with opportunities that contribute to their holistic development. Adhering to the principle of the best interest of the child implies that all actions and policies related to OVC should consider their individual circumstances, rights and needs.

c. PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The promotion and protection of the rights of the child is a wide-ranging and complex issue that is addressed in various international instruments and legal frameworks. It is important to note that there is no specific literal statement that covers all aspects of this topic. However, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the most widely used international treaty on children's rights, states that:

> *States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need* (United Nations, 1989: Article 28).

Regarding the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, the National Policy on OVC 2006 states that:

> *It is the government's responsibility to promote and protect the rights of all OVCs in the country. It stresses the need to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on age, sex, race, status, religion, language, political or social origin* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006, p.9).

The implications and insinuations of the preceding extracts on promoting and protecting the rights of the child are numerous and multifaceted. Governments have the primary responsibility for ensuring the promotion, protection and realization of the rights of the child on their territory. This includes the adoption and implementation of laws, policies and programmes that protect the rights of children. By promoting and protecting the rights of OVC, the policy ensures that the government is committed to creating an inclusive and just society where every child can thrive and reach their full potential. This section of the policy affirms the government's responsibility to ensure that all policies and initiatives focus on the rights and well-being of OVC, thereby contributing to their holistic development and social inclusion.

d. EMPOWERMENT OF FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

The empowerment of families and communities involves providing them with the tools, resources and opportunities necessary to take control of their lives, make informed decisions, and actively participate in society. It focuses on enhancing the capabilities, well-being and resilience of families and communities, recognizing their unique strengths and addressing their specific needs (UN Commission For Social Development, 2013).

In relation to empowering families and communities, the 2006 National Policy on OVC states:

> *Government should collaborate with community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations to strengthen families because families play a crucial role in the growth and development of the OVC. Empowerment is to be achieved by promoting the reintegration of the OVC into families led by a caring adult and ensuring that further family separation does not occur. In cases where it is difficult to attract families to the OVC, members of the local community also take responsibility for mentoring and support* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006, p.9).

The policy recognises that addressing the needs of orphans and vulnerable children requires a coordinated effort from multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, communities and families. It emphasises the importance of cooperation, coordination and synergy between different sectors to achieve comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

e. REDUCTION OF VULNERABILITY

The reduction of vulnerability refers to efforts aimed at minimising the vulnerability of individuals, communities and societies to various risks, hazards and adverse conditions. This includes addressing the underlying factors that make particular groups or populations more vulnerable and implementing strategies to improve their resilience and ability to withstand and recover from adverse events (Chaudhury, 2017).

In relation to reduction of vulnerability, the National Policy on OVC 2006 states that:

> *It is government's responsibility to reduce the vulnerability of OVC through targeted strategies and policies. This proves the government of Lesotho's acknowledgement of addressing the vulnerability of OVC. It recognizes that socio-economic and political factors, such as food insecurity, poverty, lack of education, inadequate health care, malnutrition, and limited social protection, contribute to their vulnerability* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006, p.9).

The implication of prioritising the reduction of vulnerability shows that the government aims to create a protective and supportive environment for OVC. Through the development of targeted strategies and policies, the government recognises the importance of addressing the socio-economic and political factors that contribute to their vulnerability. Ultimately, the government's commitment to reducing vulnerability seeks to improve the well-being and outcomes for OVC, enabling them to overcome challenges and thrive in society.

f. NON-DISCRIMINATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

Non-discrimination is the principle of treating people fairly and equally, without unjustified differences, bias or prejudice. It promotes equal opportunities and rights for all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, age or any other characteristic. Non-discrimination emphasises the importance of ensuring that policies, practices and services do not result in unfair treatment or exclusion based on inherent or acquired characteristics (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [CRPD], 2006). According to European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS, 2021), gender equality is about achieving equal rights, opportunities and equal

treatment for people of all genders. The aim is to address and eliminate gender-based discrimination, stereotypes and inequalities that disproportionately affect women and girls. Gender equality recognises that everyone, regardless of gender, should have equal access to education, health care, employment, leadership and decision-making. The aim is to create a society in which gender does not limit or determine an individual's rights, opportunities or abilities.

Regarding non-discrimination and gender equality, the National Policy on OVC 2006 points out that:

> *The Government of Lesotho shall strengthen, enact, and ensure implementation of legislation, regulations and other measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against OVC. Gender responsive policy strategies shall be developed to ensure that boys and girls have equal access to resources and opportunities* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006, p.10).

With the preceding extract, the National Policy on OVC 2006 actively discourages discrimination against orphans and vulnerable children in any form. The policy recognises that all children, irrespective of their social or cultural background, deserve equal rights and access to essential services. By emphasising inclusivity, the policy aims to eliminate discrimination based on various factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, sex, disability or any other characteristic. It promotes a society where OVC are treated with dignity and respect, and where they have equal opportunities to thrive and reach their full potential. By explicitly stating its stance against discrimination, the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006 sets a clear expectation that all actions and policies should uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

g. STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are an essential aspect of various sectors including individuals, community, organisations and government agencies. They play a critical role in fostering collaboration, synergy and collective impact to achieve common goals. Partnerships can take various forms, from formal legal agreements to informal agreements based on mutual understanding and trust.

One of the key benefits of partnerships is the ability to pool financial, human, or technological resources to address challenges or leverage opportunities. A strong partnership requires a clear alignment of the goals and interests of the members involved (Walker, 2000).

Partnerships, in the context of the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006, refers to collaborations and alliances between different stakeholders involved in addressing the issues of orphans and vulnerable children. These stakeholders can include government institutions, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), communities, families and children themselves. Strengthened partnerships allow for a more coordinated and holistic response to the challenges OVC face. By working together, different stakeholders can coordinate their efforts, share information and avoid duplication of services (Börje, 2013).

In relation to the principle of strengthening partnerships, the National Policy on OVC 2006 states that:

> *The Government shall strengthen partnerships at all levels to include NGOs, community groups, private sector, development partners, professional associations and other civil society organisations to ensure sustainable delivery of quality services to OVC* (Kingdom of Lesotho 2006, p.10).

The policy recognises that meeting the needs of OVC requires a collaborative and cross-sectoral approach, and that stakeholder engagement for caring and supporting OVC is important. By strengthening partnerships with various stakeholders, the policy ensures that the government leverages shared strengths and resources to meet the complex and multi-faceted needs of OVC. This collaborative approach helps ensure sustained and inclusive support for OVC and creates an environment where their rights, well-being and development are prioritized by a wide range of stakeholders working together towards a common goal.

h. ACCESS TO QUALITY SERVICES, INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

According to Abubakar (2020), access to quality services, information and resources refers to ensuring that orphans and vulnerable children have equal and adequate opportunities to receive the necessary support, services, information and resources essential to their well-being and development. Sejane (2017) points out that access to quality services means that OVC should have access to essential services such as health care, education, nutrition, psychosocial support and protection. These services should meet certain standards of quality, effectiveness and adequacy and be tailored to OVC's specific needs. Access to information, according to Sejane (2017), implies that OVC, their families and communities should have access to accurate, relevant and age-appropriate information regarding their rights, available services and opportunities. This includes information on health, education, legal rights, social services and any other relevant topic that can empower OVC and enable them to make informed decisions. Access to resources is about ensuring that OVC have access to the necessary material resources to meet their basic needs and promote their overall well-being. This includes access to food, clean water, shelter, clothing and other essential resources needed for their physical and emotional well-being.

In line with the constitutional right to quality services, information and resources, the National Policy on OVC 2006 states that:

> *In order to ensure accessibility to quality basic services, the Government shall provide guidelines for equitable allocation of all available resources and information and shall also ensure that OVC access services that are age-appropriate, gender sensitive and child friendly* (Kingdom of Lesotho 2006, p.10).

The National Policy on OVC 2006 recognises the importance of ensuring access to quality services, information and resources for orphans and vulnerable children. This principle implies that all children, regardless of their background or circumstances, should have equitable access to essential services and resources necessary for their well-being and development. Access to quality services means that OVC should have access to health care, education, social support and other services that meet their specific needs. It emphasises the importance of providing services that are of high quality, culturally appropriate, and responsive to the unique challenges faced by

OVC. Furthermore, the policy recognises the significance of providing information to OVC. This includes information about their rights, available services, educational opportunities and other relevant resources. Access to information empowers OVC to make informed decisions, advocate for themselves and actively participate in their own development.

4.2.1.4 CONSEQUENCES FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Theodoulou and Kofinis (2004) define policy implementation as the phase in the policy process where action is taken to put a policy into practice and address a recognized policy issue. This phase is all about translating policy decisions and intentions into concrete measures, programs or projects. According to Cardno (2018), policy consequences refer to the outcomes or effects that arise as a result of policy implementation. These consequences can be intended or unintended, positive or negative, and they can have a significant impact on various stakeholders and the broader socio-political environment. Analysing policy consequences, as suggested by Cardno (2018), can help identify the challenges that may arise during policy implementation.

According to Taylor *et al.* (1997), there are many challenges encountered during policy implementation. These challenges hinder effective policy implementation. The same authors indicate that one of the challenges is policy interpretation which policy is subjected to depending on the interest of the interpreter. This renders policy implementation to depend on the way it is interpreted by the implementer. Analysing the consequences of the implementation of the National Policy on OVC (2006) is essential to understand its impact on addressing the challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children. Therefore, the consequences for the National Policy on OVC 2006 implementation will be implied in the discussion of the findings. This discussion will shed light on the strengths, weaknesses, successes and areas for improvement in the policy's execution.

4.2.1.5 SILENCES AND OMISSIONS OF THE NATIONAL POLICY OF ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN 2006

Policy silence and omissions refer to intentional or unintentional exclusions of specific issues and perspectives in policy documents (Ball, 1993). Rakolobe (2017) indicates that when

conducting a policy analysis, a basic requirement is to find out all aspects of the policy that are not written, are worded in an ambiguous way, or have been intentionally omitted from the policy. Rakolobe (2017) further states that these silences and omissions affect the implementation of the policy. This is consistent with Taylor *et al*. (1997) who point out that what the policy implies and does not necessarily state is as important as what is stated directly.

a. POLICY SILENCES

In the National Policy on OVC 2006, there are four specific areas where monitoring and responsibility are not clearly addressed. The first one is the provision of bursary support. The policy does not provide details on how the provision of bursaries to OVC for meeting their educational needs will be monitored. Monitoring mechanisms are important to ensure that the bursaries are utilized appropriately and effectively, reaching the intended beneficiaries, and achieving the desired outcomes. Without clear monitoring guidelines, it becomes challenging to assess the impact and effectiveness of the bursary program. The second area is the supply of learning materials. The policy acknowledges the need to introduce mechanisms for making learning materials available to OVC and all learners. However, it does not specify the responsible entity for ensuring a constant supply of learning materials to OVC. Identifying the responsible entity is crucial for effective implementation and coordination of efforts. Without a designated entity, there might be confusion and gaps in ensuring an uninterrupted supply of learning materials to the target population (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006).

The third area is the provision of capacity building and consultation. The policy is silent on how the capacity and manner in which the community and orphans and vulnerable children will be consulted. While the policy acknowledges the importance of engaging and involving the community and OVC in decisions regarding their well-being, it does not provide specific details on how this consultation process should be conducted or the mechanisms to ensure meaningful participation (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006: Section 7.2). Lastly, the use of the terms "regular" and "regularly" in Sections 6.2, 8.0, and 13.0 introduces ambiguity in terms of the specific timeframe implied by these terms. The policy does not provide a clear definition or frequency for what constitutes "regular" (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006). This lack of clarity can lead to inconsistent implementation and monitoring of activities outlined in these sections.

b. OMISSION FROM THE POLICY

The National Policy on OVC 2006 does not mention specific measures to address the educational needs and challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children with disabilities. It should include provisions for inclusive education and support services tailored to their specific needs.

While the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006 mentions the need for resource mobilization, it does not set out a clear strategy for securing funding and allocating resources for policy implementation. It would be helpful to include a detailed financial sustainability plan. The National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006 does not specifically address the mental health and psychosocial support needs of orphans and vulnerable children. Given the trauma and emotional challenges they may face, it would be important to include provisions for comprehensive mental health care and support.

4.2.2 ANALYSIS OF OVC BURSARY SCHEME POLICY 2000

The OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 was piloted in Lesotho in 2000, with funding provided by the World Bank and the Government of Lesotho in a 50:50 partnership. The establishment of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 as a pilot project with joint funding from the World Bank and the government shows recognition of the importance of education to OVC. The main purpose of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 was to respond to declining school enrollment rates due to high unemployment from repatriated Basotho miners and to the household impact of rising rates of HIV and AIDS (MOET, 2011). Essentially, the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 was developed to reflect a concerted effort to meet the educational needs of OVC in Lesotho and to ensure that they receive the financial support they need to continue their education and improve their future prospects (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000).

The policy initially focused on primary and lower secondary levels, from Standard 3 to 7 (corresponding to Grades 3 to 7) and those in secondary school from Form A to C (corresponding to Grades 8 to 10). In 2004, the Global Fund started providing support for OVC in high schools from Form D and E (corresponding to Grades 11 and 12). This expansion was

mainly due to the Ministry of Education and Training's inability to provide assistance to OVC after they completed Form C (Grade 10). The Global Fund's support aimed to fill this gap and ensure that OVC had the opportunity to continue their education beyond Grade 10. The policy recognised the importance of supporting OVC throughout their school years to ensure continuity in their education. The involvement of external funding from the Global Fund highlights the need for additional support when the government's resources are insufficient to meet the educational needs of OVC beyond a certain level (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000).

According to Ministry of Development Planning [MODP] (2019), European Union (2020) and MOSD (2022), the number of OVC supported by the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 has increased from 23,304 OVC in 2018 to 28,304 OVC in 2022. As stated by UNICEF (2018), the number of OVC supported by the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 actually fluctuated between 2018 and 2022. These fluctuations are attributed to various factors, such as poor policy implementation, which leads to fluctuations in the number of children supported. Fluctuations in the amount of funding could lead to fluctuations in the number of children supported. The second feature is the limited funding. Mufeti (2022) indicates that the availability of financial resources plays a crucial role in determining the number of children who can be supported. When there are funding constraints, this can impact the ability of the policy to reach and support all eligible OVC.

Addressing these challenges is important for policy makers and stakeholders to support OVC consistently and appropriately. This could include improving policy implementation, ensuring adequate resource allocations, and regularly assessing and considering the needs of eligible OVC to minimise variability in the number of children supported. Table 4.1 below shows the number of supported OVC per year between 2018 and 2022.

*Table 4. 1***:** *Number of OVC supported by OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 from 2018 to 2022*

Years	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
NO. of OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 Beneficiaries	23,304	108,883	28,000	23,845	28,304

*Sources: (*UNICEF, 2018; Kingdom of Lesotho, 2019, European-Union, 2020; Mufeti, 2022; MOSD, 2022)

4.2.2.1 POLICY GOAL

In this context, the policy goal is the desired outcome that the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 seeks to achieve. The goal of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 thus provides orientation for policy makers and serves as a basis for decision-making and action.

The goal of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is:

> *to promote the education of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) with the purpose of fighting poverty* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000, p.2).

Based on this goal, the OVC Policy 2000 seems to recognise that education plays a crucial role in empowering OVC and equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed for personal development, employment and economic self-sufficiency. The policy aims to enable OVC to access and complete their secondary education, which in turn improves their chances for a better future and helps break the cycle of poverty.

It is therefore important to examine the features of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 and assess whether it is user-friendly and in line with the principle of the best interests of the child, in particular of orphans and vulnerable learners, which is crucial for its effective implementation.

4.2.2.2 FEATURES OF THE OVC BURSARY SCHEME POLICY 2000

The policy features refer to the specific characteristics or components that define that policy and distinguish it from other policies. These features help identify and understand the nature and scope of the policy (Hator, 2021). In the context of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, the features are the components which outline applications processes and procedures.

I.   BENEFICIARIES OF THE OVC BURSARY SCHEME POLICY 2000

The OVC Bursary Scheme appears to be a comprehensive and inclusive policy that aims to provide educational support to various categories of children who are considered orphans,

vulnerable and needy. The policy's eligibility criteria are designed to target children facing various challenges that may hinder their access to education. The policy identifies several categories of vulnerable children, including orphans, children with disabilities, children whose parents are sick or disabled, and those who have been abandoned. By addressing multiple vulnerabilities, the policy seeks to ensure that children facing different challenges are not left behind in accessing education. The policy takes into account both parental and child vulnerabilities when determining eligibility for assistance. Children whose parents face challenges that prevent them from providing support are also considered for educational assistance, recognising the interdependence between parental well-being and a child's education. The policy sets the age limit for eligible children as 18 years and below, ensuring that support is provided during the critical stages of secondary education. The policy requires that eligible children be enrolled in secondary schools which are legally registered with the Ministry of Education and Training. Requiring a doctor's certificate as evidence of parental illness ensures that the policy is implemented transparently and prevents potential abuse of the system. Eligibility for children whose parents are not adults (defined as 55 years and above) highlights the policy's recognition of intergenerational poverty and the need to break the cycle by investing in education. By using criteria set by the Integrated Social Safety Net (ISSN) to determine neediness, the policy leverages existing social protection mechanisms to identify eligible beneficiaries (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000).

II.   APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

Regarding the required documents, the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 states that:

> *A stamped letter from the chief confirming the family's poverty status, the child's OVC status, and the family's situation, a stamped letter from the applicant explaining the reasons for applying for the bursary, Certified copies of the deceased's or parents' documents, such as death certificates or identification documents, a letter from a doctor confirming that the parent or parents of the applicant are sick and unable to work, the child's acceptance letter to the school, also known as the admission letter, a certified copy of the child's birth certificate as proof of identity, councillor's letter and certified copies of parental*

identification documents, such as identity cards or passports (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000, p.3).

These documents are typically required to assess the eligibility of the applicant and to ensure that the bursary is awarded to deserving candidates based on the specified criteria outlined in the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000.

III.   SELECTION CRITERIA

Based on the eligibility criteria used to select the beneficiaries, the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 points out that:

> *The beneficiary must belong to a household categorized as NISSA 1 which is considered ultra-poor or NISSA 2 which is considered very poor, the beneficiaries should be children aged between 12 and 17 years old. The beneficiary must be enrolled in a legally registered secondary school with the Ministry of Education and Training, the beneficiary should be identified as eligible by both the Management Information System (MIS) and the Village Assistance Committee (VAC) and the beneficiary should be living within an area selected by ISSN (presumably referring to the National Identity and Civil Status Authority)* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000, p.3).

Based on the extract, the selection criteria and the application process for the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 appears to be clear, simple and accessible to OVC and their legal guardians. It was also noted that information on the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, eligibility criteria and application process is written in both English and Sesotho for easy understanding by target beneficiaries. However, despite the specificity of these eligibility criteria, some weaknesses were identified during interviews. These weaknesses suggest that the criteria are not effective in identifying and prioritising the most vulnerable and needy children. A notable weakness is the lack of measures to ensure fair and equal access to bursary support for all eligible children.

In support of this view, School Principal for Government School (GPS) stated that:

There are approximately more than 60 orphans and vulnerable learners in this school with around 26 orphans and vulnerable learners supported by the OVC bursary scheme.

The implication of the preceding excerpt is that while there are some OVC who were supported by the bursary, others were not. This was supported by School Principal for Community School (CPS) who added that:

There are approximately more than 40 OVC in this school, among which, 21 are supported by OVC the bursary scheme. Those who are not supported are still many because there are more than 20.

The implication is that many eligible OVC are still not supported even though the eligibility criteria seem to be specific and comprehensive.

IV. DISCONTINUITY OF BURSARY SUPPORT

Regarding the discontinuity of the bursary support, the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 points out that:

If a beneficiary does not pass and proceed to the next grade, the bursary is temporarily terminated, if a beneficiary fails the same grade for two consecutive years, they will be exited from the OVC Bursary support and if a beneficiary successfully completes secondary school and graduates, they will exit the OVC Bursary support (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000, p.4).

These conditions outline circumstances under which bursary support may be discontinued. They emphasise the importance of academic progression and successful completion of secondary education as factors determining the eligibility and continuation of the bursary assistance provided through the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. This is also intended to increase completion rates for the supported OVC.

V.   OVC BURSARY SCHEME POLICY 2000 COVERAGE OF SUPPORT

Under the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, the support provided covers various aspects of education and school related expenses. The OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 states that:

> *The bursary support covers registration fee, school fees, textbooks fee, stationery, exam fees, accommodation and boarding fee, and feeding fee.*

Based on the findings of the semi-structured interviews, several key issues regarding the effectiveness of OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 support coverage were identified. Insufficient coverage of basic needs was found to be the main problem impeding effective OVC school participation. It was found that the policy coverage of registration fees, school fees, textbooks, stationery, examination fees, accommodation and boarding were insufficient. The interviews revealed that additional items such as school uniforms, shoes and food are critical for effective OVC school participation and should be included in support coverage. The lack of these essential needs impairs the OVC's ability to feel like other learners and participate fully in their education. The study found that there are no mechanisms to monitor and assess the impact of bursary support on academic achievement and beneficiary attendance and overall educational progress. This lack of monitoring makes it difficult to assess the effectiveness of bursary support and identify areas for improvement. Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation processes would provide valuable data to measure the positive impact of support on OVC educational performance.

VI.   ELIGIBILITY FOR OVC BURSARY SCHEME POLICY 2000 SUPPORT

The OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 allows various individuals and organizations to apply for educational assistance on behalf of eligible children. Regarding the eligibility for OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 support, the policy states that:

> *People of goodwill, such as individuals willing to support OVC, neighbors, members of self-help groups or church believers, local and county authorities such as chiefs, school principals, local government councilors and county governors, children themselves, (4) parents or guardians, Spouses or other children within the family Government and independent organizations such as*

NGOs or community-based organizations working with OVC (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000, p.3).

This shows that the policy promotes an inclusive approach and recognises the important role that different people play in the training of OVC. By engaging these diverse potential applicants, the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 aims to create a collaborative and supportive environment where multiple stakeholders work together to ensure educational support for eligible children. The existence of discrepancies between the selection procedures described in the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 and its actual implementation is indeed worrying. Although the policy has well-formulated selection procedures, the fact that there are eligible orphans and vulnerable children who are not receiving the educational support to which they are entitled points to a problem in the implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. One of the main reasons for this discrepancy is insufficient resources allocated to the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000).

As highlighted in the Lesotho Government's HIV and Social Protection Assessment Report 2019, limited program resources may impede the ability to support all eligible OVC through the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2019). This inadequacy has resulted in lower OVC school enrollment and increased OVC dropout rates. This implies that an effective implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is essential in reducing school dropout rates among orphans and vulnerable children, increasing their access to education and improving their overall well-being and future prospects.

4.2.2.3 THE OMISSIONS

Monitoring and evaluation play a critical role in the effective implementation of any policy, including the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. However, the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 lacks stipulations on monitoring and evaluation (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000). The implication of this is that without a clearly defined framework for ongoing monitoring and evaluation, it becomes difficult to assess whether the policy is achieving its intended goals and whether it effectively reaches target beneficiaries and meets their needs. Regular assessments

and evaluations are essential to measure policy impact and outcomes, identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments to ensure its effectiveness. By actively soliciting feedback from beneficiaries, guardians and other stakeholders, policy makers can gain valuable insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the policy and use that information to refine and enhance it (Baker *et al.* 2018).

It is important to consider not only what is explicitly stated in the policy document, but also what may be implied or intentionally omitted. In the case of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, the lack of a monitoring and evaluation framework raises concerns about how the impact and effectiveness of the policy will be measured and how accountability and transparency will be ensured. To address these concerns and strengthen the implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, it is critical for policy makers to incorporate a robust monitoring and evaluation framework. This framework should outline clear indicators, data collection methods, reporting mechanisms and feedback channels to assess policy progress, identify challenges and make evidence-based decisions. In this way, the policy can be continuously improved to better meet the needs of OVC, improve their access to and retention in secondary school, and ultimately contribute to their overall well-being and development.

There is a concern that the Ministry of Education and Training is not explicitly mentioned in the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000). This is because the MOET plays a critical role in the effective implementation of any educational policy, including the OVC Bursary Scheme. The Ministry of Education and Training has the authority and responsibility to oversee the implementation of educational policies. Their involvement ensures that the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is properly executed and aligned with the broader educational goals and objectives of the country (MOET, 2010).

The Ministry is responsible for allocating human resources which support the implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme. The Ministry can help in providing training and capacity-building programs for school principals and other relevant personnel involved in the implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. Considering these reasons, it is important for the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 to recognise the critical role of the Ministry of Education and Training explicitly. This recognition can help ensure that the Ministry's involvement, support,

and oversight are valued and adequately addressed, leading to a more effective implementation of the policy and better outcomes for orphaned and vulnerable learners (MOET, 2010).

Indeed, when it comes to public policies, government commitment is critical to their successful implementation. However, the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 does not spell out the government's commitment to implementation. The government's commitment can take various forms such as financial support, resource allocation, infrastructure development, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and legal frameworks. The OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 makes no explicit mention of government commitment, indicating a gap or oversight in the policy document. Typically, these relate to the government's obligation to ensure policy effectiveness and sustainability, and to demonstrate accountability to the public. It is a clear signal that the government is committed to achieving policy goals and supporting target beneficiaries (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000).

4.2.3   INTERTEXTUALITY

The OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is well aligned with the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006. The objective of the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006 is to prevent OVC endangerment, protect, nurture, support and develop OVC. The OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 specifically aims to promote the education of orphans and vulnerable children to help fight poverty. The policy goal of the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006 includes developing legal, policy and institutional frameworks for OVC protection and establishing coordination structures for OVC programs. It also involves improving care and services for OVC and their families, and promoting multi-sectoral and gender-sensitive approaches that are all consistent with the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 goal of promoting OVC access to secondary school and retaining them until they complete their final grades (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000: Kingdom of Lesotho, 2006).

Through the provision of educational support, the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 supports the policy direction and resource allocation set out in the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006. The OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is consistent with the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006, which is also committed to

promoting the education of OVC. This shows that the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is not a standalone policy for orphans and vulnerable children. In essence, both policies recognise the importance of education to break the cycle of poverty and vulnerability that orphans and vulnerable children often face.

In summary, the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is not an isolated policy but rather an integral part of the broader national strategy to address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children, as set out in the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006.

4.3   PRESENTATION OF THE INTERVIEW FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the assessment of the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in enhancing access and retention of orphans and vulnerable children in secondary school. The OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is a government initiative aimed at promoting the education of orphans and vulnerable children in order to reduce poverty. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in achieving the intended goals. To gain further insights, interviews with different types of participants, including school principals, teachers, parents/guardians of OVC and the OVC themselves were conducted.

Through the interviews, the aim was to understand the perceptions, experiences and challenges faced by various participants in relation to the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. The impact of the policy on OVC's access to secondary education, their retention rates in school and any barriers or gaps that may exist in its implementation were explored. The findings presented in this section are based on the analysis of the interview data, including recurring themes, shared experiences, and unique perspectives of the participants. These findings provide valuable insight into the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 and offer recommendations for improvement or further action. It is important to recognise that the findings presented here reflect the subjective viewpoints and experiences of the participants. Although efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy and objectivity of the data, there may be limitations in the interview process, such as potential bias or variations in interpretation. The key findings shed light on the

effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in enhancing access and retention in secondary school for orphans and vulnerable learners.

4.3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH SITE

Leribe district is one of the ten districts in Lesotho, a country located in Southern Africa. It is situated in the northern part of Lesotho and shares borders with the Free State Province of South Africa to the west. Domestically, it is bordered by Botha-Bothe district to the north, Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka districts to the east and Berea district to the south. The district covers an area of approximately 2,828 square kilometres. In 2016, Leribe district had a population of 337,521, which accounted for about 16,8 percent of Lesotho's total population at that time. Hlotse is the capital town of Leribe district. According to Lesotho District Profile 2016, there were approximately 11,015 OVC in 2011 and 10,940 OVC in 2016. Hlotse is an important urban centre and serves as the administrative hub for the district. Additionally, Leribe district has one more town called Maputsoe. Regarding education, there are approximately 67 public secondary schools registered in Leribe district, according to the Bureau of Statistics (BOS) Lesotho District Profile 2016. These schools play a crucial role in providing education to the local population and contributing to the overall educational system of Lesotho (BOS, 2016).

Table 4.2 shows the distribution of orphanhood from 2011 to 2016 while Figure 4.1 presents the map of Lesotho which shows the districts which border the Leribe district.

*Table 4. 2***:** *Distribution of orphanhood from 2011 to 2016*

ORPHANHOOD	2011	2016
Number of Paternal Orphans	7,071	7,074
Number of Maternal Orphans	1,684	1,843
Number Double Orphans	2,600	2,023
Total	**11,015**	**10,940**

Source: BOS, 2016; Lesotho District Profile 2016
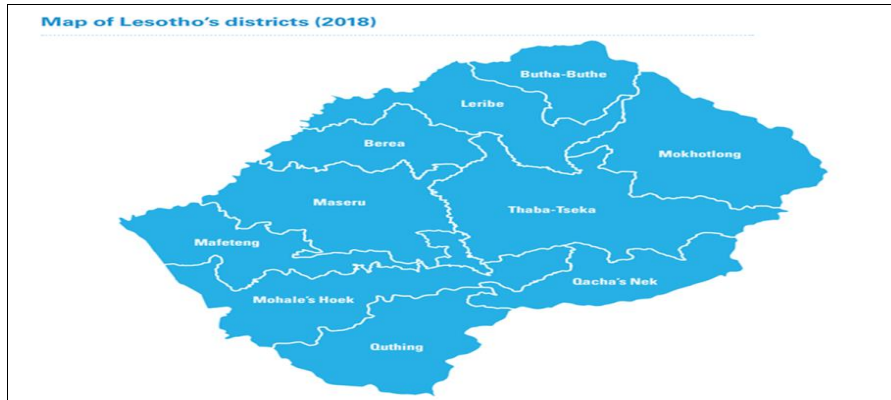
Figure 4. 1: Lesotho Map (MOET, 2021)

4.3.2 PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES

Participants in this study include school principals, teachers, orphans and vulnerable learners who were supported and not supported by the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 and guardians/parents. Principals were selected because they are typically responsible for managing the overall operations of schools including the well-being of OVC in the context of this study. Teachers are responsible for teaching and learning and interact with learners daily. To comply with the ethical considerations of anonymity and confidentiality, the following symbols are used throughout this study: School Principals for Government School (GSP), School Principal for Community School (CSP), School Teacher for Government School (GST), School Teacher for Community School (CST), Orphans and Vulnerable Learners (OVC): OVC1, OVC2, OVC3, OVC4, OVC5, OVC6, OVC7 and OVC8 and Guardian/Parent (GP).

Table 4.3 presents the profiles of the participants which are designation, number of years a participant has worked at or attended the school, and school proprietor, which indicates ownership of the school studied. These participant profiles help me to understand the level of experience and contextual factors of the participants involved in the study. They contribute to a more comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the research findings.

*Table 4. 3***:** *Participants Profiles*

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Participant	Designation	Years in this School	School Proprietor
1	Principal 1	16 years	Government
2	Principal 2	5 years	Community
3	Teacher 1	16 years	Government
4	Teacher 2	13 years	Community
5	OVC1- Single orphan	4 years	Community
6	OVC2- Needy	3 years	Community
7	OVC3- Needy	4 years	Community
8	OVC4- Needy	3 years	Community
9	OVC5- Needy	1 year	Government
10	OVC6- Needy	3 years	Government
11	OVC7- Double orphan	2 years	Government
12	OVC8- Needy	2 years	Government

4.3.3 SUMMARY OF THE THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

A thematic analysis was conducted to analyse the interview responses which yielded the following themes and sub-themes as presented in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4. 4: Summary of Themes and Sub-themes

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Challenges encountered by the OVC in their Secondary School education	Unmet Basic Needs
	Unmet School-Related Needs
	School Fees and Other School-Related Expenses
	Taking Care of Elderly and Sick People
	Lack of Parental Support
	Teenage Pregnancy and Early Marriage
	Peer Pressure

	Child Labour
Measures taken to address the challenges faced by OVC	School Interventions in Place
	Community Interventions in Place
Factors Affecting Effective Implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000	Delay in Disbursement
	Unfair Allocation
	Age Discrimination
	Performance-Based Implementation
Support Mechanisms Suggested for OVC	Support from the Community
	Monitoring and Evaluation
	Holistic Bursary Support
	Psychosocial Support to OVC

4.3.3.1 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY OVC IN LESOTHO SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The participants were asked to reflect on the challenges encountered by OVC in secondary schools and they expressed similar and divergent views.

a) UNMET BASIC NEEDS

The findings revealed that unmet basic needs are a major challenge faced by OVC in secondary education. These challenges discourage OVC from effectively participating in school. It was reported that learners who do not have food, clothes and cosmetics hardly go to school. In view of this, CSP reported that:

> *OVC sometimes come to school on empty stomachs, and this has a negative impact on their ability to concentrate and attend classes.*

According to CSP, it has been noted that some OVC arrive at school without having had a proper meal. This situation adversely affects their ability to concentrate and actively participate in class. Hunger can impair cognitive functioning and diminish attention spans, making it difficult for these students to focus on their studies and fully benefit from their education. The impact of unmet basic needs, particularly the lack of essential items like food, clothing and personal care products contributes to the barriers faced by OVC in their educational journey.

In support of this view, GSP stated that:

> *Some OVC come to school without breakfast and do not have cosmetics to use. It is embarrassing for a teenager not to have a roll-on, toothpaste, or body cream. They feel embarrassed and do not participate fully in school activities because of a low self-esteem.*

According to GSP, it has been observed that certain OVC arrive at school without having had breakfast and lacked access to cosmetics or personal hygiene care items. This situation can be particularly challenging for teenagers as they may feel embarrassed or self-conscious about not having essential items such as roll-on deodorant, toothpaste or body cream. The absence of these items can contribute to low self-esteem among OVC. This, in turn, may hinder their full participation in school activities. When students feel embarrassed or lack confidence due to their unmet basic needs, they may be less likely to engage actively in classroom discussions, extracurricular activities, or social interactions. As a result, their overall educational experience and academic performance may suffer. Recognising and addressing the importance of basic needs such as food, clothing and personal care items is crucial in supporting OVC in their educational journeys.

Additionally, GST added that:

> *The bursary does not mind if learners have clothes and cosmetics to use. It does not take into account whether the supported OVC ate something before going to school. With nothing to eat, these learners drop out of school. These challenges keep them at home even if school fees are paid.*

When OVC do not have access to sufficient food, it can significantly impact their well-being and ability to focus on their studies. The lack of proper nourishment may lead to poor concentration, fatigue, and a general decline in physical and mental health. These circumstances can ultimately result in OVC dropping out of school, regardless of whether their school fees are paid through a bursary. The challenges related to unmet basic needs go beyond financial support. While financial assistance is undoubtedly important, it is essential to address the holistic needs of OVC, including access to food, clothing and personal care items. A comprehensive approach that combines financial assistance with support for basic needs can contribute to creating an enabling

environment for OVC to thrive in their educational pursuits and reduce the likelihood of dropping out.

This was justified by GP1 who indicated that:

> *Sometimes my child goes to school without eating because there was no food at home. Clothes and shoes are the big problems as she doesn't have the right clothes like other kids.*

This highlights the real-life impact of food insecurity on OVC and how it directly affects their ability to start the school day adequately nourished. This also emphasises the social and psychological implications that arise from the inability to meet basic needs, potentially leading to feelings of exclusion or being different from other children. The first-hand experience shared by GP1 underscores the urgent need to address the challenges faced by OVC in obtaining food, clothing and other essentials. It provides valuable insight into the daily struggles that OVC and their families go through, highlighting the importance of comprehensive support systems that encompass not only financial assistance but also assistance in meeting basic needs to ensure that OVC can fully participate in their education.

Furthermore, OVC5 stated that:

> *Sometimes my grandmother tells me that she has no money for lunch which makes me spend the whole day at school without food.*

This first-hand account highlights the harsh realities faced by some OVC, as they have to endure hunger and its consequences while trying to focus on their studies. The inability to access regular meals not only affects the physical well-being of OVC but also hinders their ability to concentrate and actively engage in learning. Hunger can lead to fatigue, reduced cognitive functioning, and difficulty in maintaining attention, all of which negatively impact their educational experience and academic performance. The experience shared by OVC5 sheds light on the daily challenges that some OVC face in meeting their basic nutritional needs. It signals the urgent need for interventions that address food insecurity among OVC, ensuring that they have access to nutritious meals during the school day. This was supported by OVC6 thus:

> *Sometimes I have a hard time having a lunch box and breakfast before coming to*
> *school. It is hard for me to concentrate when there is no food.*

When individuals, particularly growing children and adolescents like OVC, do not have access to proper nutrition, it can significantly affect their ability to concentrate, learn and retain information. Hunger and malnutrition can lead to fatigue, difficulty in processing information, and decreased attention spans, making it hard for OVC to fully engage in their studies. It reinforces the importance of addressing food insecurity as a fundamental aspect of supporting OVC in their educational journeys. Efforts to provide meals and ensure consistent access to nutritious food for OVC can significantly improve their ability to concentrate, learn and actively participate in school activities.

Additionally, OVC 7 asserted that:

> *We depend on our uncle to send us money so that we can buy groceries. However,*
> *sometimes we have nothing to eat. Sometimes I feel like going to look for a job so*
> *that we can have food and clothes, especially when there is no food. Sometimes I*
> *don't have soap to wash the uniform.*

The uncertainty and inconsistency in receiving financial support can lead to food insecurity, leaving OVC7 and their family without proper nourishment. This reflects the resilience and determination of OVC to overcome the challenges they face in meeting their basic needs. However, the pursuit of employment at a young age can present its own set of obstacles and potentially interfere with their education. This further accentuates the multi-faceted nature of the challenges faced by OVC in relation to unmet basic needs. The account shared by OVC7 underscores the urgent need for comprehensive support systems that address not only financial assistance but also the provision of essential items such as groceries, clothing and personal care products.

Also, OVC8 indicated that:

> *Sometimes I have nothing to eat in the morning and during lunch at school. That*
> *causes me not to listen during the lesson because then I am hungry.*

Hunger can have profound effects on cognitive functions and overall well-being. When learners experience hunger, their energy levels drop, making it difficult for them to focus and concentrate on the lessons being taught. The physiological need for food becomes a priority, distracting them from their learning and inhibiting their academic progress. Providing regular, nutritious meals not only meets their physical needs but also enables them to fully participate in the learning process, contributing to improved academic performance and overall well-being.

b) UNMET SCHOOL-RELATED NEEDS

The findings revealed that even though OVC are supported with school fees, registration fees, stationery and textbooks, other school-related costs which play a significant role in their daily lives are not catered for. It was reported that OVC did not have proper school uniform and shoes, while some went to school without bathing due to a lack of cosmetics. To justify this, GSP reported that:

> *Most OVC do not have proper school uniform. They wear everything that comes their way when they come to school, and this makes them feel uncomfortable because they realize that they are different from other learners. This makes them look different from others because they do not have proper school uniforms.*

The inability to afford proper school uniforms not only has practical implications but also impacts the emotional well-being of OVC. Feeling different or out of place due to their appearance can lead to a sense of exclusion and low self-esteem. These factors can hinder their overall engagement in school activities, affect their social interactions, and potentially impede their academic progress.

In support of this statement, CST pointed out:

> *One of the challenges of OVC is lack of proper school uniform. I don't know if the bursary caters for school uniforms, but most OVC do not have proper school uniform. Those who wear a school uniform do not have jackets to wear in winter and in cold weather conditions.*

The implication is that despite receiving support in other areas, OVC still struggle to obtain proper school uniforms. It is evidenced that OVC are faced with the challenge of inadequate clothing to suit different weather conditions, which can further marginalize and discomfort them, potentially affecting their attendance and participation in school during colder seasons. The insight shared by CST highlights the need for comprehensive support that encompasses not only academic expenses but also essential items like school uniforms and appropriate clothing for varying weather conditions. Addressing these needs is vital in ensuring that OVC have a sense of belonging, comfort and inclusivity within the school environment.

Additionally, OVC2 explained that:

> *I did not have all the books because my uncle keeps on buying them one by one when he gets money until the list is complete. This makes me to always be behind with my work because we are expected to write each subject in a separate book. I sometimes do not write schoolwork because I did not have exercise books for a particular subject. As a result, teachers always punish me for not having all the books during classes.*

The inability to access the required materials not only affects the OVC's ability to complete assignments and homework but also exposes them to disciplinary actions and punishment from teachers. OVC2's experience highlights the detrimental impact that limited access to educational resources can have on their academic performance and overall educational experience. It is crucial to address the issue of inadequate access to books and exercise books for OVC.

The challenges faced by OVC in obtaining all the required learning materials highlight the barriers they encounter in fully participating in their education. These limitations can negatively impact their academic progress and contribute to feelings of frustration and inadequacy.

In addition, OVC3 stated the following:

> *Sometimes, I spend the whole year not having any textbooks and exercise books. I also sometimes do not have additional textbooks that have to be bought by the parents.*

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This account indicates the significant challenges faced by OVC in accessing essential learning resources. The lack of textbooks and exercise books can severely hinder their ability to engage with the curriculum, complete assignments and study effectively. Without these materials, OVC may struggle to keep up with their peers and may experience difficulties in comprehending and retaining the required knowledge. The financial constraints faced by the OVC's families highlight the need for comprehensive support systems to ensure that OVC have access to the necessary educational resources regardless of their financial circumstances.

This was supported by OVC6 by saying that:

> *I do not have all the exercise books and I have to write each subject on a separate*
> *book.*

The inability to have dedicated exercise books for each subject can have practical implications, such as difficulty in keeping track of assignments, notes and progress in different subjects. It can also impact their ability to refer to previous lessons and study effectively, potentially resulting in lower academic performance.

Additionally, OVC8 indicated that:

> *I do not have all the exercise books needed at school.*

This shortage of exercise books can have a direct impact on their ability to complete assignments, practise concepts and keep their notes organized. Not having all the required exercise books can lead to a disjointed learning experience for OVC8. They may struggle to stay on top of their coursework, track their progress and effectively engage with the material being taught. The absence of these resources can hinder their academic development and limit their potential for success.

In support of this view, OVC3 said that:

> *I do not have a proper school uniform. Sometimes we are sent back home from*
> *school to go and put on proper school uniform. Sometimes we are punished for*

not wearing the right school uniform. This makes me sad because I know I do not have the right school uniform.

This was backed by OVC4, indicating that:

I am sometimes afraid to present and participate in class because I do not always have the proper school uniform.

The fear OVC4 experienced reflects the social and psychological challenges that arise from not having the right school uniform. It can lead to a sense of being different or excluded, which can significantly impact their overall well-being and academic performance. Creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment requires addressing these concerns. Efforts should be made to ensure that OVC have access to necessary school uniforms, either through financial support or donations. Additionally, fostering a culture of acceptance and understanding within the school community can help alleviate the anxiety and fear experienced by OVC4 and others in similar situations.

In addition, GP further stated that:

I struggle to buy my children's books and other learning materials.

The financial constraints faced by GP can have a direct impact on their children's educational opportunities. Without the proper learning materials, their children may face challenges in keeping up with their studies, completing assignments and fully engaging in the learning process. It is crucial to recognise and address the financial barriers that families like GP's encounter. Educational institutions, government programs and community organizations can play a vital role in providing support to families in need, such as through scholarship programs, book banks, or initiatives to donate educational resources.

Additionally, GP restated that:

This child has many challenges which include not having the school uniform, shoes, and school bag.

These items are essential for a child's comfort, sense of belonging and readiness to engage in the learning environment. The absence of a school uniform can contribute to feelings of being different or excluded, potentially affecting the child's self-esteem and confidence. Furthermore, the lack of proper shoes and a school bag can hinder their ability to navigate the school environment effectively and carry necessary supplies.

c) SCHOOL FEES AND OTHER SCHOOL-RELATED EXPENSES

The findings discovered that orphans and vulnerable learners face significant challenges in accessing education and staying in school due to the lack of school-related expenses. These, include school fees, school trips and contribution fees. This is demonstrated by the following response from OVC6 who explained that:

> *Most of the time I was expelled for not paying the school fees and that was painful*
> *because I missed classes as my parents did not have money. I used to stay at home*
> *for several weeks until the money was there.*

The inability to pay school fees can be a significant barrier for orphans and vulnerable learners, preventing them from accessing their right to education. This financial burden can contribute to a cycle of exclusion and limited opportunities for these learners.

Additionally, OVC5 indicated that:

> *Last year, I was not working hard as I was playing with my friends, I did not see*
> *the importance of being in school as I was always embarrassed when I was*
> *expelled for not paying school fees. I had many friends who did not take their*
> *studies seriously, and I followed them. I am sometimes not able to pay all the*
> *school-related fees. I sometimes do not go on school trips because of money.*

The financial constraints highlighted by on OVC5 do not only affect OVC's academic progress but also influence their social interactions and peer dynamics. OVC5's experience highlights how the inability to meet school-related financial obligations can contribute to a sense of embarrassment, isolation and lack of engagement in educational activities.

In support of this view, OVC7 reasoned as follows:

> *I know very well that I will not be able to take school trips. I do not have a problem with it, but it is so painful.*

The inability to participate in school trips can have several implications. It not only deprives OVC7 of valuable educational experiences outside the classroom but also limits their exposure to new environments, cultures and learning opportunities. School trips often provide students with practical experiences that enhance their understanding of various subjects and promote social interaction and personal growth. The pain expressed by OVC7 underscores the emotional impact of not being able to partake in these activities. It highlights the disparity between their experiences and those of their peers who have the financial means to participate fully. This disparity can lead to feelings of exclusion, low self-esteem and a sense of missing out on important aspects of their education.

Additionally, OVC8 stated that:

> *It is not easy for my parents to pay school-related fees because they are not working, and this makes me to be expelled from school when the school fees are needed especially when we are going to write the tests at the end of every quarter.*

The inability to pay school fees can have a severe impact on the continuity of education for OVC8 and others in similar situations. Expulsion from school not only disrupts their learning but also negatively affects their academic progress, social interactions and overall well-being.

In support of this claim, GP1 submitted that:

> *Sometimes I do not have money to pay the fees which leads to my child staying at home until I get money and pay.*

The inability to pay school fees creates a disruption in a child's education and can have detrimental effects on their academic progress, social interactions and overall well-being. It can

lead to gaps in learning, missed opportunities and a sense of exclusion from the educational environment.

d) TAKING CARE OF SICK PEOPLE

The findings revealed that OVC have the additional responsibility of caring for their sick parents, which has a significant impact on their mental well-being and ability to concentrate in class. This was reported by OVC1 who indicated that:

> *My parent was working in South Africa and had an accident that cut off her leg, making life at home difficult. I have to make sure that I get up early and prepare food for my sick mother, and this makes me feel tired and sleep in class. After school I have to do housework like fetching water, sweeping, cooking and helping my mother. This makes me forget my homework sometimes. When my mother is not well, I feel like I don't want to go to school and want to be at home to help her. When my mother is not well, sometimes I don't go to school because I have to look after her. I also accompany her when she goes for the check-ups.*

The added responsibilities of caring for ailing parents can have a profound effect on OVC1's daily routine and academic performance. The physical and emotional demands of taking care of a sick parent can lead to fatigue, which in turn affects their ability to concentrate and participate fully in class. OVC1 also mentions that the demands at home cause them to forget about their homework and even miss school on occasions when their mother's health is particularly poor. The well-being of OVC is crucial for their overall development and academic success. It is important to recognise and address the unique challenges they face, including the responsibility of caregiving. Providing support systems, such as counselling services, mentorship programs and community resources can help alleviate the mental and emotional strain on OVC1 and others in similar situations. Collaborative efforts among schools, social services and health care providers can ensure that these vulnerable children receive the necessary support to balance their caregiving responsibilities and education.

e) ***LACK OF PARENTAL SUPPORT***

The findings revealed that lack of parental support is one of the challenges faced by OVC. This was raised by CSP who reported that:

> *When the OVC feel pressure of being disciplined at school, they sometimes choose to drop out because some live in families where there are no elders to discipline them. Some learners do not have elders to guide them because they live in child-headed families. These learners become vulnerable because there is no one to talk to them and show them the importance of being in school and doing good.*

In child-headed families, OVC often assume adult responsibilities and may not have elder family members to provide guidance, mentorship or instil the importance of education. This lack of guidance and support can contribute to feelings of isolation, a lack of motivation, and a decreased understanding of the value of attending school and performing well academically. The absence of positive role models and a support network can significantly impact the OVC's overall well-being and educational trajectory. Without someone to talk to or provide guidance, they may struggle with making informed decisions, managing their emotions and staying engaged in their education.

Additionally, GSP stated that:

> *I suspect the OVC lack parental or guardian guidance. There is no one to discipline these OVC. Therefore, they end up making mistakes that drive them out of school. Others stay in child-headed families, while others stay with the elderly who are unable to discipline them. Sometimes if a learner has committed an offence at school, parents and guardians are reluctant to come to school. Sometimes genuinely, there is no one to come to school to help discipline the child.*

Furthermore, some OVC live with elderly individuals who may find it challenging to effectively discipline and guide them. The generation gap and potential health or mobility limitations of the elderly caregivers can create additional barriers to providing the necessary support and discipline that OVC require. Additionally, GSP highlights that when OVC commit infractions or engage in misconduct at school, parents and guardians may be reluctant to come to school or are unable to

provide the needed support. This lack of parental involvement further exacerbates the challenges faced by OVC in terms of discipline and behaviour management. In support of this view, GST stated that:

> Most of these OVC live with their parents who do not care about their education. Some live in child-headed families and have no one to talk to about their problems.

The absence of parental care and support can have detrimental effects on the OVC's educational journey. They may struggle with self-discipline, attendance and engagement in school activities. The lack of a nurturing environment and a space to discuss their problems can lead to feelings of loneliness, frustration and a diminished sense of self-worth.

Additionally, OVC7 stated that:

> Sometimes other learners make fun of me for being the one who takes care of my siblings, especially when I am late.

The response for OVC7 highlights the social difficulties faced by OVC who are responsible for taking care of their siblings. The participant mentioned that they sometimes face mockery from other learners, particularly when they arrive late for school due to their caregiving responsibilities. This experience can be emotionally distressing for learners and may contribute to feelings of isolation or lack of belonging.

Also, OVC2 explained that:

> My parents went to South Africa to work but they do not regularly send us money to buy food and other needs.

This response shows that OVC are faced with economic challenges which hinder their active participation in school. This situation can severely affect OVC's well-being as financial instability affects their ability to access basic needs and school-related needs. It underscores the need for financial support systems and interventions to assist OVC whose parents are absent or unable to provide adequate financial support.

f) TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND EARLY MARRIAGE

The findings revealed a distressing trend among orphaned and vulnerable learners wherein they face a higher risk of teenage pregnancy. This was evidenced by a statement from GSP who indicated that:

> We had a case here in school whereby one of OVC got pregnant at a tender age, which led to her dropping out of school and eventually losing her bursary support. This is because the bursary policy does not continue to support them after they have not progressed to the next grade. OVC sometimes drop out of school because guardians/parents force them into early marriage.

When OVC become pregnant, the challenges of raising a child at a young age often make it difficult for them to continue with their education. The demands of caring for a child, coupled with potential social stigma, may lead them to make the difficult decision to drop out of school in order to prioritize their parenting responsibilities. Similarly, forced early marriage can disrupt their educational trajectory, limiting their opportunities for personal and professional development.

g) PEER PRESSURE

The findings revealed that peer pressure negatively influences orphaned and vulnerable learners to make poor decisions in an attempt to fit in with their peers. This was emphasised by GP2 who stated that:

> This child has so many friends who do not attend school, and this sometimes makes my child to avoid going to school by pretending to be sick. Sometimes she comes home late with false excuses that she had a lot of work at school.

OVC face significant pressure from their friends to engage in behaviours that are detrimental to their education and overall well-being. One of the negative impacts of peer pressure on OVC is school avoidance. They may be influenced by their friends to skip school, leading to frequent absences and a lack of commitment to their education. This behaviour can have serious consequences for their academic progress and future opportunities. Additionally, it is essential to

recognise that OVC face unique challenges and vulnerabilities that can contribute to their susceptibility to peer pressure.

In reference to the influence of peer pressure on OVC school participation, CSP stated that:

> *They experience peer pressure that leads them to attend initiation school (**lebollo**), forgetting that if they do not progress to the next grade, they will lose their bursary support*.

This focus on short-term gains, driven by peer pressure, can overshadow the long-term consequences of not progressing to the next grade. OVC may fail to recognise that without academic progress and successful advancement to higher grades, they risk losing their bursary support and the opportunities it provides for their education.

h) CHILD LABOUR

The findings highlight the issue of OVC being exposed to child labour, which has detrimental effects on their education. This was emphasised by OVC2 stating that:

> *Sometimes, especially on Saturdays, I have to look after cattle and not attend study. When my uncle is not there, I do not go to school in order to look after the cattle.*

The need to contribute to household tasks, including taking care of cattle, can arise due to various factors, such as cultural norms, economic circumstances or lack of available assistance. OVC may feel obligated to prioritize these responsibilities, as they play a vital role in supporting their families or fulfilling traditional roles. However, it is important to recognise that these responsibilities can have a negative impact on the OVC's ability to attend school consistently and fully engage in their studies. Missing school days or arriving late due to these obligations can lead to gaps in their learning and hinder their academic progress.

When OVC get home from school, they are often burdened with home activities assigned by their guardians or parents. These responsibilities may include tasks such as cooking, cleaning,

taking care of younger siblings, or other household duties. The demanding nature of these obligations leaves OVC with no time to dedicate to their school assignments and studies. The combination of schoolwork and domestic responsibilities creates a significant imbalance in OVC's lives, hindering their educational progress and overall well-being. This was raised by OVC8, stating that:

> *I am sometimes unable to do the homework or read because there is a lot of work*
> *to be done when I arrive at home since my parents are too old and sick.*

The responsibility of taking care of household chores, particularly when parents are elderly or unable to perform them, falls on the shoulders of OVC. These tasks can include cooking, cleaning, fetching water, or other responsibilities essential for the functioning of the household. OVC8's situation reflects the added burden they carry, which leaves little time and energy for academic pursuits. The lack of support and assistance at home due to the parents' age or other limitations can further amplify the challenges faced by OVC in maintaining their schoolwork. Without sufficient time to dedicate to studying and completing assignments, OVC8 and those in similar situations may struggle to keep up with the academic requirements and perform to the best of their abilities.

The lack of time and resources for completing schoolwork can lead to academic challenges, reduced learning opportunities and a widening educational achievement gap. In this regard, OVC6 stated that:

> *I do not have the interest of doing the schoolwork because I do a lot of work after*
> *school before my mother could arrive from work.*

This exhaustion and lack of time can result in diminished motivation and decreased focus on academic activities. The overwhelming nature of their household chores can saturate their enthusiasm for schoolwork, leading to decreased interest in completing assignments and studying. It is important to recognise that OVC6's situation is a result of the circumstances they find themselves in, where they are shouldering responsibilities beyond their age and capacity. This can hinder their educational progress and overall well-being.

4.3.3.2 MEASURES TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES

To address the various challenges in the different domains, schools, guardians/parents and government have implemented several countermeasures. This section presents the countermeasures taken to address challenges encountered by orphans and vulnerable learners in secondary schools.

a) SCHOOL INTERVENTIONS IN PLACE

Based on the challenges identified, different measures taken were outlined by school principals, and teachers and guardians/parents. In light of this, principals and teachers in both government and community schools reported different measures taken to help OVC.

To prove this, CSP explained that:

> *The school approached the politicians during the election campaign and asked them to help these learners in any way they could. We managed to get food parcels for the OVC although they could not sustain them for a long time. Some of my colleagues have pointed out that it would be better if these learners were given seeds to grow vegetables at home rather than food parcels. We have submitted a request to the government and non-governmental organisations to supply the OVC with the seeds. To address the problem of hunger, the school decided to institute a feeding program where each student was expected to pay M200 per quarter. However, this plan failed because the OVC could not afford the M200. This is because the feeding fee paid under the bursary scheme is relatively small at M500.00 per year which is approximately M125.00 per quarter. And the parents don't want to pay the balance. Others did not pay because they believed the government will pay the additional fee on feeding.*

This highlights the financial constraints faced by OVC and their families, who rely on the relatively small feeding fee provided through the bursary scheme (M500.00 per year or approximately M125.00 per quarter). Furthermore, some parents may have been hesitant to pay the balance of the feeding fee because they had expectations that the government would cover it. This suggests a gap in communication or understanding between the school and parents regarding the financial responsibilities associated with the feeding program.

GSP added that:

> *Individually teachers help these learners. And sometimes in groups they buy shoes, groceries, cosmetics and other school-related needs for learners. Being understaffed we are unable to invest as much in supporting these learners as we spend most of our time preparing and teaching them. To address the issue of early marriage, the school attempted to involve the Department of Social Development in an incident where a child had to drop out of school because guardians were forcing him into early marriage. The Social Development Department did not respond on time to this issue. This department only responded to our report when the child has fled to her relatives in South Africa. I think it would be useful if the schools were given someone to look after the OVC and make sure they receive guidance and advice. They should also monitor the presence and performance of the OVC and facilitate provision of timely assistance.*

The teachers' time and resources are primarily focused on preparing and teaching lessons, which restricts their ability to invest more in supporting OVC. This highlights the need for additional support from external sources to effectively address the various needs of OVC.

This was supported by GST, who stated the following:

> *As a teacher, when I see that one of the OVC is having problems, I call such a learner and ask what his/her problems are, even though I have realised that it is hard for these learners to share their problems. If necessary, I occasionally buy them shoes, uniform, and food, although it is still not enough. I think it will be wise if the responsibility for selecting the beneficiaries of the OVC bursary scheme is given to schools as they are the ones interacting with these learners on a day-to-day basis. This will help target support to the learners who really need it. Schools have each child's records, making selection easier.*

Another suggestion put forward by GST is to assign the responsibility of selecting beneficiaries for the OVC bursary scheme policy to schools themselves. This is based on the understanding that schools have regular interactions with OVC and possess detailed records of each child. By

involving schools in the selection process, it is believed that support can be better targeted to the learners who genuinely require it, ensuring that assistance reaches those in the greatest need.

In addition, CST also pointed out:

> Sometimes I buy shoes for OVC and, if necessary, uniforms. During my classes, I direct the questions to OVC so that they can get them right and build their confidence. I also interact with them to see how they are doing.

The statement from CST highlights their efforts to support OVC (orphans and vulnerable children) by purchasing shoes and uniforms for them when needed. This demonstrates a personal commitment to addressing the immediate needs of these learners and ensuring they have essential items for their education. Furthermore, CST takes a proactive approach in the classroom by directing questions to OVC, giving them opportunities to participate and answer correctly. By doing so, CST aims to build their self-esteem and confidence. This approach recognises the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment where OVC feel valued and included. Additionally, CST emphasises the significance of interacting with OVC to assess their well-being and overall progress. By engaging with them on a personal level, CST seeks to understand their challenges, strengths and any additional support they may require.

b) COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS IN PLACE

The community plays a crucial role in provision of support and care for OVC as highlighted by the Ubuntu philosophy that the responsibility for raising a child lies not only with the birth parents but with the community at large.

GP also indicated that:

> I borrow money from the neighbours to buy her clothes and books. Sometimes I lend her my shoes. Sometimes I get clothes and shoes from community members and relatives.

This demonstrates the individual's commitment to helping the OVC meet their basic needs and access educational resources. GP1's willingness to seek assistance from others in the community indicates a collaborative effort to support the well-being and education of the child. Overall, GP's

actions reflect the importance of community involvement and support in ensuring the OVC's access to essential items for their education and overall well-being.

GP added that:

I always try to pay the fees that are not included in the bursary. I pay my child's school fees even though it is not easy. I buy shoes when the others are torn. I try to tell her to stay away from her useless friends. I make sure she has something to eat if I have money. The problem arises when I have no money.

The parent/guardian show that they try their best to pay the fees that are not covered by the bursary, showing their commitment to ensuring their child's education continues uninterrupted. They also mentioned buying shoes for their child when they are torn, indicating their willingness to provide the necessary items for their child's schooling. The individual expressed their concern about their child's choice of friends and mentioned their intention to guide the child away from negative influences. They also mentioned their efforts to ensure the child has something to eat when there is money, emphasising the importance of providing for their child's basic needs. However, the statement acknowledges that financial constraints can be a challenge in fulfilling these responsibilities. Despite these challenges, the individual's dedication to supporting their child's education and well-being shines through.

The findings also uncovered that both guardians and parents try to help their children with both basic needs and school needs. However, due to poverty, they are not able to meet all the needs of the learners. To justify this, GP revealed that:

Sometimes I have to borrow money from the neighbours to buy uniform and books for my child. If her shoes are torn and I do not have money to buy the new ones, I give her my own shoes. We sometimes get help from community members and relatives who give us clothes and shoes for my child.

The statement indicates that the person sometimes faces financial difficulties in providing the necessary items such as uniforms and books for the child. To overcome these challenges, they resort to borrowing money from neighbours, emphasising their determination to ensure that the

child has the required school materials. The act of lending their own shoes to the child shows their willingness to make personal sacrifices to meet the child's needs. Additionally, the statement highlights the support received from community members and relatives. They assist by providing clothes and shoes for the child, demonstrating the collective effort of the community in helping to address the child's requirements.

4.3.3.3 FACTORS AFFECTING EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OVC BURSARY SCHEME POLICY

The OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is aimed at promoting access to secondary school for orphans and vulnerable learners. Several factors hinder the effective implementation of this OVC bursary scheme policy as highlighted by different participants.

a) DELAY IN DISBURSEMENT

Delay in disbursement refers to a situation where there is a delay in the payment of funds which were intended to be provided within a specified timeframe. In the case of bursary support, the delay may be due to administrative processes, bureaucratic procedures, funding issues, or other factors that prevent the timely release of funds to the intended beneficiaries. The issue of delay in disbursement was raised by GPS who indicated that:

> *The money usually comes late, which means learners do not have stationery until late in the second quarter. This means that they have nothing to use or write on during the first quarter and they decide to stay at home.*

The implication is that a delay in the disbursement of funds for the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 negatively affects both the school and the supported OVC, especially in terms of acquiring necessary stationery and materials. This delay disrupts supported learners' learning and potentially leads to them staying at home.

b) UNFAIR ALLOCATION

Unfair allocation refers to the situation whereby resources are allocated to learners who are not necessarily orphans or vulnerable, while leaving behind those who genuinely need the support. It raises concerns of unfair allocation. To demonstrate this, one teacher (GST) stated that:

> *The main weakness of this the policy is that it supports learners who are not either orphans or vulnerable learners leaving behind those who really need the support. Another weakness is that not all learners who have applied get admissions even though they have all the documents needed. The reasons for not being admitted are not disclosed because the lists are sent to the schools.*

This implies that the policy fails to prioritise and address the needs of those who are most in need of support.

c) AGE DISCRIMINATION

Age discrimination refers to the practice of imposing age restrictions within the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. This means that the policy sets specific age limits, excluding certain individuals who do not fall within the specified age range from accessing the bursary support. This is proved by the OVC bursary scheme policy 2000 which states that:

> *A learner should be under 18 years to be supported.*

Additionally, GST indicated that:

> *The other weakness of the policy is age restriction. This policy takes children who are under 18 years.*

The policy only includes children who are below 18 years old, which limits the support available to older OVC who may still require assistance in accessing and continuing their education. By setting an age restriction, the policy inadvertently excludes older OVC who may have faced similar or even more significant challenges in their educational journey. These older OVC may have experienced disruptions in their education due to various circumstances, such as financial constraints, family responsibilities, or delayed entry into the bursary scheme. Excluding older OVC from the bursary scheme based solely on age may perpetuate educational inequalities and

hinder their ability to overcome barriers to education. It is crucial to recognise that education is a lifelong process and that older OVC also deserve support to pursue their educational goals.

d) PERFORMANCE-BASED IMPLEMENTATION

Performance-based implementation refers to an approach in which the implementation of a policy is guided by predefined performance indicators and targets. It focuses on measuring and evaluating the outcomes and results achieved, rather than solely focusing on inputs or activities. Performance-based implementation places emphasis on achieving specific goals and holding stakeholders accountable for delivering measurable and impactful results. In the case of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, the target is an increased enrollment rate and reduced school dropout rate. However, the conditions for continued support contradict these targets. This was confirmed by the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 which states that:

> *If a beneficiary does not pass at the end of the academic year, he/she is restricted*
> *from getting support from OVC Bursary* (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000).

This implies that the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 implementation is performance-based. This is evidenced by the policy statement which says OVC are only supported when they pass and proceed to the next class. The possible reason for the policy to continue to provide support only to OVC who have passed and progressed to the next grade is to reinforce the importance of academic achievement and success. This approach can motivate OVC to work harder and perform well in order to receive continued support. However, supporting only OVC who have passed and progressed to the next grade may inadvertently exclude and disadvantage OVC who are facing difficulties, such as learning challenges, lack of educational resources, or emotional trauma, and may require additional support to overcome these barriers. Excluding them from the support system may exacerbate their challenges and hinder their educational progress. This also raises concerns of equity and inclusion as it perpetuates educational disparities by providing additional resources to those who are already achieving, while overlooking the needs of OVC who require more support to overcome their vulnerabilities.

4.3.3.4 EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS FOR OVC

Participants were asked to reflect on how orphans and vulnerable learners at secondary schools can be supported in order to retain them in school until they complete their final grades. The participants, including principals and teachers from both government and community schools, provided suggestions on strategies to retain orphans and vulnerable learners in secondary schools until they complete their final grades. The participants suggested the following strategies:

(1) support from the community,

(2) psychosocial support to OVC,

(3) monitoring and evaluation,

(4) holistic bursary support.

a) SUPPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY

In the context of the OVC (Orphans and Vulnerable Children) Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 implementation, 'support from the community' refers to the involvement, collaboration and assistance provided by the local community in supporting the objectives and implementation of the bursary scheme. It signifies the collective effort and engagement of individuals, organisations and institutions within the community to ensure the success of the scheme and the welfare of the orphaned and vulnerable children it aims to benefit.

In support of this, GSP proposed that:

> *Members of the community should be taught how to take care of the OVC. They should be told to take the responsibility of taking care of the OVC and making sure that they have food to eat, cosmetics to use and also to see to it that they are protected. I think we should go back to the olden days where a child was raised by every member of the community. They have to take action against learners who are not in school during school hours. They should also go a step further by making sure that these OVC's basic needs are met because they will take care of them as they take care of their own children.*

The implication is that educating community members about their role in providing care for OVC is crucial for attainment of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. Raising awareness among community members will help in enhancing OVC access and retention in secondary school.

Creating awareness and educating community members about their role in supporting OVC is a crucial step towards building a caring and inclusive community. It fosters a sense of solidarity and emphasises the importance of providing equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their biological parents. In support of this, GST stated that:

> Community members should be taught how to care for the OVC. They should be instructed to take responsibility for looking after the OVC and making sure they have food, cosmetics, and also protect them.

Furthermore, GST asserted that:

> By educating members of the community that raising a child is a collaborative effort, the dropout rate, particularly at OVC, will be greatly reduced. Therefore, members of the community should participate in the implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 by ensuring that OVC go to school every day. They have to take action against learners who are not in school during school hours. They should also go a step further and make sure these OVC basic needs are met because they take care of them like they take care of their own children.

In support of this view, GSP proposed that:

> Each school should be assigned a person who is responsible for the welfare of these OVC and also ensure that they receive guidance and counselling when necessary.

b) MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation in relation to the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 educational support refers to the systematic process of tracking, assessing and analysing the implementation and outcomes of the bursary support provided to OVC. It involves collecting data, measuring

progress against predefined indicators, and using that information to make evidence-based decisions, improve program effectiveness and ensure accountability.

The findings revealed that monitoring and evaluation is critical for effective implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. In support of this notion, GSP stated that:

> *Government officials responsible for the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy implementation, should visit the schools regularly and ask about OVC performance and the welfare of the bursary beneficiaries. Learners' reports should be requested on a quarterly basis to monitor performance and offer help if needed. This is because there is no follow-up on the welfare and performance of OVC. Government officials should also monitor the OVC's attendance and performance.*

This was supported by GST who suggested that:

> *The office responsible for implementing the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, in cooperation with school management, should assess the factors that have impacted orphans and vulnerable learners who have been supported, in the event that these learners have failed, before support is withdrawn.*

c) HOLISTIC BURSARY SUPPORT

Holistic bursary support for OVC involves providing comprehensive assistance that goes beyond financial aid to ensure the overall well-being and educational success of these children. Holistic bursary support includes providing financial resources to cover educational expenses such as school fees, books, uniforms, transportation and other necessary supplies. This support ensures that OVC have the means to access and stay in school without facing financial barriers. It recognises that OVC often face multiple challenges and aims to address their various needs through a comprehensive approach.

The findings further discovered that OVC Bursary Scheme Policy support is not holistic as it does not cover all the school-related needs for the supported learners. In view of this, CST stated:

I would recommend that the bursary should cover all school-related costs, including the provision of uniform and the cost of transport for school trips to the beneficiaries. Additional money must be made available to learners to cover their basic needs. Just like the ones that exist in colleges and universities. To implement the policy effectively, the government should consider granting learners an allowance to purchase their basic necessities.

d) PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TO OVC

Psychosocial support to OVC refers to the provision of assistance and interventions that address the psychological and social well-being of these children. It aims to help them cope with the emotional, social and behavioural challenges they may face due to their vulnerable circumstances. Psychosocial support recognises the importance of addressing both the psychological and social aspects of a child's life to promote their overall well-being. In this regard, GSP stated that:

Every school should be assigned one person responsible for welfare of these OVC and also to make sure that they get guidance and counselling.

Regarding this extract, assigning a dedicated person in each school responsible for the welfare of OVC, as well as providing guidance and counselling services, can play a vital role in addressing their specific needs and challenges.

4.4   CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter presented the findings of the study which assesses the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in enhancing access and retention of orphans and vulnerable learners in selected secondary schools in the Leribe District. The findings were organised according to the four objectives of the study. One of the key findings of the study is that the majority of orphans and vulnerable learners are not covered by the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, despite having the required documents and meeting the eligibility requirements. This indicates that there is a gap between the policy's intentions and its implementation, resulting in limited access for those who should benefit from it. Furthermore, the study identified several

challenges that hinder OVC school participation and academic performance. These challenges include lack of parental care, responsibilities of looking after sick people, engagement in child labour and teenage pregnancy. These challenges make it difficult for OVC to regularly participate in school.

Additionally, the study found that the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is not comprehensive enough, as it does not cover all the necessary school-related fees and other basic needs that OVC require for effective learning. This shows that the policy falls short in providing adequate financial support to OVC, which can significantly impact their educational outcomes and overall well-being. The findings from the policy analysis found that the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 has a well-articulated policy goal that provides a clear direction on how the bursary should be administered to ensure all eligible OVC are fully sponsored. However, omissions and silences found in the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 could be the reason why a large number of eligible OVC are not supported. The findings revealed that the policy does not provide information on monitoring and evaluation, and the entity responsible for overseeing the implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. The study suggests that it is crucial for the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports, Recreation and Social Development to be aware of these silences and omissions in order to ensure the policy's effectiveness.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the findings, draws conclusions and makes recommendations emanating from the study. It begins by outlining the purpose and objectives of the research. The discussion of the findings is in line with the four research objectives guiding the study. Based on the research findings, conclusions are drawn to summarise the main findings and implications of the study. Based on the conclusions of the study, concrete recommendations will be made for policy makers and relevant stakeholders. The chapter concludes with suggestions for potential areas for further research based on the limitations or gaps identified in the current study.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to assess the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in enhancing OVC access and retention in the selected secondary schools in Leribe. To achieve this purpose, the discussion of the findings is centred on four research objectives namely:

- To identify the challenges that the OVC face at secondary education level.
- To find out the criteria and procedures used to identify the recipients of the policy.
- To assess the extent to which the policy promotes OVC access and retention through secondary schools in Lesotho.
- To identify the support mechanisms that need to be put in place to improve the OVC's educational success.

5.2.1 THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY OVC IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

The literature indicates that orphans and vulnerable children face several challenges that prevent OVC from fully participating in school education. These include lack of psychological support, unmet basic needs, overcrowded extended families with no place to study, overwhelming responsibilities of their guardians, lack of parental support, lack of food, lack of proper school

uniform, as well as lack of educational support from parents/guardians and lack of parental care (Melody, 2021; Hlojeng & Makura, 2020; Moteuli, 2019).

Regarding the challenges faced by OVC, the findings revealed that unmet basic needs such as the availability of food (breakfast, lunch and other meals), clothing and hygiene items (toothpaste, soap and toiletries) hinder OVC school participation. This shows that although OVC are supported by registration fees, school fees, textbook fees and stationery, basic needs that play a crucial role in OVC's daily lives are not met. This shows that while OVC are supported by school-related fees, their basic needs are not met which play a crucial role in their daily lives. Hungry learners cannot actively participate in class. These findings align with the research conducted by USAID and CRS (2008), which emphasised that providing food support to OVC increases their school participation and ultimately reduces dropout rates.

The findings further revealed that a lack of school-related needs, including school uniforms, shoes and school bags, is detrimental to OVC's school attendance. The lack of necessary school uniform sets OVC apart from other learners and leads to feelings of humiliation and embarrassment. This feeling is amplified when OVC are singled out and asked to dress appropriately despite knowing that their parents or guardians cannot afford the required school uniform. The findings are in line with the study by Mdugo (2018), which highlights the emotional impact that the lack of proper school uniform causes OVC to experience unnecessary humiliation and peer exclusion. Wearing proper school uniform is not just a matter of conformity, it also impacts the OVC's self-esteem and sense of belonging in the school environment.

The findings uncovered that some of the OVC do not receive support from their parents/guardians. Orphans and vulnerable learners, like other learners, need parental care to actively participate in school activities. Some of these learners live with their guardians, who believe that education is not a priority. Therefore, no educational support is provided to them. This presents a greater challenge because it discourages these learners from attending school, and forces many of them to drop out. Some OVC live in child-headed families and there are no family members and neighbours who support them. These findings are aligned with the research

conducted by Lehlaha (2011), which indicated that some OVC are forced to live independently without the guidance and supervision of an adult. This situation presents numerous challenges for OVC, impacting their overall well-being and hindering their educational progress. This leads to many life challenges that OVC face daily.

The findings further found out that some of the OVC have the responsibility of taking care of their sick parents. This affects learners psychologically and makes them not to concentrate in class. It makes learners not to learn effectively as they sometimes have to be absent, especially when the parents go for check-ups. The OVC who live with sick or old guardians do a lot of work which prevents them from learning effectively. These findings are in accordance with Mdugo (2018) who states that the unforeseen personal needs create additional stress to orphans and vulnerable learners. For instance, at home, these learners are prevented from concentrating on their schoolwork as they are overwhelmed by the responsibilities of their guardians.

The findings also established that another challenge faced by OVC is teenage pregnancy. This forces them to drop out of school to take care of their children. This was confirmed by Barry (2010) who found that teenage mothers often drop out of school because they must take care of their children.

The findings further indicate that OVC also undergo peer pressure which makes them take bad decisions in trying to fit well among the fellow teenagers. The pressure from friends in most cases makes the OVC to imitate their friends and end up dropping out of school. In support of this, it has been shown in Sarkar *et al*. (2022) that peer pressure influences teenagers' academic success or failure.

The findings suggest that the challenges faced by OVC reflect a lack of adherence to the principle of Ubuntu within the community. Ubuntu is a concept that emphasises the collective responsibility of the community in raising a child. It underlines that the responsibility for the well-being and development of a child is not solely the burden of biological parents but is shared by the entire community (Margarita & Abaunza, 2013). In African societies, the principle of Ubuntu highlights that there is no distinction in the primary parental responsibility between

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biological and non-biological parents. This means that the community as a whole is responsible for ensuring that OVC receive the necessary support and opportunities to lead a decent life, both in terms of their education and their general well-being. The findings indicate that there is a gap between the ideal of Ubuntu and its actual practice within the community. This gap is reflected in the challenges faced by OVC, such as financial constraints, limited educational support, and reduced school retention rates. These challenges suggest that the collective responsibility of ensuring the welfare of OVC is not being fully embraced by the community.

The challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) suggest that they have a significant impact on their retention and academic performance. Therefore, Figure 5.1 below provides a summary of the impact of the challenges OVC face on retention and academic performance.
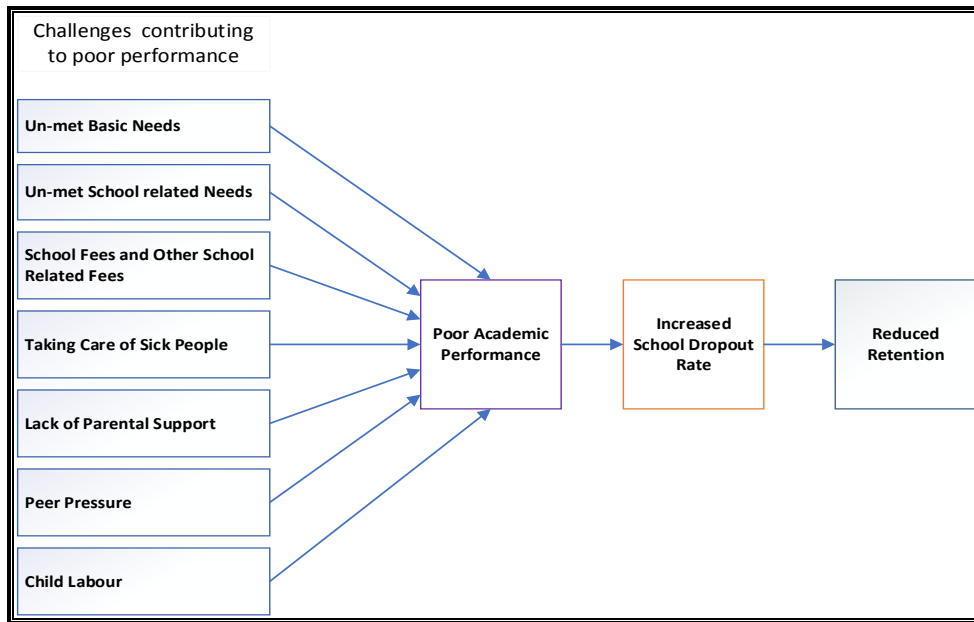

Figure 5. 1: Effects of Challenges Encountered by OVC on School Retention

Figure 5.1 shows the impact of various challenges faced by OVC on their academic performance and retention in secondary school. Based on this figure, OVC's academic performance and school attendance are significantly affected by various factors. OVC often struggle to meet their basic needs such as access to nutritious food, clean water and appropriate clothing, leading to health problems and making it difficult for them to focus on their education. Many OVC families do not have the financial resources to pay for school fees, uniforms and other school related needs. This results in these children not being able to attend school regularly or being forced to drop out because they cannot afford the costs. The responsibility of taking care of sick people drains these children time and energy, leaving them little room for school attendance and homework. Lack of the emotional and educational support that other children receive from their parents or caregivers hinder their educational progress. OVC may be more susceptible to negative peer influences, which may result in risky behaviors, truancy, or dropping out of school to be with peers who are not pursuing education. In many cases, OVC are forced into child labor to support themselves and their families. This not only limits their ability to attend school, but also exposes them to dangerous working conditions. The cumulative effects of these challenges often result in poor school performance, absenteeism, and eventual dropout in OVC. This, in turn, contributes to increased dropout rates and lower secondary school retention rates for OVC.

5.2.2 THE CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES USED TO IDENTIFY THE RECIPIENTS OF THE OVC BURSARY SCHEME POLICY 2000

Literature shows that to promote access to education for OVC in Lesotho, the government has established two policies. One is the National Policy on OVC 2006 which encourages the provision of bursaries and learning materials to meet the educational needs of OVC and all learners. It emphasises the importance of financial support and resources to ensure OVC can access and benefit from education. The other is the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 which provides direction on how to enhance OVC access and retention in secondary schools. It outlines criteria for awarding bursaries to OVC, aiming to alleviate financial barriers and enable their participation in education.

Despite the existence of these well-developed policies, the findings revealed that financial constraints still prevent some OVC from attending school. Even for those who manage to secure

a bursary, there is a risk of losing it if they fail to progress to the next grade. This situation leads to increased school dropouts and reduced school retention rates among OVC. These findings shed light on the importance of addressing the financial barriers that OVC face in accessing and continuing with their education. It is vital to ensure that the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is implemented effectively and supported by adequate financial resources.

The findings show that there are two ways in which orphans and vulnerable learners are identified for educational support under the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. The first is the self-targeting selection criteria where parents/guardians are the ones who apply for their children by providing all required documents to the Department of Social Development. Under this criterion, beneficiaries are identified based on the level of vulnerability and orphanage status of each learner. The second way to identify recipients is through what is known as the National Information System for Social Assistance. The beneficiaries, under this criterion, are selected based on the level of poverty of their families. Children from poor families are given social grants since they live in poor families. They are labelled as needy learners, and the Department of Social Development is mandated to award bursaries to them. This is confirmed by the study by Smith *et al.* (2011) who indicate that eligibility criteria for the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 include family background, neediness, orphanhood and vulnerability status. These authors further emphasise that the socio-economic family background is the most important aspect in selection and determining the beneficiaries of the bursary.

Using both the self-targeted selection criteria and the NISSA, the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 aims to identify and support orphans and vulnerable learners based on their level of need and the socio-economic conditions of their families. This approach helps ensure that educational support is provided to those who need it most, thereby facilitating access to education for disadvantaged children. It was also noted that the two eligibility criteria require that the beneficiaries be children under the age of 18, enrolled in a legally registered secondary school and who have lost one or both parents. The policy also supports learners whose parents are both older than 65 years. Moreover, the policy extends its support to learners whose parents do not take responsibility for their upbringing. It also covers learners whose parents are ill and have a medical certificate proving their incapacity to work (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000). These

provisions acknowledge the diverse circumstances and challenges that OVC may face in their family situations. By incorporating these eligibility criteria, the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 aims to provide targeted support to children most in need and ensure they have access to educational opportunities despite their difficult circumstances.

Regarding the discontinuity of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 support, the findings reveal that if a beneficiary does not pass and proceed to the next grade, the bursary is temporarily terminated while the bursary support is permanently terminated if a beneficiary fails the same grade for two consecutive years or successfully completes secondary school and graduates (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2000). These discontinuity criteria demonstrate that the policy has certain limitations and conditions for continued support. The policy aims to support OVC throughout their educational journeys, but also includes provisions for temporary or permanent termination of bursary support based on academic performance.

5.2.3 THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE OVC BURSARY SCHEME POLICY 2000 PROMOTES OVC ACCESS AND RETENTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The literature emphasises the need for comprehensive educational support mechanisms to improve access and retention of orphans and children at risk (OVC) in secondary schools (Shann, Bryant, Brooks & Bukuluki*,* 2013; Oketch *et al.,* 2020; YPLA, 2011; Lekhetho, 2013; MOHSW, 2005). Regarding the extent to which the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 promotes access and retention of OVC in secondary schools, the findings indicated that there are large numbers of eligible OVC who are still not supported by the policy. This suggests that there are gaps in its implementation, preventing some OVC from accessing the educational support they need. Furthermore, the findings suggest that unmet basic needs, unmet school-related needs and fees, and termination of bursary support after a learner fails to progress to the next grade contribute to OVC dropping out of school. This aligns with the understanding that simply improving access is not enough to ensure retention (Shann *et al.,* 2013). Critical issues such as lack of food, school uniforms and hygiene items must be systematically addressed in the educational support of OVC.

The findings indicate that despite the existence of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, the OVC's academic performance is deteriorating. Academic performance is considered an important measure of the effectiveness of educational policy in addressing educational challenges and promoting OVC academic success in secondary school. However, the study found that the number of OVC who successfully complete their secondary education is very small, with many OVC dropping out of school before reaching Grade 11. Higher completion rates indicate that the policy is effective in helping OVC stay in school and complete their secondary education. However, as the findings show low completion rates, this suggests that the policy is not effectively addressing the barriers OVC face in accessing and completing education. These findings underscore the need to evaluate and reassess the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 to identify its shortcomings and make improvements. Addressing the factors that contribute to OVC dropping out of school and developing additional strategies to support their educational journey is crucial. In doing so, it may be possible to increase policy effectiveness and improve academic outcomes for OVC.

The findings indicate that there are delays in the disbursement of funds, which subsequently affects the purchasing of the necessary stationery for the supported learners. These delays negatively impact the day-to-day operations of the entire school. This ultimately affects the academic performance of the supported OVC as they may not have the necessary workbooks and pens to complete their schoolwork. The delay in disbursing funds poses a barrier to accessing essential learning materials, which prevents OVC from participating effectively in their learning. Without the necessary writing materials, OVC find it difficult to complete assignments, take notes or participate in class activities, resulting in a decline in their academic performance. It is vital for the authorities responsible for implementing the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 to address these delays in disbursing funds. Allocating funds in a timely and efficient manner is crucial in ensuring that OVC have access to the materials and resources they need to fully engage in their studies and improve their academic performance. Additionally, setting up mechanisms to monitor and track the payout process will help identify and troubleshoot any bottlenecks or issues that are causing delays.

5.2.4 THE SUPPORT MECHANISMS THAT NEED TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO IMPROVE OVC EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

Literature suggests the establishment of various educational support mechanisms to facilitate active participation of OVC in secondary school. These mechanisms comprise a range of interventions aimed at addressing different aspects of OVC's needs. These include tuition support, school feeding programs, parent/guardian support and psychological support (USAID and CRS, 2008; Mohoebi, 2013; Kathini, 2014; Mwoma and Pillay, 2016; Marthe, 2017; Maingi, 2019; Moteuli, 2019; Melody, 2021). The findings discovered that one of the important mechanisms for the implementation of this OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is community support. It is suggested that the government should raise awareness within the community of their role and responsibility in ensuring OVC training. The emphasis should be on helping OVC with basic needs and school requirements. When the community understands the needs of OVC and the challenges they face, it will be easy for community members to contribute to a more supportive and caring environment that improves OVC access and retention in secondary schools.

Additionally, fostering a culture within the community that prioritizes the enrollment of all OVC in the school is vital. This includes promoting the belief that every child deserves access to education and encouraging community members to actively support and advocate OVC enrollment and participation in schools. This joint effort can help break down barriers to education and create a more inclusive education system. Community involvement in supporting OVC also means building partnerships between schools, local authorities, NGOs and community-based organizations. Joint efforts can help mobilise resources, create sustainable support systems and build networks that provide OVC with the support they need.

These findings are in line with the Ubuntu theory as it believes that a child's life, even if orphaned, should not differ from the life of a child with one or both parents as it is a community responsibility to ensure that the child is cared for and has access to education (Motha, 2010; Johnson & Johnson, 2009). This shows that the provision of educational support for OVC in secondary education should be approached from a holistic perspective, taking into account all

aspects of the individual learner; the educational as well as the socio-emotional and economic components.

The findings align with the Ubuntu theory which emphasises the collective responsibility of the community in caring for and providing access to education for all children, including orphans and vulnerable children. According to the Ubuntu philosophy, the life of orphans and vulnerable children should not differ much from that of a child with one or both parents present. It underscores the importance of the community coming together to ensure every child is cared for and has equal opportunities, including access to education. An Ubuntu-inspired approach to OVC educational support means addressing the holistic needs of the individual learner. This approach recognises that addressing OVC's educational needs should go beyond academic support and also include socio-emotional and economic components. The Ubuntu theory recognises the interconnectedness of different aspects of a child's life and the importance of addressing all of these components to ensure OVC's overall well-being and educational success. It emphasises the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach to supporting OVC in secondary education (Chigangaidze *et al.,* 2021; Kanjandai, 2018; Mankowitz, 2018; Mohoebi, 2013; Motha, 2010; Msengana, 2006; Venter, 2004).

The findings underscore the importance of having dedicated personnel in secondary schools to provide psychological support, counseling and mentoring to OVC. These learners may have experienced various forms of trauma, loss, or challenging circumstances, hence addressing their emotional well-being is critical to their academic success and overall development. The study suggests provision of emotional support, counseling services, and access to mental health professionals so that OVC can get the support they need to process their experiences and build resilience. This support will help OVC manage the psychological trauma they face on a daily basis, ultimately improving their well-being and reducing the likelihood of dropping out.

The findings align with research by Tamasane (2011), which highlights the critical role of psychological support for OVC in managing the long-term psychological impact of their circumstances. The availability of such support can have a positive impact on children's academic performance and contribute to their overall educational outcomes. Having trained

professionals in schools who can provide counselling and mentoring services will create a safe and supportive environment for OVC. These professionals will help OVC manage their experiences, build resilience, and develop the skills needed to effectively meet challenges. Providing psychological support will not only address the immediate psychological needs of OVC, but will also help create a culture of empathy, understanding and support within the school community. It will create an inclusive and caring environment where OVC feel valued, supported and empowered.

The findings suggest that regular monitoring of the OVC by the bursary scheme officials is needed to offer the necessary support on time. Regular monitoring will help in identifying OVC who need help and taking measures to help them. It will help in understanding all that transpires in the life of the OVC. The findings appear to be consistent with a previous study by Mohoebi (2013), which highlights the importance of capacity building for effective implementation of educational grant support in reducing the rate at which OVC drop out of school. The author suggests that a regular performance analysis needs to be conducted to track the performance of the supported OVC and to also identify the potential challenges that may lead to leaving school early. This could help deliver the remedial strategies in a timely manner instead of waiting for the results submitted at the end of the sessions.

5.3   CONCLUSIONS

The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in enhancing OVC access to education and retention in selected secondary schools in Leribe. This study was guided by Ubuntu philosophy as a theoretical framework. Ubuntu is a philosophy and concept underpinned by Mbiti in 1970 that emphasizes the interconnectedness of all individuals and communities and emphasizes the importance of compassion, empathy and mutual support. Ubuntu promotes the idea that one person or group's success or challenges impact the entire community. The focus of Ubuntu is on respect, protecting everyone's dignity and the right to life (Bolden, 2014). Mbitis's (1970) maxim: *I am because we are, and because we are, I am. This is translated in Sesotho as "motho ke motho ka batho"* (Mahlatsi (2017). The maxim is consistent with the core principles of interconnectedness and communal identity that are fundamental to the Ubuntu philosophy. Mbiti's maxim emphasizes the idea that individual identity is inseparable

from the collective identity of the community. In the case of the OVC bursary scheme, the provision of educational support to orphans and vulnerable children is crucial to enable them to access and complete their secondary education. These children often face numerous challenges, including economic and social difficulties, stigmatisation and lack of access to educational resources. The OVC bursary policy aims to alleviate some of these challenges through the provision of financial support. For example, by adopting Ubuntu principles, communities can improve the effectiveness of the bursary scheme, by ensuring that OVC have access to secondary school education and ultimately contribute to their overall well-being and the betterment of society as a whole. Based on the findings of this study, a number of conclusions are made.

5.3.1 THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY OVC IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that orphans and vulnerable learners are faced with several challenges apart from the cost of school fees, registration fee, textbook fee and stationery, which hinder their school participation and contribute to high secondary school dropout rates. The study concludes that unmet basic needs and other school-related needs such as food, shoes, uniforms, toiletries for daily hygiene, additional school fees and school trips fee are the main challenges contributing to OVC dropping out of school. These material deficiencies pose difficulties for these learners to actively engage in classroom activities and other school-related tasks.

Moreover, the study highlighted the financial burden faced by OVC in meeting additional school-related expenses, including transportation costs. This supports the need for setting up initiatives that provide meals, clothing and hygiene items on a regular basis to ensure that the basic needs of OVC are met. It is concluded that that there is a need for provision of support, either through government programs, community initiatives or donor support, to ensure that OVC receive the required school uniforms. This will help alleviate feelings of humiliation and exclusion and contribute to a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. This also supports the need for raising awareness and fostering a culture of empathy and understanding within the school community to create an environment where OVC are not stigmatised or marginalised for not being able to afford school uniforms.

The study further concludes that lack of parental support and care negatively affects OVC school participation. Orphans and vulnerable learners, like other learners, need parental care to actively participate in school. It is therefore vital that OVC are provided psychosocial support, counselling, and mentoring to cope with their emotions and develop resilience. The study also concludes that teenage pregnancy and early marriage among OVC is the result of lack of parental support and care. Thus, it is important for the community to adopt the Ubuntu principle which underscores that the responsibility for the well-being and development of a child is not solely the burden of biological parents but is shared by the entire community. This will make the community to take full responsibility to support and care for OVC.

The study also concludes that taking care of sick parents is another challenge affecting OVC school participation. Based on the findings of this study, when OVC are responsible for looking after a sick parent or guardian, it significantly affects their ability to concentrate in class and learn effectively. This responsibility may lead to frequent absences, particularly when the parents need to attend medical check-ups or receive treatment. The burden of caregiving places considerable emotional and practical strain on OVC. They experience heightened levels of stress, worry and fatigue as they balance their caregiving responsibilities with their academic obligations. Consequently, this situation can hinder their concentration and negatively impact their overall educational performance.

The study concludes that there is a gap between the ideals of Ubuntu and its actual practice within the community. This gap is reflected in the challenges faced by OVC, such as financial constraints, limited educational support, and reduced school retention rates. These challenges suggest that the collective responsibility in ensuring the welfare of OVC is not being fully embraced by the community. Thus, it is important to promote and strengthen the principle of Ubuntu within the community.

5.3.2 THE CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES USED TO IDENTIFY THE RECIPIENTS OF THE OVC BURSARY SCHEME POLICY 2000

The study concludes that the selection criteria for the OVC Bursary Scheme also include children whose parents are both over the age of 65. The policy acknowledges that vulnerable children

may face unique difficulties even when both parents are alive. Aging parents may have health issues or reduced income, which can impact their ability to provide adequate support for their children's education.

The study also concludes that the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is age restricted as the eligibility criteria require that a child should be under the age of 18 to be supported. This suggests that the policy is targeting a particular subset of vulnerable learners based on these criteria. This restriction implies that children who are above the age of 18 may not be eligible for the bursary support, even if they are in need of educational support and are still enrolled in secondary schools.

The study further concludes that the implementation of the policy is performance-based as opposed to its selection criteria which is needy-based. The study's conclusion suggests a disconnection between the intended purpose of the policy (needy-based selection) and its actual implementation (performance-based). This misalignment raises concerns about whether the policy effectively targets and supports the most vulnerable learners, especially those who may face significant financial barriers to education.

The study also concludes that the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 only manages to increase OVC enrolment but fails to retain all the enrolled OVC until they complete Grade 11. This is because the policy has a condition for continued support which states that if a beneficiary does not pass and proceed to the next grade, the bursary is temporarily terminated and also if a beneficiary fails the same grade for two consecutive years, the bursary is permanently terminated. The policy aims to support OVC throughout their educational journey, but also includes provisions for the temporary or permanent termination of bursary support based on academic performance. The temporary termination of the bursary for beneficiaries who do not pass and proceed to the next grade can disrupt their education. They may face financial difficulties in continuing their studies without bursary support. Similarly, the permanent termination of the bursary for beneficiaries who fail the same grade for two consecutive years can have a long-lasting impact on their educational opportunities.

5.3.3 THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE OVC BURSARY SCHEME POLICY 2000 PROMOTES OVC ACCESS AND RETENTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The study concludes that despite the existence of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, there are large numbers of OVC who are not supported with some staying at home due to financial constraints. The study concludes that the number of OVC who successfully complete their secondary education is very small, with many dropping out of school before reaching Grade 11. Higher completion rates would indicate that the policy is effective in helping OVC stay in school and complete their secondary education.

The study also concludes that OVC's academic performance is deteriorating despite the presence of this policy. Academic performance is a significant indicator of the effectiveness of educational policies in addressing challenges and promoting the academic success of OVC in secondary school. The declining academic performance among OVC despite the existence of this policy indicates that there are additional factors influencing their educational outcomes that are not adequately addressed by the policy itself. These factors include unmet basic and other school-related needs, lack of parental support and care, looking after sick people and other challenges that OVC face in their daily lives.

The study concludes that there is poor administration of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000, specifically regarding the disbursement of funds to beneficiary schools. Delays in fund disbursement can have a significant impact on the day-to-day operations of the school, particularly in providing necessary stationery for supported learners. These delays can subsequently affect the academic performance of the supported OVC as they may not have access to the essential workbooks and pens needed to complete their schoolwork. Without the necessary writing materials, OVC find it difficult to complete assignments, take notes, or participate in class activities, resulting in a decline in their academic performance.

5.3.4 THE SUPPORT MECHANISMS THAT NEED TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO IMPROVE OVC EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

The study concludes that there is a lack of community awareness regarding its role and responsibility in ensuring that OVC have access to secondary schools and are retained until

completing Grade 11. This suggests that community members do not fully understand the importance of supporting OVC in their educational journey or are unaware of how they can contribute to ensuring OVC access schools and are retained. Community awareness plays a vital role in creating an environment that supports the education of OVC. When community members are informed and engaged, they can actively contribute to promoting access to education, providing necessary support systems, and fostering a conducive learning environment for OVC. Lack of awareness can result in lack of community involvement, which can ultimately hinder the educational success of OVC.

The study further concludes that there is lack of dedicated personnel to provide psychological support for OVC in school to cope with emotional stress. Having trained professionals in schools who can provide counselling and mentoring services will create a safe and supportive environment for OVC. These professionals will help OVC manage their experiences, build resilience, and develop the skills needed to effectively meet challenges. Psychological support plays a crucial role in helping OVC navigate the emotional challenges they may face due to various factors such as loss of parents, vulnerability and adverse life circumstances. It provides them with a safe space to express their emotions, develop coping mechanisms and build resilience. The study suggests provision of emotional support, counseling services and access to mental health professionals, so that OVC can get the support they need to process their experiences and build resilience. This support will help OVC manage the psychological trauma they face on a daily basis, ultimately improving their well-being and reducing the likelihood of dropping out.

The study also concludes that there is a need for regular monitoring of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 implementation so that the necessary support can be provided on time. Regular monitoring will help in identifying OVC who need help and taking measures to help them. It will help to provide vital information on all that transpires in the life of the OVC.

5.4 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The limitations mentioned in this study are indeed important to consider and may have affected the application of the findings. The unavailability of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in

the public domain posed data collection challenges, impacted study timelines, and hampered transparency and accountability in the policy implementation process. The delay in accessing these documents disrupted the research plan and made it difficult to understand the provisions of the policy. The study suggests that the Department of Social Development should take action to increase community awareness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. This will allow legitimate OVC and other stakeholders to access the information they need, improve their understanding of the policy, and enable them to take advantage of its benefits. The department should prioritize making these policy documents publicly available to ensure transparency, facilitate policy analysis, and improve accountability. In addition, it may be beneficial for the department to consider digitising these documents and making them easily accessible on their website or through other online platforms. This would not only improve public access, but also contribute to the efficient dissemination of information and the overall transparency of the system.

The inability to include one of the proposed secondary schools due to lack of cooperation is a significant limitation. This reduction in the number of schools may have impacted the diversity and representativeness of the sample, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to a broader population.

Moreover, the exclusion of one school affected the interview schedule and caused a delay in the data analysis process. This delay could have introduced additional variables or changes in the context, which might have influenced the findings. The timing of the study is highlighted as another limitation, specifically regarding the data collection process. Conducting semi-structured interviews during the participants' lunchtime, with a maximum duration of 10 minutes per participant, could have led to certain challenges. Participants may have felt rushed or had limited time to fully express their thoughts, which could have affected the depth and quality of their responses. Consequently, this time constraint may have influenced the study findings and limited the richness of the data collected. Furthermore, the four-day timeframe allocated for conducting interviews with 14 participants could be considered relatively short. The limited time available for data collection might have restricted the researcher's ability to explore the research questions in more depth.

5.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and limitations of the study, several recommendations are made to enhance the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 and improve the support provided to OVC in their educational journey.

5.4.1   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY

The findings revealed that financial constraints prevent some orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) from attending school, despite the existence of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 and that there is a risk of losing the bursary if they fail to progress to the next grade. It is recommended that the government should review and strengthen support through this policy to ensure that the financial barriers faced by OVC are effectively addressed. This should include increasing the coverage and value of bursaries, streamlining the application process, and improving transparency and accountability in the disbursement of funds. It is also recommended that the government should establish and implement additional financial support programs specifically aimed at filling the financial gap in the support provided by the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. It is also recommended that the ministry should develop monitoring and support mechanisms to track the progress and well-being of bursary recipients.

The findings also revealed that the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is implemented in age-restricted and performance-based approaches which limit educational support to children under the age of 18, and also to children who keep passing and progressing from one grade to another. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the government should conduct a comprehensive review of the policy to assess its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. In particular, the government should assess the age restriction criterion and consider revising it to include older orphans and vulnerable children who still need financial support for their education. The government should also consider revising or adjusting the criteria to ensure they are fair, supportive and reflect the specific circumstances and challenges faced by OVC.

The findings revealed that unmet basic needs, as well as other school-related needs such as access to food, clothing, toiletries, proper school uniform, and additional school fees are significant barriers to OVC participation in secondary schools. Based on these findings, it is

recommended that the government should review the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 to make it more holistic and address these challenges comprehensively. By reviewing and updating the policy, the government should ensure that it reflects the current needs and challenges faced by OVC. This would allow the implementation of more effective and comprehensive support measures that would remove the barriers to OVC participation in secondary schools and ultimately improve OVC access and retention in secondary schools.

In addition, it is recommended that the government should strengthen existing legal frameworks and policies related to child marriage, underage, early and unintended pregnancy and education. The government should ensure effective enforcement of these laws to protect OVC from early marriage and ensure their right to education.

It is therefore recommended that the Department of Social Development should consider digitizing the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 document and make it easily accessible on their website or through other online platforms. This will not only improve public access, but also contribute to the efficient dissemination of information and the overall transparency of the system.

5.4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Having discovered that the main challenges affecting OVC school participation are unmet basic needs and lack of parental support and care, it is recommended that alternative support systems and interventions to compensate for the lack of parental or guardian support be developed. Collaborative efforts between schools, community organisations and government agencies should be established to bridge this gap and provide the necessary guidance and support networks for OVC.

Based on the finding that some orphaned and vulnerable children have the extra responsibility of taking care of their sick parents, which negatively impacts their psychological well-being and ability to concentrate in class, it is recommended that psychosocial support for OVC be provided to help them cope with the emotional and psychological challenges they face. These include

individual or group counselling, support groups with peers in similar situations, and therapeutic interventions aimed at building resilience and improving mental well-being.

It is also recommended that awareness campaigns to educate parents and the wider community about the importance of parental support to OVC be conducted. These campaigns will eliminate common misconceptions, reduce stigma, and encourage the community to take responsibility of supporting and caring for OVC.

The findings revealed that most orphaned and vulnerable children lack the support of their parents or guardians. Given that parental support and care is vital to OVC's active participation in the school, it is recommended that the government should establish and implement parental support programs that target parents and guardians of OVC. These programs will provide guidance on effective parenting techniques, child development, and creating a supportive and nurturing environment for the OVC.

It is further recommended that the government should establish and implement home visitation programs whereby the Department of Social Development and Social Workers visit the homes of OVC to assess their living conditions, offer advice to parents or guardians and provide necessary support services. In addition, it is recommended that the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports, Arts, Culture and Social Development should work with the Ministry of Education and Training to ensure schools are aware of the specific needs of OVC and provide appropriate support. This includes training teachers to identify and address the needs of OVC and to facilitate communication between schools and parents.

Based on the findings that OVC face the challenges of teenage pregnancy and early marriage leading to school dropout and reduced OVC school retention, it is recommended that the government should establish and implement comprehensive sexuality education programs that provide OVC with age-appropriate information on reproductive health, contraception, and the consequences of early pregnancy and marriage. It is also recommended that targeted awareness campaigns should be launched to raise awareness of the risks and consequences of teenage pregnancy and early marriage. These campaigns should target both OVC and the community, emphasising the importance of education, the value of delaying parenthood, and the harmful

effects of child marriage. It is also recommended that the government should provide OVC with life skills training and empowerment programs that build their self-esteem, decision-making and negotiation skills. These programs should be designed to equip OVC with the knowledge and skills to withstand social pressure, make informed decisions and pursue their educational goals.

The study found that the government does not pay out the funds for supported OVC on time. It is therefore recommended that the government provides timely and consistent financial support to enable sponsored learners to receive learning materials in a timely manner. This will help streamline the disbursement process and allow timely purchasing of workbooks and pens for OVC so that they receive these items on time.

5.4.3   AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of the study suggest that it is crucial for future researchers to expand their coverage and include other districts in their assessment of the impact of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 on OVC education. This recommendation is based on the understanding that different districts may have varying contextual factors, participant characteristics, and geographical settings that can influence the implementation and outcomes of the policy. By including a diverse range of districts in future studies, researchers can obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 operates in different contexts. This broader perspective will help in identifying potential variations in outcomes across districts, and shed light on the factors that contribute to successful or challenging implementation. This knowledge can inform policy makers and stakeholders about the need for tailored interventions and strategies to address specific issues in specific districts. It can also highlight best practices or successful approaches that can be replicated or adapted in other areas.

Secondly, it is recommended for future researchers to assess the factors that hinder the effective implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in promoting access and retention of OVC in secondary school, considering its main objective. Understanding the barriers and challenges that impede the policy's effectiveness is crucial for improving its implementation and achieving the desired outcomes. The assessment will provide valuable insights for policy makers,

inform evidence-based decision-making, and support the development of targeted interventions to enhance access and retention of OVC in secondary schools.

5.5   CONCLUSION

This study sought to assess the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in enhancing access and retention of OVC in secondary schools in selected secondary schools in Leribe. Primary data was collected using semi-structured interviews while secondary data was collected using document analysis. Data was analysed thematically by NVivo software 14. This software helped in data preparation, organisation and analysis, leading to deeper insights and more robust research findings.

The findings indicated that orphans and vulnerable learners, despite OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 educational support, face several challenges that negatively impact their school participation and performance, ultimately leading to school dropouts. Unmet basic and school-related needs are the main challenges leading to OVC school dropout. Another significant challenge in increasing OVC school dropout is termination of the bursary support when a learner fails to proceed to the next grade.

In conclusion, it is always important for policies to undergo regular reviews to ensure they are still fulfilling what they were originally intended to achieve and to assess where improvements could be made. The OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 is an important policy which enables OVC to access educational opportunities which would otherwise be out of reach for them. Its continued implementation, in a context where many people are socio-economically deprived, provides a pathway and a major lifeline for many children.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: TURNITIN REPORT

APPENDIX 2: PROOF OF LANGUAGE EDITING

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY   OF LESOTHO

P.O. Roma 180

 Lesotho

Southern Africa

Telephone: +266 22340601

　　　　　+266 52213632

　　　　　+266 52213639

Fax　　　: +266 22340000

Website: http://www.nul.ls

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

31ˢᵗ July 2023

The Supervisor Department of Educational Foundations Faculty of Education NUL

Dear Supervisor

Re: proof of language editing

This letter proves that I read and edited 'Mampho Ntsekele Matšela's dissertation titled: *The effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 in enhancing orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)'s access and retention in the selected secondary schools in Leribe.*

Sincerely,

_____

Mahao Mahao (PhD)

Department of Language and Social Education

Faculty of Education,

National University of Lesotho

APPENDIX3: INTRODUCTION LETTER TO EDUCATION OFFICE LERIBE

The National University of Lesotho

Telephone: +266 22340601
Fax: +266 22340000
http://www.nul.ls

P.O. Roma 180
Lesotho
Africa

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

8th May 2023

The Officer in Charge
Education Office Leribe
Leribe

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION FOR MRS. 'MAMPHO MATS'ELA-NTSEKELE (STUDENT NUMBER: 200202710) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I wish to confirm that Mrs 'Mampho Mats'ela-Ntsekele is a registered part-time student at the National of University of Lesotho, in the Faculty of Education. She is currently pursuing Master of Education (M.Ed) Degree in Educational Administration, Management and Policy. As a requirement for this degree, she is conducting a study entitled: *The effectiveness of the Educational Bursary Scheme Policy (2000) in enhancing orphans and vulnerable children (ovc)'s access and retention in the selected secondary schools of Leribe.* The study seeks to assess the extent to which this policy promotes OVC access and retention in secondary schools in Lesotho. Finally, the study will identify the support mechanisms that need to be put in place to improve OVC educational success.

Data collection will consist of document analysis of some official documents, and semi-structured interviews will be conducted with principals, teachers, parents, learners and the Ministry of Education officials. The interviews will take a maximum of 20 minutes. The researcher will see to it that no more harm will occur to the participation as a result of this study. Potential benefits include an improvement in the implementation of the OVC bursary scheme policy due to an increased OVC completion rate and reduced dropout rate in secondary.

Yours sincerely

T. Tlali (PhD) - Supervisor

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APPENDIX 4: LETTER FROM THE DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGER-LERIBE

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
LERIBE DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE
P.O. BOX 70, LERIBE 300.
TEL: 22400210

09/05/2023

The Principals
Post-primary schools
Leribe District

Dear Principals

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY.

Permission is hereby granted to **Ms Mampho Matšela** to conduct a research study

whose title is, **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EDUCATIONAL BURSARY SCHEME POLICY (2000) IN ENHANCING ORPHAN AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN (OVC)'S ACCESS AND RETENTION IN THE SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL OF LERIBE.**
This study will be conducted in post-primary schools in the Leribe district in the month of May 2023 beginning on 10/05/2023.

You are kindly requested to provide her with the information she may require, and your usual cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Setenane Phakoana (Mr): District Education Inspector – Leribe

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
& TRAINING
EDUCATION OFFICE

0 9 MAY 2023

P.O. Box 12 Leribe 300
Tel: 22 400 210 / 22 401 330
Fax: 22 400 022

Scanned with
MOBILE SCANNER

APPENDIX 5: INTRODUCTION LETTER TO DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT LERIBE

The National University of Lesotho

Telephone: +266 22340601
Fax: +266 22340000
http://www.nul.ls

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

P.O. Roma 180
Lesotho
Africa

8th May 2023

The Officer in Charge
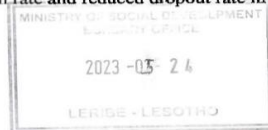Department of Social Development

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION FOR MRS. 'MAMPHO MATS'ELA-NTSEKELE (STUDENT NUMBER: 200202710) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I wish to confirm that Mrs 'Mampho Mats'ela-Ntsekele is a registered part-time student at the National of University of Lesotho, in the Faculty of Education. She is currently pursuing Master of Education (M.Ed) Degree in Educational Administration, Management and Policy. As a requirement for this degree, she is conducting a study entitled: *The effectiveness of the Educational Bursary Scheme Policy (2000) in enhancing orphans and vulnerable children (ovc)'s access and retention in the selected secondary schools of Leribe.* The study seeks to assess the extent to which this policy promotes OVC access and retention in secondary schools in Lesotho. Finally, the study will identify the support mechanisms that need to be put in place to improve OVC educational success.

Data collection will consist of document analysis of some official documents, and semi-structured interviews will be conducted with principals, teachers, parents, learners and the Ministry of Education officials. The interviews will take a maximum of 20 minutes. The researcher will see to it that no more harm will occur to the participation as a result of this study. Potential benefits include an improvement in the implementation of the OVC bursary scheme policy due to an increased OVC completion rate and reduced dropout rate in secondary.

Yours sincerely

Tlali

T. Tlali (PhD) - Supervisor

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
BURSARY OFFICE

2023 -03- 2 4

LERIBE - LESOTHO

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APPENDIX 6: INTRODUCTION LETTER TO RENEKENG HIGH SCHOOL

The National University of Lesotho

Telephone: +266 22340601
Fax: +266 22340000
http://www.nul.ls

P.O. Roma 180
Lesotho
Africa

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

8th May 2023

The Principal
Renekeng High School
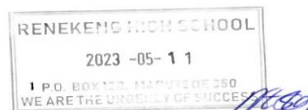Leribe

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION FOR MRS. 'MAMPHO MATS'ELA-NTSEKELE (STUDENT NUMBER: 200202710) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I wish to confirm that Mrs 'Mampho Mats'ela-Ntsekele is a registered part-time student at the National of University of Lesotho, in the Faculty of Education. She is currently pursuing Master of Education (M.Ed) Degree in Educational Administration, Management and Policy. As a requirement for this degree, she is conducting a study entitled: *The effectiveness of the Educational Bursary Scheme Policy (2000) in enhancing orphans and vulnerable children (ovc)'s access and retention in the selected secondary schools of Leribe*. The study seeks to assess the extent to which this policy promotes OVC access and retention in secondary schools in Lesotho. Finally, the study will identify the support mechanisms that need to be put in place to improve OVC educational success.

Data collection will consist of document analysis of some official documents, and semi-structured interviews will be conducted with principals, teachers, parents, learners and the Ministry of Education officials. The interviews will take a maximum of 20 minutes. The researcher will see to it that no more harm will occur to the participation as a result of this study. Potential benefits include an improvement in the implementation of the OVC bursary scheme policy due to an increased OVC completion rate and reduced dropout rate in secondary.

Yours sincerely

T. Tlali (PhD) - Supervisor

RENEKENG HIGH SCHOOL
2023 -05- 1 1
P.O. BOX ... MAPUTSOE 350
WE ARE THE UNIVERSITY OF SUCCES

160

APPENDIX 7: INTRODUCTION LETTER TO SECHABA HIGH SCHOOL

The National University of Lesotho

Telephone: +266 22340601
Fax: +266 22340000
http://www.nul.ls

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

P.O. Roma 180
Lesotho
Africa

8th May 2023

The Principal
Sechaba High School
Leribe

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION FOR MRS. 'MAMPHO MATS'ELA-NTSEKELE (STUDENT NUMBER: 200202710) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I wish to confirm that Mrs 'Mampho Mats'ela-Ntsekele is a registered part-time student at the National of University of Lesotho, in the Faculty of Education. She is currently pursuing Master of Education (M.Ed) Degree in Educational Administration, Management and Policy. As a requirement for this degree, she is conducting a study entitled: *The effectiveness of the Educational Bursary Scheme Policy (2000) in enhancing orphans and vulnerable children (ovc)'s access and retention in the selected secondary schools of Leribe.* The study seeks to assess the extent to which this policy promotes OVC access and retention in secondary schools in Lesotho. Finally, the study will identify the support mechanisms that need to be put in place to improve OVC educational success.

Data collection will consist of document analysis of some official documents, and semi-structured interviews will be conducted with principals, teachers, parents, learners and the Ministry of Education officials. The interviews will take a maximum of 20 minutes. The researcher will see to it that no more harm will occur to the participation as a result of this study. Potential benefits include an improvement in the implementation of the OVC bursary scheme policy due to an increased OVC completion rate and reduced dropout rate in secondary.

Yours sincerely

T. Tlali (PhD) - Supervisor

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APPENDIX 8: RESEARCHER'S COVER LETTER

TITLE OF STUDY: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EDUCATIONAL BURSARY SCHEME POLICY IN ENHANCING ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN (OVC)'s ACCESS AND RETENTION IN THE SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF LERIBE

I am 'Mampho Mats'ela-Ntsekele, a student at the National University of Lesotho. I am conducting the study as a requirement for master's programme. You are being asked to participate in the study. The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy (2000) in enhancing OVC access and retention in the selected secondary schools of Leribe. This purpose will be achieved by identifying the challenges the OVC faces in its secondary education and critically assessing the criteria and procedures used to identify the recipients of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000. The study will further assess the extent to which the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 promotes OVC access and retention in secondary schools in Lesotho. Finally, the study will identify the support mechanisms that need to be put in place to improve OVC educational success. This study will contribute to the completion of master's programme.

This study consists of an interview session that will be conducted between a researcher and individual participant in his/her location. Participants will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions relating to the effectiveness of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy (2000) in enhancing OVC access and retention in the selected secondary schools of Leribe. Participation in this study will take a maximum of 20 minutes of participant's time. The researcher sees no more than minimal risks from your participation in this study. Potential benefits from participating in this study include an improvement in the implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy 2000 due to an increased OVC completion rate and reduced dropout rate in secondary. Participation in this study will help the researcher to have more information on the topic. There is no compensation for participation in this study.

The findings of this study will be submitted to the National University of Lesotho as part of the fulfilment of master's degree requirements. While individual responses will be collected and recorded anonymously and treated in the strictest confidence, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. No identifiable information will be collected from the participants and no identifiable responses will be presented in the final form of this study. All data will be stored in a secure location

accessible only to the researcher. The researcher reserves the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. At the end of the study, all records will be destroyed.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Participants who decide to take part in this study, may also withdraw at any time. However, once the responses have been submitted and collected anonymously, participants will not be able to withdraw from the study. If there any questions or concerns during participation in this study or after its completion, or would like to receive a copy of the final overall results of this study, please contact:

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APPENDIX 9: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

   a. CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS ABOVE 18 YEARS

I have read and understand the information provided about what is required of me as a participant in this study. I am aware that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from it at any time without giving reasons and free of charge. I understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I had the opportunity to ask questions and received satisfactory answers to my questions.

Guardian/ Parent Signature: _____ Date_____

MAMPHO NTSEKELE MATS'ELA
Name of Researcher

_____   _____
Signature   Date

   b. CONSENT FORM FOR THE MINOR

I have read and understand the information provided about what is required of my child as a participant in this study. I am aware that his/her participation is voluntary and that she/he can withdraw from it at any time without giving reasons and free of charge. I understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily allow my child to participate in this study. I had the opportunity to ask questions and received satisfactory answers to my questions.

Guardian/ Parent Signature: _____ Date_____

MAMPHO NTSEKELE MATS'ELA
Name of Researcher

_____   _____
Signature   Date

APPENDIX 10: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A. SUPPORTED ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE LEARNERS

Q1. In which grade are you?

Q2. OVC Status

Q3. Who do you stay with?

Q4. What are the challenges that you face that prevent you from studying effectively?

Q5. How long have you been supported by the OVC bursary policy?

Q6. Is there any class you repeated?

Q7. If yes, how did you pay for your school fees?

Q8. What are the requirements for the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy continuous support?

B. NOT SUPPORTED ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE LEARNERS

Q1. In which grade are you?

Q2. OVC Status:

Q3. Who do you stay with?

Q4. What are the challenges that you face that prevent you studying effectively?

Q5. Why are you no longer supported in school?

Q6. Is there any class you repeated?

Q7. Who pays for your school fees and other related school costs?

Q8. What are the requirements for the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy continuous support?

C. SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Q1. Proprietorship of the School:

Q2. How many years have you been a principal in this school?

Q3. How many OVC

Q4. What are the challenges faced by these OVC supported by OVC Bursary Scheme Policy?

Q5. What are the measures taken by school to assist these OVC to overcome these challenges?

Q6. How is the overall performance of OVC in this school in all grades?

Q7. What support mechanisms can be recommended to enhance the educational success and retention of the OVC?

Q8. Are there any weaknesses you have identified on the implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy?

D.   SCHOOL TEACHER

Q1. How many years have you been working in this school as a teacher?

Q2. What are the challenges faced by the OVC compared to other learners?

Q3. What do you do as a teacher to make OVC feel that they are part of the class?

Q4. How is the overall performance of OVC compared to other learners in this school?

Q5. Are there any weaknesses you have identified for the implementation of the OVC Bursary Scheme Policy?

Q6. What do you think needs to be done to address these weaknesses for effective implementation of this bursary?

E.   GUARDIANS/PARENTS

Q1. How are you related with the child that you are staying with?

Q2. How long have been staying with this child?

Q3. In which OVC status does this child fall?

Q4. Who is paying for this child?

Q5. What are the challenges you face in relation to school related fees for this child?

Q6. Apart from school related challenges, what other challenges do you encounter regarding this child?

Q7. What do you do to help this child to overcome these challenges?

Q8. What are the requirements for the continuous bursary support?