



**EXPLORING WORKPLACE ADVERSITY AND RESILIENCE  
AMONG TEACHERS IN THE LEJWELEPUTSWA DISTRICT: THE  
NEED FOR SUPPORT PROGRAMMES FOR TEACHERS**

By

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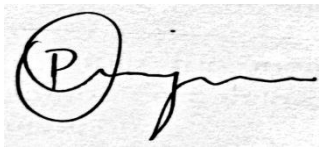
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## DECLARATION

I, Phindiwe OldJohn, declare that the research study Exploring workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district: The need for support programs for teachers is my own work and that all the sources used and cited were acknowledged by means of complete references.



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Date

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## ABSTRACT

Despite volumes of research work on workplace adversity and resilience internationally, much remains unknown about the adversities and resilience among teachers in South Africa. The aim of this research study is therefore clear in its title: *Exploring workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district: the need for support programmes for teachers*. It was envisaged that the findings of this study would make it possible for strength-based, resilience-focused interventions to be developed in order to support teachers and prevent staff turnover. Workplace adversity negatively impacts teachers' performance. A generic qualitative study was conducted. This study is phenomenological and exploratory in nature. The design of the study was a multiple case study research and qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The findings taken from the participants' narratives were categorised. The study documented individual and environmental processes that enabled teachers to function resiliently despite the adversities they face at work. Teachers attributed their ability to thrive in the midst of workplace adversity ultimately through the following factors: personal resilience, support from their families and community, professional assistance, religious practices and beliefs as well as seminars and workshops. Workplace adversity negatively impacts teachers' performance. It is therefore essential to give them the necessary support in the form of structured programmes to assist them in performing well consistently despite the adversities they face in the workplace.

**Keywords:** workplace adversity, resilience, teacher resilience, risk factors, protective factors

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## CHAPTER 1

### ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the past, teachers in township schools in South Africa were labouring under severe conditions that could be classified as workplace adversity. For example, township schools were unstable because they had become centres for political activism. The situation has not changed that much since for teachers in township schools continue to face constellations of risks that constitute workplace adversity. There are no programmes in place aimed at supporting the well-being of teachers in township schools. Fleisch (2008:19) noted that schools in South Africa underperform due to risk factors such as ill health, poverty, resources, language and teaching.

The result of these adverse circumstances is staff turnover since teachers feel that they cannot cope resiliently with the adversity they encounter in the workplace. It is important to know the nature of workplace adversity in South African schools, to understand ways in which teachers cope with workplace adversity and to provide guidelines that lead to the development of resilience programmes for teachers.

The study explored the phenomenon of workplace adversity and resilience in teachers of South Africa.

This chapter presents an overview of the study and covers the following topics:

- Background of the study
- Problem statement
- Aim and the objectives of the study
- Research design
- Theoretical framework
- Concept clarification
- Trustworthiness
- Ethical considerations

- Chapter division and conclusion

## 1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Teachers are an essential part of the academic workforce, but despite the important role played by teachers, they are still facing many adversities in the workplace. The advent of democracy in South Africa saw the introduction of many changes that affected the education system as a whole. Teachers had to contend not only with changes to the curriculum but also with changes relating to the way schools and classrooms had to be managed.

The changes that were introduced brought untold stress upon teachers who had been labouring under the apartheid education system of the past. As a result of these and other stressors, South Africa sighted an exodus of teachers out of the system on a regular basis, citing stress and low salaries as reasons for leaving. Learner indiscipline as well as a lack of departmental and parental participation and support compound teachers' predicament even further. The aforementioned stressors constitute workplace adversity.

Workplace adversity is defined as a cluster of stressful or traumatic situations stemming from working conditions, the work environment, excessive workloads, lack of autonomy, workplace bullying, violence and restructuring encountered in an occupational setting (Lian & Tam, 2014:10; Jackson & Daly, 2011:2) causing teachers to exit the system. Workplace adversity impact include the impact on physical, mental and emotional health and well-being of teachers (MacDonald, 2010:2).

Researchers such as Hussain (2010:46) and Thornqvist (2011:20) discovered that for teachers, resilience risk factors such as inadequate buildings and facilities, low salaries, lack of resources and a lack of administrative support constitute workplace adversity. Workplace adversity can severely affect the health and well-being of teachers and result in reduced productivity (De Vos, 2013:9). It is believed to be one of the primary reasons teachers fail to flourish in the workplace and eventually leave the teaching profession (MacDonald, 2010:2).

Resilience risk factors are personal and socio-ecological processes that combine in complex ways and reduce resilient coping among vulnerable people (Ungar, 2010:8). Resilience is however strengthened by personal and socio-ecological processes that also combine in complex ways and enables one to cope resiliently despite risk and adversity (Malindi, 2009:32).

In the absence of strength-based and resilience-focused intervention programmes, workplace adversity continues to impair resilient coping and functioning in teachers. Resilience is a context-specific phenomenon that is not easy to define (Dass-Brailsford, 2005:583). However, there is agreement that resilience involves someone doing well under conditions that would potentially negate normative development in him or her (Malindi, 2009:202).

Masten (2011:148) regards resilience as achieving positive outcomes despite the experience of adversity, continuing to function effectively in adverse circumstances, or recovery after significant trauma has been experienced.

Despite volumes of research on workplace adversity and resilience internationally, much remains unknown about workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in South Africa. This is where this study is positioned.

### **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study provides profound value and benefit—from individual to organisational level and beyond. Teachers experience many factors that contribute to workplace adversity leading to teachers exiting the system and a high rate of teacher absenteeism (O'Brien-Pallas, Murphy, Shamian, Li & Hayes, 2010:1076). Teachers continue to experience negative consequences stemming from violence and an intense workload in the workplace (Bogossian, Winters-Chang & Tucket, 2014:380). Teachers worldwide are exposed to a high rate of violence in the workplace in the form of bullying (De Vos, 2013:9; Spector, Zhou & Che, 2014:75).

It was anticipated that, at an individual level, the study would provide teachers with new information and learning experiences and opportunities to reflect on and strengthen their personal resilience. As the investigation continued, it would



provide up-to-date, reliable and current findings about workplace adversity and resilience of teachers. The findings could then be used to make recommendations for relevant improvements in the teaching working environment, which may in turn increase retention and lower recruitment costs. It was also essential to gain information about the nature and extent to which teachers experience workplace adversity and encourage a more sensitive and positive approach to resilience in the workplace.

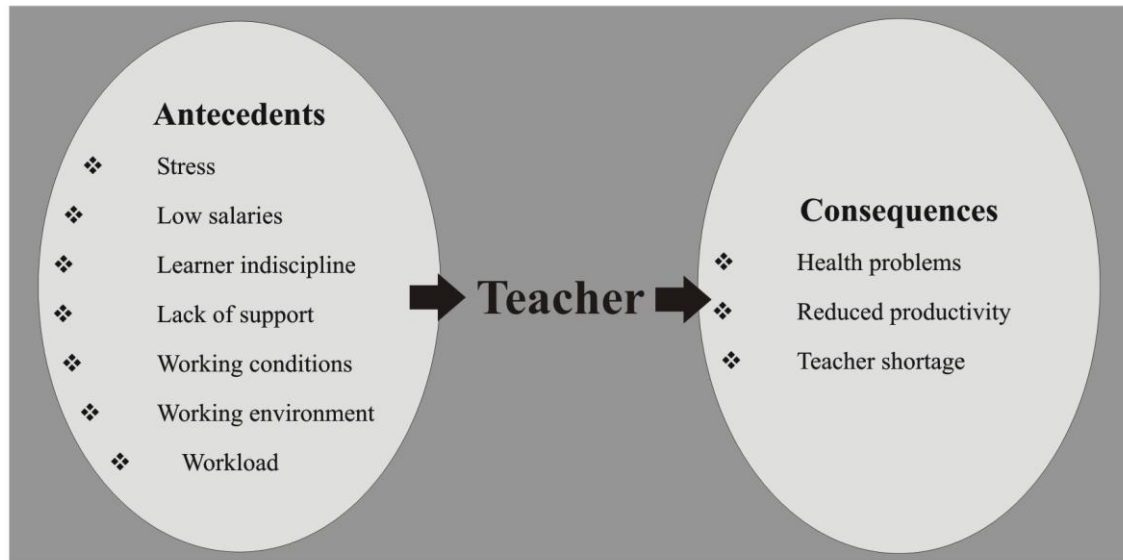
Based on the review of literature, it was assumed that the causes and effects of workplace adversity may also stem from multiple levels in the teaching profession and therefore research and a multi-level approach to intervention in this context were prudent. Coyne (2011:176).Pasha (2010:1241) further recognises that there is little evidence that indicates the effectiveness of the numerous initiatives that have been put forward in the past to manage workplace adversity. This study reported on teachers' experience of workplace adversity and their resilience.

#### **1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Workplace adversity was confirmed as a major problem facing teachers in South African schools, yet there is a dearth of intervention programmes aimed at ameliorating the plight of teachers. Several studies show that teachers were exiting the system due to a lack of intervention programmes (Worth, Lazzari & Hillay, 2017:3; Allen, Belfield, Greaves & Walker, 2012:26; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011:56).Teachers often become professionally troubled by aspects of development, progress or behaviour of a learner or group of learners (Boyden, 2009:121) and this may derail the teacher's professional competence.

Intervention programmes need to focus on resilient coping and should be strength-focused. The health and well-being of teachers in the workplace have been explored (MacDonald, 2010:30). However, not much is known about the resilience of teachers in the midst of workplace adversity, which according to Farmer (2010:3), may include increasing costs, decreasing revenue streams, increasing accountability, decreasing autonomy, changing demographics, ageing facilities, recruitment and retention issues. To combat these factors, it was important to develop resilience in teachers (Pearce & Morrison, 2011:51).

There are only a few studies which have focused on resilience in teachers (Le Cornu, 2013:10). This study thus seeks to explore workplace adversity and resilience of teachers in the Lejweleputswa district.



**Figure 1.1: From adversity to resilience**

## 1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions emanated from the research problem:

- What is your basic understanding of workplace adversity and resilience?
- What are the factors which predict workplace adversity?
- To what extent do teachers face workplace adversity?
- Are there any mechanism (policy or regulatory framework) on resilience?
- What protective resources do teachers rely on to overcome workplace adversity?

## 1.6 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to explore workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district. In the end, it was envisaged that the findings of this study may be useful for strength-based, resilience-focused interventions to be developed in order to support teachers and prevent staff turnover.

## 1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The first objective of this study was to conduct a literature study in order to

- define workplace adversity and resilience;
- determine factors that predict workplace adversity;
- determine the extent to which teachers face workplace adversity;
- comment on any mechanism (policy or regulatory framework) on resilience; and
- determine protective resources in the context of workplace adversity.

The second objective of this study is to conduct empirical research in order to

- explore the resilience of teachers in the context of workplace adversity; and
- propose guidelines for the development of strength-based resilience programmes to support teachers.

## 1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research was necessary since it allowed for new information and knowledge to be discovered (Robson, 2010:33). Research design referred to the structured approach followed by researchers in answering a particular research question (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015:86). According to Creswell (2009:22), there were three approaches to research that researchers can choose from, namely qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Researchers adopt a research approach that they believe best suit the phenomenon that is going to be studied.

In this regard, the researcher chose to conduct a generic qualitative study in order to fully explore workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:135), qualitative research focuses on phenomena that occur in a natural setting and they involve studying those phenomena in all their complexity.

This study is phenomenological and exploratory in nature. Phenomenological studies explore people's lived experiences in their naturalistic contexts (Kafle, 2011:2097). In other words, phenomenology tries to comprehend people's perceptions, perspectives and insight of specific circumstances (Delpont, Fouche & Schurink, 2011: 305). Phenomenological studies focus on people's lived experiences and if they are exploratory, as this study is, they focus on novel phenomena (Boros, 2018:17; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015:26). The phenomena under study are workplace adversity and resilience.

Furthermore, exploratory studies occur when the researcher first needs to explore a topic using qualitative data before attempting to measure or test it quantitatively (Maree, 2012:273). Exploratory studies are usually conducted on particularly novel topics (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:131; Slevitch, 2011:77) such as workplace adversity in relation to resilience in this study. Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding where a researcher develops a complex, holistic picture of natural phenomena, analyses words, reports the full detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell & Pano Clerk, 2011:12).

The design for this study is multiple case study research. A research design was defined as a plan outlining how information was to be gathered for an assessment or evaluation. This included identifying the data gathering methods, the measuring instruments that were used, how the instruments were to be administered and how the data was organised and analysed (McLeod & Elliot, 2011:3). The choice of research design was based on the researcher's research skills and research practices, which influence the way in which data was collected (Morser & Korstjens, 2018:2). The teachers who took part in this study were studied within their natural contexts.

## **1.9 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

Data refers to those pieces of information that any particular situation gives to an observer (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:88). Several methods can be used to collect data from a sample of teachers. According to Cooper and Schindler (2014:12), the gathering of data may range from a simple observation at one location to a

complex survey of multinational corporations in different parts of the world. The method that the researcher selects will largely determine how data is collected.

For this study, the researcher gave participants a few options to choose from, such as being interviewed, to share their experiences in focus groups, or by making use of personal documents as part of the strategy of inquiry. Interviews are the most predominant mode of data or information collection in qualitative research. To collect qualitative data in this study, semi-structured and focus group interviews were used. Roller (2017:19) and Roller and Lavrakas (2015:19) define semi-structured interviews as interviews that are organised according to areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth.

Semi-structured interviews were one-on-one conversations between a researcher and one participant focusing on the phenomenon under study (Gibson, 2011:470). In a semi-structured interview, the researcher followed standard questions with one or more individually tailored questions to get clarification or probe a person's reasoning (Leey & Ormrod, 2010:144). Therefore, in order to gain a detailed picture of the participants' beliefs or perceptions on a particular topic (Gibson, 2011:472), semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data. Richer data was collected when one-on-one interviews were used alongside focus group interviews (Gibson, 2011:474). For the purpose of this study, focus groups were used to collect qualitative data. A focus group was typically a group of people who shared similar experiences (Gibson, 2011:473). Focus group interviews are interviews that are conducted with groups to better understand how people feel or think about an issue, product or service (Kruger & Casey, 2015:13; Brikman & Kvale, 2014:20).

Focus group interviews were based on the belief that group interaction was productive in widening a range of responses and activating forgotten details of experience. Therefore, these interviews had the potential to produce data rich in detail that was difficult to achieve with other research methods (Maree, 2012:90; Kruger & Casey, 2015:15). The limitation of a focus group was that the samples were typically small and may not be representative. However, generalisation was not the norm in qualitative research (Salmons, 2015:30). The researcher purposively selected minimal sample size of n=34 teachers in order to focus more

on that manageable group and dig deeper into the search of all required information. The ideal number for a focus is five to eight focus groups but the study only used four focus groups consisting of seven teachers in focus groups 1 and 2. Focus group three and four consisted of 8 teachers in each group. Focus group 1 and 2 was composed of five female teachers in each focus group. Focus group 3 and 4 was made out of four female teachers in each group. Focus group 1 and 2 was composed of two male teachers in each group. Then focus group 3 and 4 were made out of four male teachers in each group. The study was made out of eighteen female teachers in total and twelve male teachers in total.

### **1.10 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

A group of individuals under study was called a population, and a subset of the population was called a sample (Anderson, 2009:153). Abha (2011:171) adds that a research population was generally a large collection of individuals or objects that were the main focus of a scientific inquiry. It was for the benefit of the population that the research was conducted (Machenjedze, 2014:28). The population of this study were teachers at schools in the Lejweleputswa district in the Free State province of South Africa. However, since it was impossible to study whole populations, a sample from the aforementioned population of teachers were recruited.

The researcher purposively selected a sample of teachers (n=34) who took part in the study as individuals and as part of focus groups (n=4) of three teachers each. The purposive sampling method is a non-probability sampling technique where participants are selected for a particular purpose (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:212). The participants consisted of male and female teachers who had experienced workplace adversity and could provide insight regarding the nature and effects of this phenomenon. Teachers who work in schools located in townships were sampled.

It should be borne in mind that qualitative researchers do not constrain their research by giving definitive sizes of samples, but the numbers may be one or more units of analysis (Creswell, 2011:112). Generalisation was not intended in this qualitative research. Therefore, large samples were not a norm in qualitative

research. Sampling in qualitative research is done flexibly and it can continue until data saturation was reached.

### 1.11 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative researchers often use multiple forms of data in any single study. They might use observations, interviews, objects, written documents, audiovisual material and anything else that might help them answer their research question (Leedy &Ormod, 2010:145). Inductive content analyses were used in analysing data for this study (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Sherril, 2016:8). In inductive reasoning, specific cases or occurrences are used to draw conclusions about the entire classes of objects or events (Elo, Kaarianen, Kantse, Polkki, Utriainen & Kyngas, 2014:2).

Content analyses is a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purposes of identifying patterns, themes or biases (Leedy &Ormod, 2010:144;Maree, 2012:101). Elo, Kaarianen, Polkki, Utriainen and Kyngas (2014:2) as well as Leedy and Ormod (2010:33) stated that in inductive reasoning people use specific instances or occurrences to draw conclusions about entire classes of objects or events. In other words, they observed the sample and then draw conclusions about the population from which the sample came.

In this study, the researcher asked the participants for permission to tape record the interviews. She conducted the interviews in the language that the participants were comfortable with. She transcribed and translated the interviews where necessary. She read the transcript several times as a way of immersing herself in the data. She labelled sections of the data– a process called open coding (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Sherril, 2016:8). Open coding was followed through axial coding, where the codes were examined for similarities and grouped into themes. The themes emerged from the data; in other words, pre-set themes referred to as *a priori* themes (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Sherril, 2016: 8) were not used.

## 1.12 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study was Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological systems theory, which focuses on factors that enhances individual resilience that might shield teachers against workplace adversity. The bio-ecological model of development was a theory which was developed by Bronfenbrenner to explain factors influencing development (Eggen & Kauchak, 2014:79). According to this theory, different individuals interact differently with certain aspects of their environment. These interactions yield varying outcomes which, in turn, influence these individuals' perceptions of those aspects.

This study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory. This model has a wide and significant influence by explaining how different levels of the system in the social context interact as people develop (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010:18). According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), an individual develops within four nested systems, namely the micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems and this is classified as the bioecological model of development.

According to Ungar (2012a:14) the environment has a profound impact on resilience. In order to understand the bio-ecological model perspective of resilience it is important to gain knowledge of mutual person environment interactions. Resilience could be seen as a set of behaviour over time that reflects the interaction between individual and their environments (Ungar, 2012:14). Findings from the literature review (Santos, 2012:181) brought to light different factors that promoted resilience. These factors can be classified according to whether they operate at the individual, family, workplace or community level:

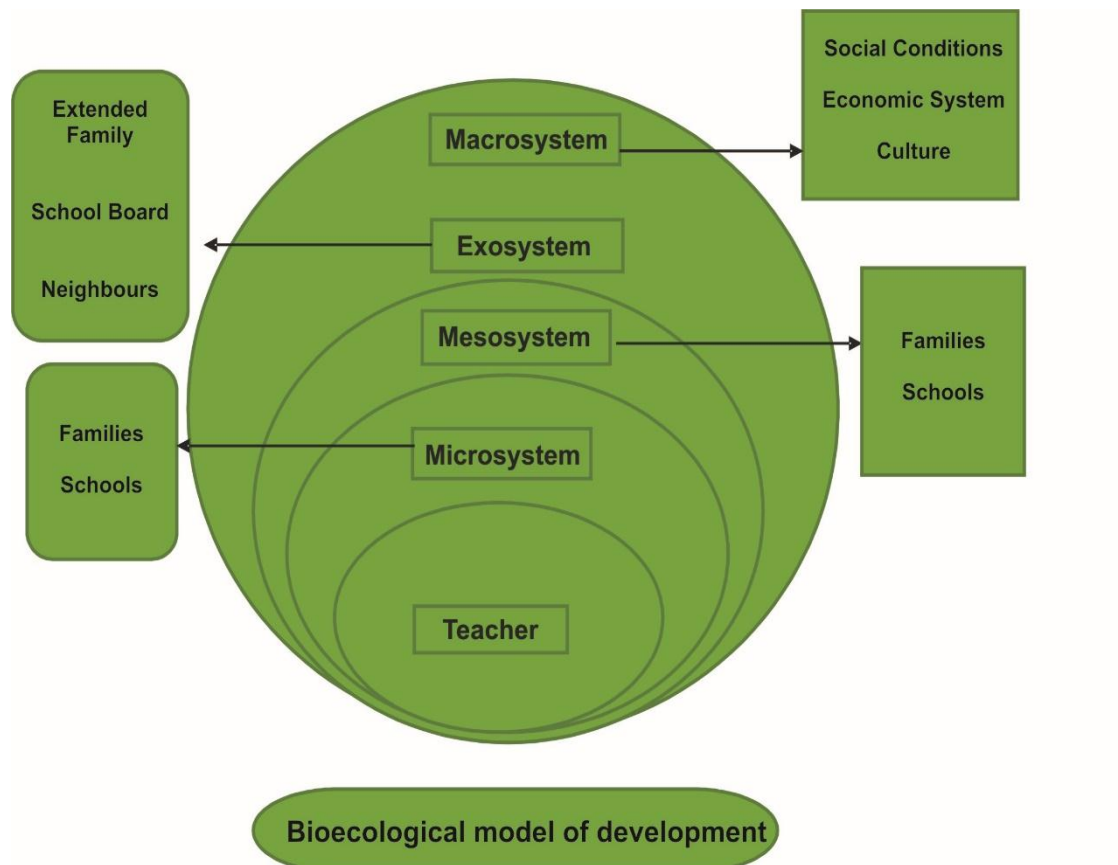
- Individual-level factors: positive effect, thinking, realism and behavioural control.
- Family level factors: emotional ties, communication, support, closeness, nurturing, and adaptability.
- Workplace-level factors: positive command climate, teamwork and cohesion.



Community-level factors: a sense of belonging, cohesion, connectedness and collective efficacy.

- The question remains if these factors are effective enough in helping teachers who experience workplace adversity.

Psychological resilience through protection of their health and well-being was very important for teachers with regard to keeping them fit for duty. Despite measures put in place by the Department of Education in assisting teachers, they still did not have enough confidence to seek help. The leadership in schools can play a pivotal role in creating a knowledge centre where it would be acceptable for teachers to find help. This study therefore proposed the need for support programmes for teachers.



## Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Model of Development

Figure 1.2: The Bioecological model of development

The Bio-ecological model centres on the dynamic relationship that exists between teachers, and the working environment serves as a pivotal framework to further expand on workplace adversity and resilience of teachers for this study. The use of Bio-ecological theory gives a clear picture of the study. In this study the researcher sampled teachers who were influenced by microsystems (families and schools), mesosystems (families and schools interacting with one another), macrosystems (political, economic and cultural systems), exosystems (systems where they are not in face-to-face interactions with others, but they are influenced by them)) (Donald *et al.*, 2010:20).

It is important to note that the context influenced how people lived their lives and how people influenced the systems in return. The lived experiences of the participants were linked to the systems in which they subsist. The interpretation of their responses was more meaningful if these contexts were taken into account when reviewing it.

In order to enhance teacher resilience at the workplace it was important not only that the teachers had positive interactions with their perspective environment but that these environments were also to be supportive. This implies that the teachers should have the will and the courage to access resources within themselves and their environment (t. This may contribute to enhancing teacher resilience, enabling them to act more appropriately and effectively when faced with workplace adversity.

This part of the study gave a brief description of the theoretical orientation employed for this study and also affirmed the researchers decision to use bio-ecological model perspective of resilience. A more detailed account of these important aspects of this theory as they relate to this particular study were briefly discussed in chapter 2.

### **1.13 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE**

A paradigm was a comprehensive belief system, a world view or the framework that guided this research and practice in a particular field (Riyami, 2015:2). In conducting this study, the researcher was guided by the interpretivist, post-

positivist epistemological research paradigm that aimed to produce an understanding of the social context of the phenomenon and the process whereby the phenomenon influences and was influenced by the social context (Henning, 2013:118; Kawulicin, 2011:60).

In this case, the study explores workplace adversity and resilience in teachers. The naturalistic contexts in which the participants were located needed to be fully understood, including the role these contexts played in influencing the meaning-making process (constructions) of the participants. The data was interpreted in view of their unique experiences shaped by the situatedness of the participants.

## **1.14 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

It was important that the concepts the researcher used frequently in the study be fully understood. In this section, the researcher clarified the concepts used in the study. The definition of terms was significant to the understanding of any research. It was important that the researcher and the reader have a clear understanding of the variables.

### **1.14.1 RESILIENCE**

Resilience was defined as the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances. Further, resilience was defined as the ability of an individual to successfully recover from, or adapt to adversity and to develop social or emotional and academic competence despite exposure to life problems (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013:5).

Resilience was defined as the capacity of individuals to navigate and negotiate their pathways towards resources that sustain their well-being; the capacity of the individual's physical and social ecologies to provide resilience resources; and the capacity of individuals, families and communities to negotiate culturally meaningful ways to share resilience resources (Ungar 2006:56; Masten, 2011:147). Table 1.1 shows the definition of resilience by different authors.

**Table 1.1: Definitions of resilience**

Author	Definition
Rutter	Protective factors which modify ameliorate or alter a person's response to some environmental maladaptive outcome (1987:316).
Masten, Best & Garmezy	Process of capacity for or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances (1990:426).
Luther & Cicchetti	A dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity (2000:543).
Masten	A class of phenomena characterised by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development (2001:228).
Connor & Davidson	The personal qualities that enable one to thrive in the face of adversity (2003:76).
Bonanno	Ability of adults in otherwise normal circumstances who are exposed to an isolated and potentially highly disrupted event such as the death of a close relation or violent or life-threatening situation to maintain relatively stable healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning, as well as the capacity for generative experiences and positive emotions (2004:20-21).
Agaibi & Wilson	Complex repertoire of behavioural tendencies (2005:197).
Lee & Cranford	Capacity of an individual to cope successfully with significant change, adversity or risk (2008:213).
Leipold & Greve	An individual's stability or quick recovery (or even growth) under significant adverse conditions (2009:41).

#### **1.14.2 TEACHER RESILIENCE**

Teacher resilience was described as a quality enabling teachers to maintain their commitment to teaching (Caena, 2011:6). Furthermore, teacher resilience is a

process of development that occurs over time, involving the ability to adjust to varied situations and increases one's competence in the face of adverse conditions (Caena, 2011:6). Teacher resilience was the capacity to successfully overcome personal vulnerabilities and environmental stressors (Jacquith, Mindich & Chung Wei, 2010:2).

This means that teacher resilience involved specific strategies that individuals employed when they experienced adverse situations (Castro, Kelly & Shih, 2010:363). It was important for teachers to adopt personal resilience, referred to as a process of dynamic adaptation to adversity (Shepherd, Kavanagh, Picot, Cooper, Harden, Barnett, Jones, Clegg, Hartwell, Frampton & Price, 2010:273).

### **1.14.3 RISK FACTORS**

Bessel, Orton and Koa (2012:15), defined risk factors as any influences that increases the probability of the onset, digression to a more serious state or maintenance of a problem or condition. Risk processes were aspects of either the individual or environment which were associated with problem outcomes in individuals and impede normal development (Wright, Masten & Narayan, 2013:15; Masten, 2011:398). These personal and environmental factors act as barriers to health and well-being (Ungar, 2004:38; Ungar, 2013:352).

### **1.14.4 PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

Protective factors imply internal and external resources that moderate and mediate the effects of risk or adversity and enhance good adaptation or competence (Loeb, Deardorff & Lahiff, 2014:2041; Masten, 1994:10). Green and Conrad (2002:11) and Robbe (2014:19) define protective factors as individual characteristics and environmental assets that buffer, interrupt or even prevent risk. Individual and environmental support or strength, a person's response to stress and adversity lead to successful adjustment called protective resources (Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch & Ungar, 2005:70-271; Boyden & Mann, 2005:6; Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2006:172; Judge, 2005:150; Ungar, 2004:39; Renner & Whitney, 2012:47; Robbe, 2014:20).

#### **1.14.5 ADVERSITY**

Adversity was defined as the experience of life events and circumstances which may combine to threaten or challenge healthy development (Morgan, Rochford & Sheehan, 2016:3;The American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition, 2000;Daniel, Wassell & Gilligan, 1999). Bellis, Lowey, Leckenby, Hughes and Harrison (2014:87) and Jackson, Firtko and Edenborough (2007:5) define adversity as the state of hardship or suffering associated with misfortune, trauma, distress, difficulty or a tragic event. Davidson, Davaney and Spratt (2010:371) and Stoner and Gilligan (2002:19) holds that adversity comprises of three elements: it is unexpected; it is disruptive, twisting and thwarting; it has a level of uncertainty and ambiguity.

#### **1.14.6 WORKPLACE ADVERSITY**

Workplace adversity has been conceptualised in nursing as the cluster of negative, stressful, traumatic or difficult situations or hardships stemming from working conditions, the work environment and the daily challenges encountered in an occupational setting (Jackson & Daly, 2011:21;McDonald, 2010:7).Jackson and Daly (2011:22) expanded on this definition with a plethora of challenges that teachers face at school in their daily life.

#### **1.15 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

According to Babbie (2011:20) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011:20), trustworthiness in a qualitative study is similar to validity and reliability in quantitative research. Trustworthiness focuses on addressing alternative issues such as credibility, conformability, dependability and transferability respect when determining the trustworthiness of their qualitative investigations (Anney, 2014:275; Carcary, 2009:11; Drury, Homewood & Randall, 2011:21). The constructs of trustworthiness in this study are outlined in Chapter 3.

#### **1.16 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Research is conducted within ethical bounds. In this study, permission was solicited from the Department of Education and ethical clearance from the Central

University of Technology, Free State. Most ethical issues in research fall in one of four categories, namely the participants' rights to human dignity, privacy and confidentiality, protection from harm and informed consent (Babbie & Mouton, 2007:25; Gabb, 2010:468; Gawande, 2010:15; Drury, Homewood & Randall, 2011:22; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:101; Strydom, 2007; Tabor, 2010:18; Terre Blanche, 2007). Leedy and Ormrod (2010:101) recommend that whenever human beings are used as subjects in a study, ethical implications must be closely looked at. Ethical aspects descend from the following categories:

- **Protection from harm**

The researcher chose a research method that would not compromise the rights of the teachers. This means that teachers were not expected to perform acts that were out of the ordinary. All the teachers were socially, physically and psychologically protected from any form of harm.

**Informed consent** The researcher explained the nature of the study to all the teachers. The teachers were explained to that the study was voluntary and that they were fully informed as possible.

- **Right to privacy**

The teachers' identities were protected as promised. Teachers' personal privacy was respected and all the information that was provided by the teachers was kept strict and in confidentiality. The above mentioned ethical considerations are discussed in detail on chapter 3.

## **1.17 CHAPTER DIVISION**

The study is divided as follows:

Chapter 1: Orientation to the study

Chapter 2: The phenomenon of resilience and workplace adversity

Chapter 3: Research methodology

Chapter 4: Data presentation, interpretation and analysis

Chapter 5: Findings, conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter presented an overview of the research study at hand and provided, amongst others, the problem statement and background of the study. The aim of the research was to investigate workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district and to emphasise the need for support programmes for teachers. This section highlighted the research objectives and the significance of the study, research design, theoretical framework, concept clarification, trustworthiness and ethical consideration.



## Chapter 2: Literature review

This section of the study reviews the current and past research literature that relates to workplace adversity and resilience among teachers both here in South Africa and abroad.

## Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter detailed the research process used in this study. The qualitative research methods that were used in the research study were explained. This section of the study indicated how the research was conducted and documented, including an explanation and justification for recruitment, data collection methods and the analysis of results. The considerations taken into account for ethical research practices and rigour are provided.

## Chapter 4: Data presentation, interpretation and analysis

This chapter focuses on teachers' experience of workplace adversity and resilience. This section deals with data presentation, interpretation and analysis of the data collected.

## Chapter 5: Findings, conclusion and recommendations

Chapter 5 is the last chapter that presents the findings of teachers' experience of workplace adversity and the resilience of teachers. It brings conclusion to the study and makes recommendations.

### **1.18 SUMMARY**

The envisaged study represents a need to contribute meaningfully towards efforts aimed at enhancing the economic, environmental, social and psychological well-being of teachers in township schools. In this study background was provided, the problem and aim were presented, and the design, ethics and trustworthiness were explained.

## CHAPTER2

### RESILIENCE AND WORKPLACE ADVERSITY

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Retaining teachers was a major issue of concern in many countries. To teach and to teach at one's best over time requires resilience. Teacher resilience is relatively a topical area of investigation, which provided a way of understanding what enabled teachers to persist in the face of workplace adversity. The previous chapter provided an introduction and background to the study. This chapter explored and provided an overview of the resilience phenomenon in more detail.

#### 2.2 AN OVERVIEW OF RESILIENCE

Resilience was relatively novel and decidedly complex concept (Theron & Theron, 2010:3) defined resilience as a person's ability to bounce back after experiencing adversity (Ungar, 2011:2). According to Wright (2013:25), resilience was the ability to use social-emotional skills to overcome the effects of stress. In one study of teachers and resilience, the definition developed was the 'process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances (Pearce & Morrison, 2011:48).

This makes resilience a process of doing well in the midst of risk and adversity. It was not surprising that there are only a few studies that have examined how teachers understand resilience or how they would describe resilient teachers (Mansfield, Beltman & McConney, 2012:359). Despite the vast body of research on resilience, there was little agreement on a single definition of resilience among scholars. Masten (2013:227) and Ungar (2011:7) argue convincingly that resilience was a common phenomenon among individuals that result from the effective operation of the basic human adaptation system, and when protected and in good working order, development can be robust even in the face of severe adversity.

Despite volumes of research on workplace adversity and resilience internationally, much remains unknown about workplace adversity and resilience

among teachers in South Africa; thus the study saw the need to propose guidelines for the development of strength-based resilience programmes to support teachers. Personal resilience was defined as the capacity of individuals to cope successfully with significant change or risk (Bennett, 2015:21; Jacelon 1997:125; Wagnild & Young, 1993:168). Persistence and perseverance were identified as factors for personal resilience (Bennett, 2010:370; Gu & Day, 2007:1308; Le Cornu, 2009:720; Mansfield, Beltman, Price & McConney, 2012:359).

Resilience was widely used as a concept to explore the development of children and families in circumstances of illness, trauma and poor life chances (Bennett, 2010:372; Cheung & Kam, 2010:357; Ladikta, Ladikta, Cornman, Davis & Richter, 2009:58; Rak, 2002:250). In nursing, resilience was examined as a means to guide professional practice and personal well-being (Ablett & Jones, 2007:747; Donnellan, Bennett & Soulsby, 2014; Emle, Tozay & Ravies, 2011:108; Glass, 2009:143; Hodges, Keeley & Troyan, 2008:46; O'Dwyer, Moyle & Van Wyk, 2013:756).

In an organisational context, resilience was sighted as employees' capacity to overcome workplace adversity without showing any psychological or mental disorder, without decreasing work performance, and without losing too much time in the recovery process (Maidaniuc-Chirila, 2015:71; Tengblad, 2018:23). In other words, resilience was a process of doing well in the face of adversity. Thus, resilience was a subjective and context-specific construct that was not easy to define (Dass-Brailsford, 2005:575; Jung, 2017:2).

The resilience phenomenon was assumed to exist if an individual has overcome adversity (Masten, 2014:15; Rutter 1999:119-120; Ungar, 2011:13). This means that individuals were not considered resilient if they have never been exposed to risk or threat, which according to Malindi (2009:30), threatens to derail their development. It was only when such threat was present and overcome that the notion of resilience came into play (Masten, 2014:13; Rutter, 1999:119-120; Ulturgasheva, 2014:640).

Edwards (2010:10) suggested that the theoretical framework of resilience had two implications: first that resilience must be viewed as the capacity to personally contribute towards and also use the resources that were available in any given setting: and secondly that in order to further the development of our knowledge and understanding of resilience, research should analyse the relationship between individual and systematic process. According to Ungar (2011:9), Beltman, Mansfield and Price (2011:193) and Cohen (2011:5), resilience was conceptualised as a multi-dimensional process of positive adaptation that involved developmental progression and was dependent upon a number of interrelated contextual factors. The notion of positive adaptation was supported by a wealth of socio-ecological research and theory-based literature on resilience (Walker & Westley, 2011:3).

## **2.3 MODELS OF RESILIENCE**

The three models of resilience that were the most dominant were the compensatory model, the challenge model and the protective factors model (Schoon, 2006; Fleming & Ledoger, 2008:18; Sanchez-Teruel & Robles-Bello, 2014:186).

### **2.3.1 COMPANSATORY MODEL OF RESILIENCE**

In the compensatory model of resilience, a positive coping outcome was a consequence of the moderating effect of a positive influence (Buzzanell, 2018:16; Cook & Du Toit, 2005:233). In this model, direct intervention can help reserve, or at least stop the negative effects of an aversive situation (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005:410). Thus the positivity of a meditating agent compensates for the negativity of the adversity (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005:411).

### **2.3.1 CHALLENGE MEDEL OF RESILIENCE**

The challenge model of resilience holds that individual's resilience to a threat or a challenge is developed and or enhanced by moderate exposure to the threat or challenge (Cook & Du Toit, 2005:17; Erdem & Slesnick, 2010:199). Here resilience is viewed as an attribute that is learned or acquired through prior experience of a challenge or a threat. This means that an individual experiencing

adversity today, have a better chance of successful adaptation should they encounter a similar threat in the future. Most existing literature (Schoon, 2006) confirms that people who have previously experienced destitution are more likely to have positive adjustment outcomes in the face of challenges than those who have not.

### 2.3.3 PROTECTIVEFACTORS MODEL

The protective factors model also referred to as the interaction effect model, places emphasis on the necessity of interaction between the protective factor and exposure to risk to have a positive adaptive outcome (Schoon, 2006; Morales, 2010:168). For example, a teacher's positive adaptation to an occurrence of pupil misbehaviour in the classroom would be a result of a combination of their internal assets (competences), the support they get from the school (behaviour management policies and processes) and the domestic emotional support they may get from families to negate the adverse effects of the perceived challenging experience (Gabi, 2015:49).

In the protective factors model, protective factors are generally described as those elements and processes both internal and external to the individual, which have a moderating effect on the negative effects of a risk factor (Davydov, Stewart, Ritchie & Chaudieu, 2010:481; Jacelon, 1997; Kumpfer, 2003:459; Nettles & Pleck, 1996). Table 2.1 outlines and compares the different theories regarding resilience.

**Table 2.1: Comparison of resilience and its characteristics**

Author	Definition	Year	Characteristics
Werner	The capacity to cope effectively with internal stress of their vulnerabilities (external stress, illness)	1982	<p>Identified differences between factors that affect resilience at individual, family and community level</p> <p>Resilience changes over time</p> <p>Resilience is dependent on balance between protective factors and risk factors</p>
Garmezy	Resilience is impervious to stress. Rather it is designed to reflect the capacity for recovery and maintained adaptive behaviour that may follow initial retreat or incapacity as a result of a stressful event	1991	<p>Focus on development</p> <p>Focus on positive</p> <p>Addressed community, family, individual-level factors</p>
Luthar	A dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity	2000	<p>Resilience is multidimensional (competence in some domains not others)</p> <p>Factors are not polar opposites</p>

Author	Definition	Year	Characteristics
			Too much adversity in measurement of domains
Masten	Children who have good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation of development	2001	Variables focused statistical relationship and patterns between variables

Author	Definition	Year	Characteristics
Ungar	The outcome of negotiations between individuals and their environments for the resources to define themselves healthy amidst conditions collectively viewed as adverse	2004	<p>Seven tensions of resilience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to material resources</li> <li>Relationships</li> <li>Identity</li> <li>Power and control</li> <li>Social justice</li> <li>Cultural adherence</li> <li>Cohesion</li> </ul> <p>Emphasis on environment's capacity to facilitate growth</p> <p>Individual qualities are triggered or suppressed by environment</p>
Rutter	An interactive concept that is concerned with the combination of serious risk experiences and a relatively positive psychological outcome despite those experiences	2006	<p>Brief exposure to risk</p> <p>Mental features (sense of agency) influence resilience</p> <p>Turning point effects can influence resilience</p> <p>Attend to biology of resilience and gene-environment</p>



Author	Definition	Year	Characteristics
			Social relationships are protective
Gillespie, Chaboyer & Wallis	Five variables that explain resilience are hope, self-efficacy, control, coping and competence	2007	A revised resilience model in operating room nurses
Denz-Penley & Murdoch	Personal resilience as the main theme in the stories of people who have survived unexpectedly from a serious disease. Resilience consists of five dimensions: connectedness to one's social environment, family, physical environment, experiential inner wisdom and one's strong physical self	2008	A grounded theory of personal resilience
Dunn & Brody	A range of inputs both positive and negative combined with personality	2008	The coping reservoir. A conceptual model of medical student well-being

Author	Definition	Year	Characteristics
	and temperament factors can lead to positive and negative outcomes		
Galli & Vealey	Adversity, socio-cultural influences and personal resources were factors discussed by athletes as being at the centre of the resilience process, which consequently lead to positive outcomes	2008	Conceptual model of sports resilience
Leipold & Greve	Resilience is proposed to result from coping processes, which are influenced by personal and situational conditions	2009	An integrative model of coping, resilience and development
Mancini & Bananno	Individual differences are proposed to have direct and indirect effects on coping with loss	2009	Hypothesised model of resilience
Fletcher & Sarkar	Numerous psychological factors protect the world's best athletes from the potential negative effects of stressors by influencing their	2012	A grounded theory of psychological resilience and optimal sport performance

Author	Definition	Year	Characteristics
	challenge appraisal and meta-cognitions		
Masten	The capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system functions, viability or development	2014	<p>Person focused on identifying resilient people and finding out how they are different from those who are not resilient</p> <p>Factors exist at child, family and community level</p> <p>Phenomenon is an ordinary process of development through basic human adaptation systems</p> <p>Developmental cascades</p> <p>Late bloomers</p> <p>Discuss context and culture in 2014</p>

From the definitions in Table 2.1, it was clear that a person should have experienced serious risk and had demonstrated positive functioning in some or other way. Ungar’s definition differs from the rest of the definitions in that it included culture.

## 2.4 BRIEF HISTORY OF TEACHER RESILIENCE

Although resilience among children was well studied by researchers from multiple disciplines, there was little empirical work on resilience in teachers (Gu & Day, 2013:25). Teacher resilience provided a way of understanding what enables

teachers to persevere in the face of challenges (Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011:3). The nature of resilience was determined by the interaction between the internal assets of the teacher and the external environments in which the teacher lives and works (Gu & Day, 2013:30).

Research into teacher resilience identified confidence as a factor (Gu & Day, 2013:31; Mansfield *et al.*, 2012:360), yet teachers continue to exit the system. This confidence can have two aspects: confidence in their capacity to teach and in their ability to take risks (Mansfield, Beltman, Price & McConney, 2012:361). According to Raath and Hay (2016:5), internal assets referred to teachers' confidence that they were able to implement effective classroom management strategies, employ instructional strategies and can engage learners effectively; external aspects pertains to a school environment which included support from colleagues and management.

**Initially**, the term resilience was used to explain the capacity of individuals to adapt and thrive despite experiencing adversity (Garmezy, 1974:88; Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990). However, it was subsequently shown that resilience was not solely a personal attribute, but a complex construct resulting from a dynamic relationship between risk and protective factors (Benard & Walton, 2011:27).

**Later on**, resilience was described as the ability to bounce back from some form of disruption, stress or change (Boyden & Mann, 2009:127; Santos, 2012:18) with the emphasis on how an individual managed to be resilient (Killian, 2004:42; Luthar *et al.*, 2000:543).

**Thereafter** resilience was seen as both a dynamic process which encompassed positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity (Brooks, 2006:71; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000:543; Rutter, 1999:135) and the product of the person-environment interactions (Schoon, 2006:6; Ungar, Brown, Liebenberg, Othman, Kwong, Armstrong & Gilgun, 2007:288).

**Additionally** from the ecological view (Masten, 2012:364) saw the resilience phenomenon as positive or effective functioning in adverse circumstances.

Resilience in individuals was regarded as an ecological phenomenon that develops the interaction or transaction that occur within environments and systems such as families, schools, neighbours and workplace (Brooks, 2006:70).

The study adopted Ungar's (2011:13) definition of resilience being a person's ability to bounce back after experiencing adversity with new force and showing personal growth.

Resilience is therefore both a process of an individual's navigation towards, and the capacity of one to negotiate for, health resources on their own terms (Ungar, 2011:9).

## 2.5 BACKGROUND OF RESILIENCE

Resilience was researched across many disciplines. It was originally introduced by Buzzanell (2010:15) and Holling (1973:19) as a concept to help understand the capacity of ecosystems with alternative attractors to persist in the original state subject to perturbations as viewed by Agarwal and Buzzanell (2015:413) and Gunderson (2000:428). In the field of epidemiology, it referred to the ability to survive stress and to rise above disadvantage (Beck, 2016:370; Rutter, 1983:298). In the field of developmental psychopathology, it referred to the ability to cope with challenges and threats while maintaining an internal and integrated sense of self (Bennis, Sample & Asghar, 2015:10; Garmezy & Masten, 1986:511).

In the field of psychiatry, it was psychological and biological strengths humans use to master change successfully (Buzzanell, 2010:9; Flach, 1988:10). In the field of medicine, resilience was defined as the ability to recognise pain, acknowledge its purpose, tolerate it for a while, until things begin to normalise (Bennis, Sample & Asghar, 2015:11; Flach, 1988:11; O'Leary & Ickovics, 1995:131). In nursing, it was the ability to regenerate power to respond to the internal or external environment for survival, growth or development (Agarwal & Buzzanell, 2015:419; Jones, 1991:99). In the field of change management, it was analysed as the ability to demonstrate both strength and flexibility during the change process while displaying minimal dysfunctional behaviour (Beck, 2016:360; Conner, 1993:15).

Resilience was defined in the area of psychology as the ability to bounce back and to withstand hardship by repairing oneself (Higgins, 1994:10; Ungar, 2011:10; Wolin & Wolin, 1993:7). In the field of human development, resilience was defined as the ability to withstand or successfully cope with adversity (Rentschler, 2013:1818; Werner & Smith, 2001:9). Social Sciences defined resilience as the ability to recover from negative life experiences and become stronger while overcoming them (Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010:11). of late it has been used to conceptualise studies in the field of educational administration (Ledesma, 2014:2).

The study of resilience has advanced in four major waves of research;

The **first wave of resilience** research was dominated by a strong cultural philosophy that valued individualism Wright *et al.* (2013:27) in their intrinsic and extrinsic traits and protective characteristics and factors (Ebersohn & Bouwer, 2013:3; Oliver, 2007:24; Ungar, 2011:11). Hence resiliencies considered a stagnant phenomenon (Wright *et al.*,2013:23).The **second wave of resilience** research focused on a developmental systems approach to theory and research on positive adaptation in the context of adversity or risk (Ungar, 2011:8) or the interactive process that enhances resilience (Masten, 2004:313).

Davidson (2008:120) and Ungar, Ghazinour and Ritcher (2013:352) explained that resilient individuals do not merely cope with difficult circumstances, but were actively involved in a process where specific choices were made regarding their manner of dealing with circumstances. **The third wave** focused on creating and enhancing resilience by means of prevention and intervention techniques directed at changing developmental pathways (Masten, 2004:314; Richardson, 2002:311; Ungar, Ghazinour & Ritcher, 2013:359; Wright *et al.*, 2013:28). The **fourth wave** rose and focused on the capacity of the individual and the environment to provide resilience-promoting resources that can mitigate risk processes in culturally meaningful ways (Masten& Obradovic, 2008:4; Ungar, 2011:14).

## 2.6 PROCESS OF RESILIENCE

Despite the lack of universal acceptance of a definition for psychological resilience (Scollick, 2016:87;Wald, Taylor, Asmundson, Jang, Stapleton,2006:10), many definitions share some common attributes, including strength to endure some type of traumatic stress or adverse circumstances. The concept of psychological resilience was rooted in a number of fields. It originated in developmental psychology and childhood psychopathology in the 1970s (Bonanno & Macini, 2008:371; Cumming, 2011:414; Garmezy, 1991:420; Werner, 1995:83).

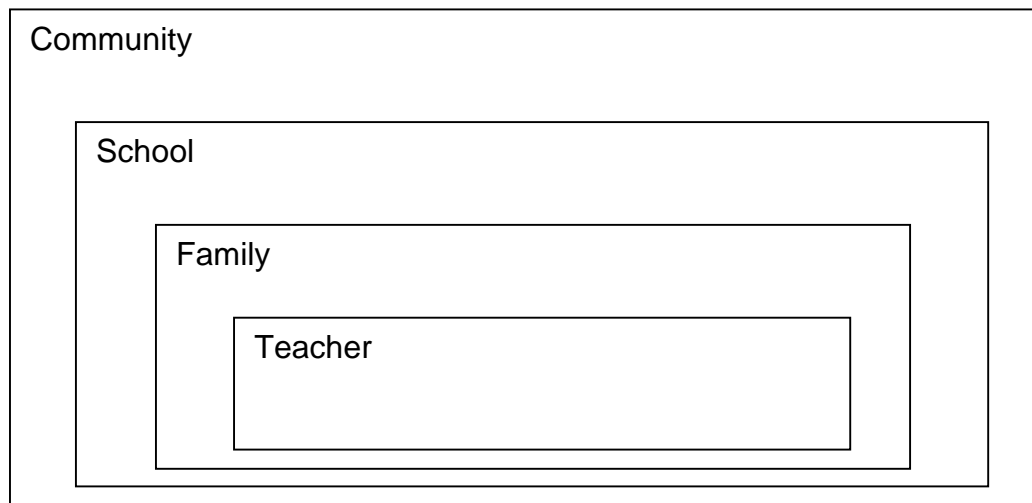
## **2.7 BIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL PERSPECTIVE OF RESILIENCE.**

Previous studies of resilience saw the individual as being solely responsible for change (Ungar, 20212a:13). Individual qualities associated with resilience such as self-esteem among others were highlighted as offering protection against negative environmental stressors. According to Ungar (2012a:13) this means that individuals who were disadvantaged were expected to exercise personal agency in regard to accessing opportunities in their environment in order to overcome workplace adversities.

It will therefore be very essential to consider workplace resiliaince.



See Figure 2.1 for a graphic representation of the framework of factors that promote resilience.



### **Brofenbrenner's Bio-ecological Model**

**Figure 2.1: Framework of factors that promote resilience**

The theoretical framework forms an important of any research. In this particular study the researcher applied the bio-ecological model perspective of resilience to explain the role of community, school, family in relation to workplace adversity and the resilience of teachers. It was important to keep in mind the various personal and environmental factors which might have enhanced or limited their resilience.

According to Meredith, Sherbourne, Gaillot, Hansel, Ritschard, Parker and Wrenn (2011:4), this approach depicts how resilience factors operate at different levels of teaching environment, from the individual level to the broader community level and puts more emphasis on transaction and integrative perspectives (Brofenbrener, 1977:521; Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993:101).

Psychological resilience is important for the teaching profession (Meridith, Sherbourne, Gaillot, Hansell, Richard, Parker & Wrenn, 2011:4). A resilience approach is significant for teachers because it may address the ever-present

concerns about the stigma of needing help for psychological or behavioural problems.

## **2.7 RISK FACTORS**

Generally, risk refers to the variables that interact to increase the individual likelihood of psychopathology or susceptibility to navigate developmental outcomes (Ebersohn, 2014:3;Malindi, 2009:40) or any measurable predictor of an undesirable outcome (Masten, Herbers, Cutuli, Lafavor & Theresa, 2011:4).The concept of risk is highly debatable. However, there has been an agreement between the theorists that accumulative risks are worse than individual risks (VicHealth, 2015:27).Ungar (2011:8) adds that risk is the likelihood of suffering harm or loss (Overseas Development Institutions, 2015:2) further notes that risk is any influence that increases the probability of onset, digression to more serious state or maintenance or a problem (Kirby & Fraser, 1997:10).

Risk factors are those characteristics thought to present a group of people with a higher probability of undesirable outcome (Masten, 1994:8). Secondary risk and threats arise from the existence of organisations. This reflects the failed interaction between managers and staff (Mowbray, 2011:4). These personal and environmental factors act as barriers to the health and well-being of an individual (Ungar, 2011:16).

## **2.8 INDIVIDUAL RISK FACTORS**

According to Benders (2012:107) and Day (2008:250), teaching demands significant personal investment. The second personal risk factor was difficulty asking for help (Benders, 2012:109; Castro, Kelly& Shih, 2010:625; Fantili & McDougall, 2009:418;Flores, 2006:2025;Jenkins, Smith & Maxwell, 2009:69) followed by a perceived conflict between personal beliefs and practices being used (Day & Gu, 2014:18;Flores,2006:2033;McCormack & Gore, 2008:5). Hence the study explores workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district and also saw the need to propose support programmes for teachers.

## **2.9 PROTECTIVE FACTORS OR SUPPORT**

According to Malindi (2009:42) and Pangallo, Zibarras, Lewis and Flaxman (2015:8), protective resources are assets, conditions or processes that mitigate risks. Protective factor generally describes the circumstances that moderate the effects of risks and enhance adaptation (Masten, 1994:11; Pooley & Cohen, 2010:35). Masten (1987:432) and Resnick and Inguito (2011:15) argue that risk and protective factors are polar opposites, in which competence decreases as stress increases.

However, Rutter (1983:297) and Turner, Holdsworth and Scott-Young (2016:388) contended that risk and protective factors interact to produce an outcome. Individual support, strength or a person's response to stress and adversity that lead to successful adjustment are called protective resources (Amstrong, Hine, Hacking, Armaos, Jones, Klessinger & France, 2005:270; Donald, Dower, Correa-Velez & Jones, 2006:172; Sexton, Byrd & Von Kluge, 2010:237; Ungar, 2011:9). Therefore, individual protective resources are inner strengths in the emotional, cognitive, physical or moral spheres that promote adaptive coping while environmental protective processes are the aspects in the environment or context (Lee, Nam, Kim, Kim, Lee & Lee, 2013:271; Malindi, 2009:27).

Essentially, anyone can be resilient. There is evidence that resilience can help an individual to adapt to adversity and achieve positive outcomes despite difficult circumstances (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007:79; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013:18). Resilience has helped individuals from various populations and careers, such as Olympic athletics (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012:672), people with amputations (Livingstone, Mortel & Taylor, 2011:25) and children who are deemed vulnerable (Werner, 1989:108). In light of this evidence, it is possible that resilience may be a positive force for teachers.

## **2.10 WORKPLACE ADVERSITY IN DETAIL**

Life is fraught with challenges. Each person faces various obstacles on a daily basis. Some challenges may be the mundane occurrences of everyday life, while others may seem insurmountable. Each of these obstacles challenges a person

to adapt, rather than succumb to perceived adversity. The ability to adjust to challenging circumstances is essential for human development and teaching is no exception. Like many professionals, teachers encounter adversity in their occupational environment. In order to fulfil the obligations of their role, teachers must overcome these adversities.

There are a variety of factors that have been identified by researchers that impact the capacity of teachers to adjust to obstacles in their workplace. Resilience is one way that many populations overcome adversity and still move forward in the face of difficulty (Jackson, 2015:1). Workplace adversity is understood to be the primary reason teachers fail to flourish in the workplace and eventually leave the teaching profession. The major elements of workplace adversity in teaching are negative and dissatisfactory working conditions, the work environment and the daily challenges faced by teachers in the course of their work. The phenomenon of workplace adversity also includes the impact on physical, mental and emotional health and well-being (McDonald, 2010:2).

### **2.10.1 CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF ADVERSITY**

Several authors stipulated that resilience can exist in the presence of significant adversity or trauma (Luthar, Cicchetti & Bekker, 2000:551; Simmons & Yoder, 2013:21). Other researchers conceptualised adversity as any hardship, not only earth-shattering events (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013:19; Jackson, 2015:20). It was also proposed that adversity does not necessarily need to be a wholly negative event (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013:17).

The study saw the necessity to distinguish between adversities that are external, from pain, or suffering that are internal experiences. Pain represents a psychological phenomenon and suffering is the subjective endurance of pain or distress (Carnevale, 2009:177). Suffering has also been conceptualised as a distressed state, which is distinct from adversity (Morse, 2001).

## **HAPPY EVENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES**

For example, Fletcher and Sarkar (2013:15) argued that weddings and graduations are happy events, but the major life changes that are associated with these events can be experienced as adversity. Additionally, adversity does not necessarily have to be something that is forced upon an individual by external circumstances (Jackson, 2015:13). For the purposes of this study, adversity is located in the context of the workplace and is defined in this study as any negative, stressful, traumatic or difficult situations or an incident of hardship that is encountered in the occupational setting (Jackson, 2015:15). This includes daily challenges experienced by teachers (McDonald, Jackson, Wilkes & Vickers, 2013:138).

Teachers face a barrage of challenges in their daily life. Aside from doing their individualised education programmes, administrative tasks and activities, they also have responsibilities at home (Santos, 2012:13). Literature attests to the industrial and organisational challenges currently facing teachers in many parts of the world (Jackson, 2015:25; Zautra, Hall & Murray, 2010:13).

## **WORKPLACE STRESSORS**

The workplace and the nature of stressors in the workplace have a significant influence on resilience (Lee *et al.*, 2013:271). There are systemic factors that can create workplace adversity and a lasting negative impact on teachers. There are many factors that contribute to workplace adversity for teachers such as workplace climate, violence (bullying) in the workplace amongst teachers, shortage of teachers, high rate of absenteeism and staff turnover (Chan, Tam, Lung, Wong & Chau, 2013:608).

## **POLITICAL CLIMATE**

The political climate in teaching has a significant impact on teachers. There are many factors that contribute to workplace including job security, teacher-learner ratios, wages and workload. Low wages are a source of frustration in teaching and teachers feel that they are undervalued in their workplace (Bogossian *et al.*,

2014:376). Ultimately teachers may decide to leave the teaching profession because of job insecurity or poor remuneration (Jackson, 2015:15).

## **SCHOOL-BASED VIOLENCE**

Research shows that violence was a widespread problem among the teaching profession. Teachers experience violence from learners, parents and amongst other colleagues, superiors and from their family members' (McDonald, 2010:12; Bogossians *et al.*, 2014:381). Some teachers are exposed to physical violence at work, while others have experienced non-physical violence such as threats (Spector *et al.*, 2014:78). There are many cases of bullying and physical harm caused to teachers at work (Spector, 2014:73).

## **REASONS FOR ADVERSITY**

Literature provides the causes of workplace adversity and the development and maintenance of personal resilience in individuals (McDonald, 2010:11). The cluster of negative outcomes experienced by teachers in the workplace is termed workplace adversity. This term describes aspects of working environment, conditions or challenges faced by workers that are experienced as being negative, difficult or potentially harmful to feelings of well-being (Lundman, Alex, Jonsen, Norberg, Nygren & Strandberg, 2010:254) which indicates that resilience maybe an effective strategy for assisting teachers to meditate the difficulties they face in their workplace.

Adversity is the state of hardship or suffering associated with misfortune, trauma, distress, difficulty, or a tragic event (Abdul & Raheela, 2015:719; Rutter, 1999:125; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000:549; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004:325; Daloos, 2015:14). Stoltz (1997:38) identifies three levels of adversity: societal, workplace and individual. Workplace adversity results from the increases demands of getting ahead in the world of work coupled with a loss of trust and control. As people are working harder and harder to get ahead, they are receiving less in return (Stoltz, 1997:9). Thus the degree to which people view adversities as stable affect the perception of their ability to control their environment and destiny (Stoltz, 1997:10).

For Stoner and Gilligan (2002:20), adversity comprises of the following three elements:

- Adversities are unexpected.
- Adversities are disruptive, twisting and upsetting the expected patterns of planned actions.
- Adversity has a level of uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding it.

Workplace adversity can be viewed as any negative, stressful, traumatic or difficult situation or episode of hardship that is encountered in the occupational setting (Jackson, 2015:30; McDonald, 2010:7). Workplace adversity is understood to be one of the primary reasons teachers fail to thrive in the workplace and eventually leave the teaching profession (McDonald, 2010:2). The main elements of workplace adversity in teaching are the negative and dissatisfactory features of working conditions; the work environment and the daily challenges faced by teachers at work (McDonald, 2010).

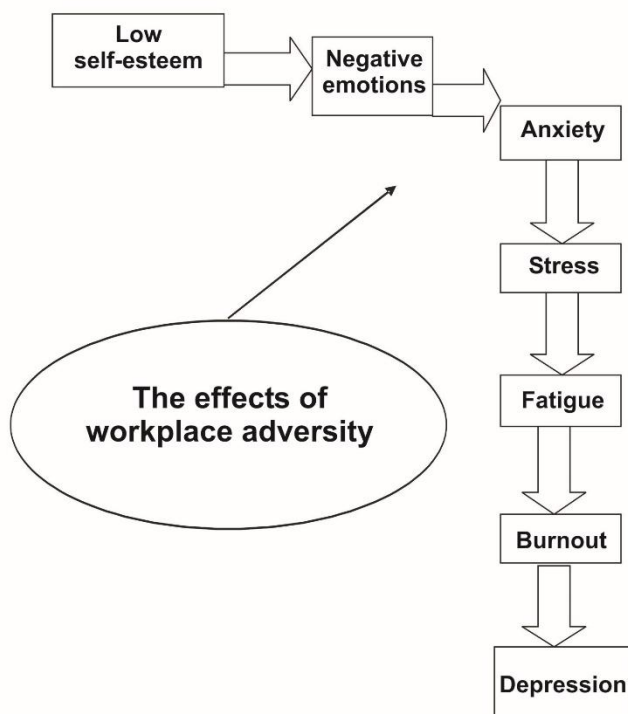
The phenomenon of workplace adversity also incorporates physical, mental and emotional health and well-being (McDonald, 2010:2). Jackson (2015) and Daly (2011:22) expands on this definition with an excess of challenges that teachers face in their regimen and concludes that, personal resilience is an essential characteristic necessary for teachers to manage the constant and highly complex demands placed on them.

Fouche (2015:1), states that teachers do not have sufficient resources to deliver high-quality education. He further notes that difficulties in the educational system have been caused by a failure of appropriate inspection and monitoring and inspection and the confusion associated with the changing curricula. It has been reported that in the United States of America, 30% of beginner teachers leave the profession within three years of teaching and almost 50% by their fifth year of teaching (Kysilka, 2010:768).

In South Africa, the attrition rate of teachers is higher than the replenishing rate (Crouch, 2002:52; Steyn, 2006:9) due to workplace adversity. De Beer (2004:11)

showed that the morale of South African teachers is low due to these adverse conditions. Lee(2011:11) and Steyn, Wolhuter and De Waal (2004:648) found that, on average, 1.7% of the teachers at historically white schools and 15% (rising to 25.5% in some cases) of teachers at historically black schools, are absent on any day (Hamlyn, 2009:3).

Teachers work in environments of organisational change that contribute to workplace adversity. Research studies have outlined a number and variety of organisationally induced sources of workplace adversity that can result in negative health outcomes for workers (Borges & Fischer, 2003:354;Budge, Carry & Wood, 2003:264; Inmyxai & Takahashi, 2010:21; Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson & Wilkes, 2006:122;Tracy & David, 2011:483). Organisational change frequently leads to resistance and anxiety that can take shape as illness (Morante, 2005:109; Tracy & David, 2011:489).Figure 2.2 depicts a number of effects that workplace adversity has on teachers.



**Figure 2.2: The effects of workplace adversity**



The experience of workplace adversity maybe the root of stress and work trauma in some teachers. This section provides the physical, psychological and social health effects that may stem from experiencing workplace adversity.

Workplace adversity can be severely stressful and may overtime scar the victim emotionally and psychological, leading to psychological trauma. This study is interested in the issues relating to workplace adversity of teachers.

### **2.10.2 STRESS AND THE WORKPLACE**

The Trade Union Congress (2000: online) has urged the Health and Safety Executive to recognise that stress is a major workplace hazard. General causes of workplace adversity range from organisational problems such as long hours, poor status and pay to job uncertainty and job insecurity (Hussain, 2010:33) while specific causes of workplace adversity range from unclear role specifications, high self-expectations and the inability to influence decision making, to clashes with superiors, isolation, poor communication and role conflict (Hussain, 2010:33).

Additionally, according to Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2010:15), teacher stress was exacerbated by the changing job climate. Teacher professional development is hampered by the lack of reflection in and on practice, which prevents creating schools for inquiry. Despite the growth of practitioner researcher movement, it is difficult for individual teachers to make significant improvements in their practice without the support of colleagues and management (Rofle, 2014:1181).

Given the above adversities that teachers have to deal with, it would be important to develop a strategy that would help teachers to negotiate, resolve and grow in the face of life's stressors and challenges. Teachers experiencing poor well-being in the workplace may be less productive, make poor decisions, be more prone to be absent from work (Boyden, 2009:121; McDonald, 2010:20). They may not be able to contribute to the effective functioning of the school due to workplace adversity (Price & Hooijberg, 1992:648; Timmermans, Ostergaard & Kristinsson,

2011:505). Hence the need to explore workplace adversity and resilience of teachers is crucial.

## **2.11 SUMMARY**

This chapter explored the phenomenon of resilience by defining the concept and demonstrating how it had evolved over the years. The chapter touched on risk and protective factors. Models and theories of resilience were explored and described. The chapter also gave a brief discussion of workplace adversity. Literature demonstrated that the problem of workplace adversity is a concern for the health and well-being of teachers worldwide.

The explication of both the causes and characteristics of workplace adversity and the components associated with personal resilience emphasises the need for research into how building and maintaining personal resilience maybe a mechanism to protect teachers against workplace adversity. In the presence of adversity, one can be resilient. Teachers are capable of developing resilience as they face challenges at work. It is evident that resilience is an important phenomenon to consider in addressing workplace adversity.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1, an orientation of the research was provided. The preceding chapter dealt with resilience and workplace adversity. The next section focused on the justification of this study in exploring workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district and also proposed the need for support programmes for teachers. This chapter described the research methodology employed and the topics which were discussed were the research design, population and sampling, data collection methods used, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical consideration.

#### 3.2 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Even though literature attested to the severity of workplace adversity in the teaching profession, the problem remained chronic and acute (Keller, Berryman & Luke, 2009:499). The incident of workplace adversity was a substantial problem facing teachers. Those issues were continuing to affect a number of teachers entering and staying in the field and required further study (Cash, Daines, Doyle, Tettenborn & Reid, 2009:388; Zander, Hutton & King, 2010:99). There was also a huge gap in research on workplace adversity and the resilience of teachers in South Africa. The study used a semi-structured interview to explore the teacher's experience of workplace adversity and their resilience.

Further research was needed to ascertain what strategies were helpful in assisting teachers to withstand workplace adversity. As previous research indicated that there were several advantages and competencies associated with the phenomenon of personal resilience (McAllister & McKinnon, 2008:374; Perry, 2008:21). Hence this study used an intervention that sought to address workplace adversity by exploring the protective and strengthening abilities of personal resilience in groups of teachers both males and females and assessed its efficacy as a strategy that influenced their health, well-being and commitment to stay in teaching. It was imperative that further research be undertaken

concerning the support programmes for teachers so as to develop and maintain personal resilience.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research was a systematic process of collecting, analysing and interpreting information (data) in order to increase our understanding of workplace adversity and resilience of teachers in schools (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:2). A research design was defined as a plan or blueprint outlining how information was gathered for an assessment or evaluation, and it included identifying the data gathering methods, the measuring instruments that were used, how the instruments were administered and how the data was organised and analysed (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2014:495; Mouton, 2010:55; Phelps, Fisher & Ellis, 2007:80).

The main function of the research design was to enable researchers to anticipate what appropriate research decisions would be made so as to maximise the validity and reliability of the eventual outcome (Machenjedze, 2014:26). The choice of the research design was based on the researcher's assumptions, research skills and research practices, which influenced the way in which data was collected (Wisker, 2009:20). Qualitative research was based on methodological traditions of inquiry that explored a social and human phenomenon (Creswell, 2013:2).

This study followed a generic qualitative study in order to fully explore workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district, as qualitative research tends to be concerned with the meaning and understanding of the phenomenon in its entirety, rather than to focus on specific concepts (Brink, Van der Walt & Van Rensburg, 2012:11).

Furthermore, qualitative research was based on a naturalistic approach that sought to understand phenomena in context and the researcher should not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest (Maree, 2012:78). According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011:31), within qualitative research, the researcher was interested in how people make sense of the world and how they experienced events. This study was an exploratory research, which

according to Babbie and Mouton (2007:79) and Newby (2013:15), was conducted in order to provide basic familiarity with the topic of relative novelty. The aim of the research, in using qualitative research, was to explore workplace adversity and resilience of teachers in the Lejweleputswa district: The need for support programmes for teachers.

A qualitative research design was applied in the study as it allowed the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of workplace adversity and resilience of teachers and the effects that these adversities may have had on teachers. Through qualitative research, teachers were asked to provide more details about the adversities that they were faced with at schools, thereby proposing support programmes for teachers.

### 3.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research was an umbrella concept encompassing a wide variety of non-numerical data collection and analysis techniques. It involved looking at characteristics or qualities that could not easily be qualified or reduced to numerical values (Strause & Cabin, 1990:22). The study employed qualitative research. The logic behind employing this approach was that all the participants involved were afforded an opportunity to express their opinions with regard to workplace adversity and resilience. Qualitative research involves fieldwork. The researcher physically went to the setting, site or institution in order to collect data from the participants in their natural setting (Maree, 2014:78). The researcher visited three schools in the Lejweleputswa district, Free State province and gathered data related to the aims and objectives of this study. Qualitative research was a social or behavioural science research that explored the processes that underlie human behaviour, using exploratory techniques such as interviews

White (2003:15) lists the following advantages of qualitative research:

- Qualitative research usually involved fieldwork. The researcher physically visited the participants setting, site, and institution in

order to observe behaviour in their natural setting. Thus, teachers were studied in the schools where they worked.

- Since qualitative research focused on process, meaning and understanding, the product of qualitative research was richly descriptive, using words and pictures to convey what a researcher has learned about phenomena, which was workplace adversity and resilience in this study.
- Qualitative methods were humanistic. The researcher gets to know people personally and experienced what they experienced in their daily lives.

A qualitative study was best suited for this study, since the research questions required an in-depth understanding of workplace adversity and resilience of teachers. According to Strause *et al.* (1990:18), this type of inquiry was largely an investigative process, where the researcher gradually made sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying data. Hence in this qualitative study the researcher did not only want to know and establish what happened but also how it happened and more importantly, why it happened the way it did (Hennings *et al.*, 2010:95). It entailed the researcher's immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for the study.

In other words, the researcher entered the participants' world, and through an ongoing interaction seek the participants' perspective and meanings on the object of the study (Strause *et al.*, 1990:21). A qualitative inquiry investigated a social human problem, where the researcher conducted the study in a natural setting and builds a whole and complex representation of the phenomena being studied, which was workplace adversity and resilience of teachers (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011:28). The goal of qualitative research is to explore and understand a central phenomenon, which is the concept or process explored in a qualitative research study (Creswell, 2011:32).

Maree (2012:265) lists the following types of qualitative data:

- individual and focus group interviews (transcripts of interviews with the participants);

- observations (notes and pictures taken by the researcher during the observation);
- documents (public and private records about the studied phenomenon);
- audiovisual material (pictures or audio recordings of people, places or events); and
- artefacts (material objects used by the people).

Qualitative research design was applied in this study and it allowed the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding and experience of workplace adversity and resilience of teachers. The researcher recorded data by making notes on interview and observation protocols and by using audio recording devices. The researcher transcribed the data for further analysis and a number of themes emerged. Then the researcher interpreted the findings.

In this study, a qualitative research approach was used to explore workplace adversity and the resilience of teachers in the Lejweleputswa district with the hope that support programmes for teachers would developed.

### **3.2 Phenomenological research**

The phenomenological research was the most appropriate for the aim of this study, which was to explore workplace adversity and resilience among teachers. Phenomenology aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of the meaning of our everyday experiences. Phenomenology referred to a person's perception of the meaning of an event (Leedy &Ormrod, 2010:141). So a phenomenological study was a study that attempted to understand people's perceptions, perspective and situations (Delpont, Fouche & Schurink, 2011:305). Phenomenology was applied in this study to reflect teachers' experience of workplace adversity and resilience.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:141), phenomenological researchers depend on lengthy interviews with a carefully selected sample of participants as was the case with this study. All the participants who were purposefully selected

had direct experience with workplace adversity and resilience (Creswell, 2011:30).

### **3.3 Advantages of phenomenology**

Phenomenology had the following advantages:

- Phenomenology is a highly appropriate approach to researching human experiences.
- It is rigorous, critical, systematic investigation of phenomena (Streubert Speziale & Carpenter, 2003:53).

#### **Indicators for using phenomenology in this study**

The purpose of phenomenological inquiry was to explicate the structure or essence of the lived experiences of teachers. The study employed phenomenology for the following purposes:

- clarifying the nature of being human;
- expanding awareness about a certain phenomenon (workplace adversity and resilience);
- fostering human responsibility in the construction of realities; and
- tightening the bond between experiences and the concepts and theories used to explain those experiences (Streubert Spziale & Carpenter 2003:48).

The most appropriate data collection strategy for phenomenological research was an interview (Padilla-Diaz, 2015:104). The study used a semi-structured interview. Existing literature (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009:215; Marshall & Rossman, 2010:51) agreed that Phenomenological research should be open or semi-structured. The study adopted a phenomenological approach because of the profession's philosophical beliefs about people in teaching. In light of the above, the researcher considered phenomenology the best method and approach for this study.



The study was phenomenological and exploratory in nature. This research design was described as phenomenology and was considered a philosophical viewpoint as well as an approach of qualitative methodology, that focused on people's subjective and lived experiences and the interpretation of their world (Creswell, 2014:253; Fouche & Schurink, 2011:309; Mouton, 2001:113; Neuman, 2011:15). Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2014:492) defined phenomenology as the qualitative analysis technique where the understanding of reported experiences was central.

These experiences were exploratory, then they focused on novel phenomena (Niewenhuis, 2016:20; Slevitch, 2011:76; Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2007:47; Willing, 2010:21) in this case the phenomena were workplace adversity and resilience. This Phenomenological research identified the nature of human experience of the phenomenon as portrayed by participants (Creswell, 2014:254). This approach tried to comprehend people's perceptions, perspectives and insight of specific circumstances (Delpont, Fouche & Schurink, 2011:305).

Phenomenology further focused on the subjective understanding of the participants as well as having insight into the social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of the participants involved (Brink, Van der Walt and Rensburg, 2012:121; Fouche & Schurink, 2011:317). Phenomenological research depends almost exclusively on lengthy interviews (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:141). Phenomenology was applied in this study reflected on teachers' experiences of workplace adversity and resilience.

This area of investigation was new; the study needed to explore workplace adversity and resilience of teachers (Blumberg *et al.*, 2014:155). Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013:182) and Terre Blanche *et al.* (2007:44) defined exploratory research as the social research that explored a certain phenomena with the primary aim of formulating more specific research questions or hypothesis relating to that phenomenon.

Exploratory approach was the most useful research design for the purpose of this study as the study was trying to address a subject about which there were

high levels of uncertainty and ignorance about workplace adversity and resilience of teachers and since the resilience of teachers was not well understood and also taking into cognisance the fact that there was very little research on the subject (Babie & Mouton, 2007:79; Feilzer, 2010:11; De Vos *et al.*, 2011:25).

According to Babbie and Mouton (2007:80) and Babbie (2013:20), exploratory research was conducted:

- to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire to better understand the phenomena of workplace adversity and resilience;
- to take the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study;
- to develop and refine methods that were used in the subsequent study;
- to explicate workplace adversity, resilience, risk and protective factors; and
- to develop new hypotheses about an existing phenomenon.

The advantages of exploratory research were that it saved time and money (Blumberget *al.*, 2014:155). This exploratory research identified the boundaries of the environment in which the problems, opportunities or situations of interest were likely to reside (Bless *et al.*, 2014:47; Feilzer, 2010:13) and the objective of this exploratory research identified key issues and variables.

Multiple case studies were used in the study. Case study was the method of this research was based on in-depth investigation over a period of time. It was a systematic way that observed events, relationships and processed and gathered and analysed information about a specific case (Yin, 2014:30; Yazan, 2015:137). A collective case study best enabled the researcher to compare and contrast the shared and differing patterns across the cases (Borbasi, Jackson & Langord, 2008:15; Garger, 2013:8). The purpose of the case study was obtain information from an actual situation which was similar to the research problem at hand (Manerika & Manerika, 2014:96).

Table 3.1 shows the advantages and disadvantages of a case study.

**Table 3.1: Advantages and disadvantages of a case study**

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holistic</li> <li>• Depth of analyses</li> <li>• Realistic</li> <li>• Attention to context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research bias</li> <li>• Observation bias</li> <li>• Interpretation bias</li> <li>• Cannot see everything going on</li> </ul>

The design for this study were multiple case studies. Yin (2014:109) defined a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigated a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. Case study research was best suitable for this exploratory study (Blumberg *et al.*, 2014:304). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:137), in a case study of a particular individual, programme, or event studied in depth for a defined period of time. In this instance, the researcher conducted multiple case studies that were different in certain key ways in order to be able to make comparison (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:137).

The case study approach has been widely used in organisational research to understand organisational innovation and change as shaped by both internal forces and the external environment (Cronin, 2014:21; Hartley, 1994:210). This approach helped the researcher to probe deeply and analyse the phenomena that constituted the life cycle of the establishment with the view of establishing generalisation about the wider population to which the unit belonged (Cohen & Manion in Bassy, 1999:x; Elman, Gerring & Mahoney, 2016:381). Yin (2013:228) stated that the case study approach provided rich data within an organisational

setting and it was not a method, but a research strategy that involved a combination of methods, both qualitative and quantitative research design. In relation to this Yin (2013:231) stated that within an exploratory case study, a cause and effect relationships were analysed in order to explain which cause, produced which effect. This occurred during the interviewing phase of the research where respondents were asked about their experiences of workplace adversity and resilience.

Couch, Gibbins and Connor (2013:49) identified four broad styles of case study:

**Ethnographic**, where one was looking at understanding the actors in the case study and offered from the outsiders' viewpoints in the case were unaware;

**Evaluative** was a single case or a collection of cases in situated in depth with the purpose of providing educational actors or decision makers such as administrators, teachers, parents and pupils with information that helped them to judge the merit and worth of policies, programmes or institutions.

**Educational**, where researchers were not concerned with social theory nor with evaluative judgement, but rather with the understanding of educational action. They were concerned with enriching the thinking and discourse of educators either through the systematic and reflective documentation of evidence.

**Action**, contributed to the development of the case or cases understudy was key, by feedback of information that guided revision and refinement of action.

This study was exploring workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district and the need for support programmes for teachers. The researcher chose this design as it allowed the study to better shed light on the phenomenon from multiple perspectives (Blumberg *et al.*, 2014:305). The limitation of case study research was that it was difficult to generalise the findings, especially if only one case was conducted (Blumberg *et al.*, 2014:305; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:137). The researcher spend a considerable amount of time with the participants, since she was a teacher herself, thereby recording details about workplace adversity and resilience (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:137).

### 3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

According to Blumberget *al.* (2014:492) and Brink, Van der Walt and Van Rensburg (2012:131), a population was defined as the entire group of persons or objects that were interested in the researcher, or who possessed specific characteristics under study (Machenjedze, 2014:28). In other words, it had to meet the criteria that the researcher was interested in studying (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole 2013:184; Cope, 2015:681; Pienaar, 2013:22). The population of this study were teachers around the Lejweleputswa district who resided in the Free State Province.

The subset of the population being studied was called the sample (Anderson, 2009:153; Bless *et al.*, 2014:40). Bless, Higdon-Smith and Sithole (2013:495) and Cope (2015:681) defined a this sample as a group of cases, teachers or records comprised of a part of that population.

A non-probability sample that conforms to certain criteria was called purposive sampling (Blumberg *et al.*, 2014:193; Cooper & Schindler, 2014:193). Purposive sampling was based on the judgement of the researcher since it was not possible to reach every teacher in the Lejweleputswa district. The criteria that the researcher had outlined was the most distinctive and representative of the population that would serve the purpose of the study (Brink *et al.*, 2012:131; Monette, Sullivan & Dejong, 2008:148; Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392). The targeted population for this study were the teachers in the Lejweleputswa district. Since it was not possible to study the whole population, the researcher purposively selected a sample of (n-34) teachers from four different primary schools and four secondary school teachers, who took part in the study in focus groups of seven teachers in focus group 1 and 2. Focus group 3 and 4 consisted of eight teachers per group. The focus groups are named (n-4) four and the individual teachers were also named (n-4) four.

- Participants had to be in the teaching profession in primary and secondary schools.
- The participants had to be teachers who had to fit the definition and the characteristics of workplace adversity.

- Teachers could only take part in the study after having received and understood all information about the nature of the study.
- Teachers were assured of their protection and that their participation would be voluntary and that they would remain anonymous.
- Teachers were informed that the data would be collected after school hours so as to protect them from taking part in the study.

### **3.5 RESEARCH PROCEDURE**

The research procedure for this study was as follows:

Workplace adversity and the resilience of teachers maybe relatively new to the South African population, particularly in the teaching profession.

- Ethical clearance and written permission were obtained from the Department of Basic Education as the study and the interview questions were conducted in schools.
- Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Central University of Technology.
- Literature study was conducted.
- All participants were identified and made aware of the nature and the purpose of the study.
- Data was collected, transcribed and analysed.

The findings of the research study are discussed in Chapter4.

### **3.6 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

Paradigm played a fundamental role in science, as an inclusive philosophical framework of the way in which scientific knowledge was produced (Brink *et al.*, 2012:25; Mouton, 2010:113).Brink *et al.*, 2012:27 further explained that a paradigm organised a researcher in his or her thinking, observing and interpreting processes. A paradigm was perceived as a general orientation that the researcher had of the world, the nature that he or she holds (Alise & Teddlie,

2010:108; Creswell, 2013:6). Researchers like Babbie (2010:33) and Collins and Hussey (2009:55) and Creswell (2011:19) and De Vos *et al.* (2011:40) and Mouton and Marais (1990:149-150) and Neuman (2011:40) were already using the term and the supporting theory of paradigms has had a major impact on the philosophy and methodology of the social sciences.

Generally, a paradigm was best described as a whole system of thinking (Neuman, 2011:94), while Biesta (2010:97) and Collis and Hassey (2009:55) and Mouton and Marias (1990:130) were of the opinion that a paradigm referred to the philosophical framework or traditions in a particular discipline. Workplace adversity was a reality that was experienced by teachers and this was supported by interpretivism (Devos, 2013:69). Fouche and Schurink (2011:309) explained that this approach assumed that reality should be constructed through the meaning that the participants assign to their life world.

Paradigms for human research were considered in terms of three characteristics in which they responded to basic philosophical questions concerning a problem or need being workplace adversity and resilience of teachers in this study. First, the paradigm was made up of ontology where the researcher asked the question, secondly the epistemology where the researcher looked at what was known about the reality by exploring the relationship between the inquirer and the phenomenon being studied. Lastly, the methodology referred to the particular ways of coming to know about the reality by choosing a method to obtain the knowledge (Brink *et al.*, 2012:24).

A paradigm was perceived as a general orientation that the researcher has of the world, the nature of the research that he or she held (Creswell, 2013:6; Feilzer, 2010:11). According to this view, people search for insight of the world they work and live in when using this paradigm, so the aim of this study relied mainly on participants' perception of the phenomenon that was studied (Creswell, 2013:8; Frels, Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2011:371).

Understanding interpretivism was not as straightforward as understanding what it was. Interpretivism was often placed in dichotomy with positivists approaches such as hard sciences versus social sciences, numbers versus discourse,

generalisation versus situatedness (Dean, 2018:3). Perhaps this understanding emerged during the paradigm wars of the 1980s (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:18). A researcher therefore chose the paradigm within which they were working, understanding the nature of their chosen paradigm and document their paradigmatic choice in their writing (De Voset *al.*, 2011:41).

Teachers' experience of workplace adversity and their resilience was real to them and this was supported by Interpretivism. Fouche and Schurink (2011:309) explained that this approach assumed that reality should only be construed through the meaning that the participants assigned to their "lifeworld". When applied to this study, the objective of interpretivism was to provide a perspective on workplace adversity and teachers resilience, analysed participants' experience and give insight regarding how he or she made sense of this phenomenon (Niewenhuis, 2016:60). Therefore, the phenomenon of workplace adversity and resilience was presented as perceived by through the eyes of the teachers.

### **3.7 DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

The researcher thought it was wise to give participants a variety of options as the topic was a sensitive matter to be discussed. Participants shared their experiences in focus groups and/or through personal documents, such as emails, journal entries and grievance letters, as was suggested by Anderson (2013:21) and Crewell (2013:10) as well as Smith and Osborn (2009:57). Personal documents method that focused on written communication, and it helped illuminate the experience that were investigated (Niewenhuise, 2016:110).

Data were those pieces of information or facts (attitude, behaviour and motivation) that any particular situation gave to an observer (Blumberg *et al.*, 2014:482; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:88). The study asked for a very comprehensive response; thus, a semi-structured interview and focus groups were most likely to provide the depth of information that was useful (Harrel & Mellisa, 2009:10). Bless *et al.* (2014:183) and Blumberg *et al.* (2014:213) defined interview as a data collection technique based on a series of questions relating to the research topic to be answered by the research participants.



According to Maree (2014:87), the aim of the qualitative interview was to see the world through the eyes of the participants. Leedy and Ormrod (2010:148) further noted that the aim was to collect rich data. The typical objective of a focus group was often a new product or product concept (Blumberg *et al.*, 2014:157). According to Blumberg *et al.* (2014:213), a personal interview was a two-way conversation initiated by an interviewer to obtain information from a participant. The advantage of an interview was that it provided good cooperation, as was the case with the teachers (Bless *et al.*, 2013:116; Blumberg *et al.*, 2014:212; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:148; Maree, 2014:87).

In this study, data were collected during focus groups discussions and one-on-one interviews with the teachers. Obtaining data from the participants with different experiences prevented information biasness and thus increased credibility regarding the information.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted face to face. It gave the researcher the opportunity to reach participants quickly. According to Blumberg *et al.* (2014:496), in a semi-structured interview the researcher formulated the questions before the interview. A focus group was a group of people who shared similar experiences (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2007:304). Focus group interviews were conducted with groups to better understand how people felt or think about an issue, product or service (Greeff, 2011:299; Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2007:304). Focus group interview was an information collecting approach that was used in this exploratory study (Bless *et al.*, 2014:183; Blumberg *et al.*, 2014:485; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:148; Maree, 2014:90).

Before the interview, the participants received consent letters via email and others in person. The consent letter included the interview questions that gave the participants time to get ready for the interview (Greeff, 2011:356). In this study, the researcher interviewed teachers who experienced workplace adversity and they shared information about their resilience skills.

### **3.7.1 The advantages of using a focus group**

According to Parahoo (1997:298) and Sullivan (2012:56), a focus group discussion had the following advantages:

- Participants were able to discuss the issues in question with each other.
- Provided an opportunity for participants to learn from each other.
- It was a cheaper and quicker way of obtaining valuable data.

Holloway and Wheeler (2002:117) listed the following strengths of focus group discussion:

- The dynamic interaction among participants stimulated their thoughts and reminded them of their own feelings about the research topic.
- All participants including the researcher had an opportunity to ask questions and these produced more information than individual interviews.
- Informants build on the answers of others.
- The researcher clarified conflicts between participants and asked about these different views.

### **3.7.2 Limitations of a focus group**

The limitations of a focus group were as follows:

- Participants were able to congregate in the same place at the same time of which some of the participants were a bit late and others were getting agitated and wanted to leave.
- Information may be biased.
- The researcher came across some challenges in terms of managing debate and controlling the process than in individual interviews.

- Some of the participants talked a little while others dominated the discussion and influenced the outcome.
- While recording data, it was challenging to take notes while many of the people were talking at the same time.
- The validity and reliability of the findings were difficult to ascertain on their own.

### **3.7.3 Anticipated problems during data collection**

In this section anticipated problems during the data collection were investigated according to the guidance of Holloway and Wheeler (2002:36).

#### Situational contaminants

Some situational factors influenced the participants' response adversely, including the participants' being aware of the interviewers' presence (reactivity factor). Environmental factors such as lighting, temperature and noise may have impacted the participants' reaction. In this study, situational contaminants were avoided by all means.

#### Response set bias

Personal characteristics of participants may influence their responses to questions, resulting in the phenomenon of social desirability of response, extreme of response and acquiescence. The interview technique used explanation of the purpose of the study and the assurance of confidentiality as well as the signed consent form were very useful in reducing the aforementioned problems.

#### Transient personal factor

Participants were tired at the end of an eight-hour workday. The interview had been scheduled to take place after hours since the teachers were not available during work hours. On weekends they had to attend to their family responsibilities. To limit their frustration, the interview was scheduled for three hours only and refreshments were provided.

### Administrative variations

The researcher practised using two cell phones to record the interviews. The phones were always charged during the interview.

### Researcher bias

The researcher conducted the interviews in the natural setting of the participants. This could have led to distortion of the findings of the study. The researcher went back to participants to verify and clarify their responses.

### **3.7.4 Research instruments**

In this study, the researcher was the primary data collection instrument because the data from the participants were verbal in the context of the research problem (Holloway and Wheeler, 2002:8). This approach enabled participants to easily provide answers; therefore, the teachers provided in-depth information about their experience of workplace adversity and resilience.

Data was collected by means of a focus group discussion and a one-on-one interview. The rationale behind this was to:

Explore workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district and to justify support programmes for teachers.

Furthermore to:

- obtain different perspectives on the workplace adversity and resilience of teachers;
- determine factors that predicted workplace adversity; and
- determine the extent to which teachers were faced with workplace adversity.

### **3.7.5 Pilot study**

According to Holloway and Wheeler (2002:800), pilot studies were not usually used in qualitative studies, but novice researchers could conduct interviews as

pre-exercise, to get used to the type of data collection. A pre-exercise was done to orientate the researcher to the research project and provide the researcher with insight into the phenomenon. A pilot study ensures that errors can be rectified at a little cost. Qualitative techniques used to inform the study during the design phase.

The pilot study was conducted in the Lejweleputswa district Free State province of South Africa. This district was selected because of easy access. The pilot was done through a one on one interview with one teacher. This teacher was recruited in one of the township schools. The selection procedure was based on convenience.

The purpose of the of the pilot phase was firstly to determine the basic understanding of workplace adversity and resilience. Secondly, to identify the factors that predicted workplace adversity. Thirdly the indication of the extent to which teachers face workplace adversity. And fourthly, to evaluate the availability of mechanisms or regulatory framework directed at resilience.

It became evident that the pilot study was essential for purposes of this study and to prevent waste of time, energy and money. The value of this pilot study was emphasised by the following points. It was needed to detect the flaws including instructions and time limit, identified unclear or ambiguous items in the interview. The pilot study was very essential for this research as it has given warning about where the main research can fail. Indications where the research protocol were not followed were very clear and corrected.

The pilot study was conducted with one teacher who met the selection criteria. This was done immediately after work.

### **3.7.6 Semi-structured and focus group interviews**

The following questions were asked in both interviews:

Workplace adversity

- What was your basic understanding of workplace adversity?

- What were the factors that predicted workplace adversity?
- To what extent do teachers faced workplace adversity?
- Please comment on any mechanisms (policy or regulatory framework on resilience) which guide schools and teachers on resilience?

#### Resilience

- What was your basic understanding of resilience?
- What strategies did teachers employ in response to workplace adversity?

The semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded, providing the teachers gave consent. The length of the interview ranged from 30 to 60 minutes.

### **3.8 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data were the facts collected from the teachers or observation plus published information (Blumberg *et al.*, 2014:482). While data analysis was the editing and reducing accumulated data to a manageable size, developing summaries, looking for patterns and applying statistical techniques (Blumberg *et al.*, 2014:482). Maree (2014:101) stated that content analysis was a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis that identified and summarised message content. Maree (2014:101) further noted that content analysis was an inductive and iterative process where the researcher looked for similarities and differences in the text.

A qualitative researcher collected data in the form of written or spoken words and observation and the data was analysed by identifying and categorising them according to inductive codes or themes (Bless *et al.*, 2014:287; Terre Blanche, 2007:47). When analysing data, qualitative researcher adopted an inductive approach (Babbie & Mouton, 2007:273; Flick, 2014:14). In inductive reasoning, people used specific instances or occurrences to draw conclusions about the entire classes of objects or events (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:33; Terre Blanche, 2007:4).

The main advantage of using content analysis was that it added to the transparency, that were, the procedures the researcher followed was clear to the readers of the study (Bless *et al.*, 2014:287).The quality, however, depended crucially on the input.

### **3.8.1 The use of open coding**

Open coding described the process of labelling pieces of qualitative information (Bless *et al.*, 2014:250). Axial coding referred to relating categories formed through open coding with each other (Bless *et al.*, 2014:253). Open coding is generally the initial stage of qualitative data analysis. After completing the open coding, depending on the methodology used in this study, we did Axial Coding and Selective coding at a later stage in the research. These coding methods helped the study to build theories in an inductive, deductive or verification modes of inquiry.

The following steps were followed in handling the qualitative data:

- The researcher divided the data into segments and then scrutinised it for commonalities that reflected categories or themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:143
- The researcher separated relevant data from irrelevant data; then broke down the relevant data into phrases that reflected a single specific thought for interpretation.
- The data that had been collected by means of semi-structured, focus group and personal documentation and interviews was transcribed and analysed (Henning, 2013:127).
- The researcher perused the data, and red the transcripts and personal documents numerous times.
- She listened to the audio-recordings of the semi-structured and focus group interviews. Envisioning the participant's voice during successive reading of the transcripts aids a more comprehensive analysis (Smith *et al.*, 2009:82).

### **3.9 IDENTIFYING EMERGENT THEMES**

The most prominent phrases that surfaced from the transcripts and accompanying audio-recordings were identified (De Vos, 2013:80). Emergent themes were listed and the relations between them were identified (Viasmorandi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016:101; Smith & Osborn, 2009:70).

The following strategies were applied to this study to recognise patterns and connections between themes (Smith *et al.*, 2009:96-99; Viasmorandi *et al.*, 2016:101).

#### **3.9.1 Abstraction**

Patterns among emergent themes maybe identified and labelled with “super-ordinate” themes (Smith *et al.*, 2009:96), which were referred to as main themes in this study (De Vos, 2013:80). Emergent themes were grouped to reflect the workplace adversity experienced by participants and the resilience of teachers.

#### **3.9.2 Numeration**

Numeration was the number of times the emergent themes occurred in the transcripts (Smith *et al.*, 2009:98). Smith *et al.* (2009:98) and Viasmorandi *et al.* (2016:101) suggested that this strategy can be a way in which the relevant significance of some emergent themes could be indicated. In this study, a theme was identified when a certain idea or experience was highlighted by at least two participants in the group (De Vos, 2013:80).

### **3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY**

The study aimed to ensure the quality of the findings of qualitative research by looking at the trustworthiness criteria of this study. Qualitative researchers generally viewed the concepts internal and external, reliability and objectivity as unsuitable to ascertain qualitative study (De Vo *set al.*, 2011:15). According to Babbie (2013:8), trustworthiness in a qualitative study was similar to validity and reliability in quantitative research. Trustworthiness focused on addressing alternative issues such as credibility, conformability, dependability and



transferability respect when determining the trustworthiness of their qualitative investigations (Carcary, 2009:11; Ary, Jacobs, Razavich & Sorensen, 2010:25).

The following steps were taken by the researcher to ensure trustworthiness of the data that was collected:

### **3.10.1 Credibility**

Credibility was the quality of the study relating to how believable or convincing the data was (Malindi, 2009:110). Therefore, the researcher provided a detailed description of the setting, participants, procedures and interactions so that the findings were reliable and believable (De Vos, 2013:35). Credibility involved processes such as prolonged engagement, meaning that the researcher spent a considerable amount of time with the participants to make sure that there was enough information about the phenomenon being studied (Rossman & Rallis, 2012:65).

The researcher did spend enough time with the research participants to ensure that there were enough about the phenomenon being studied (Rossman & Rallis, 2012:65). Follow-ups were conducted during the course of the study with the participants. Long engagement with the participants assisted the researcher to identify intervention initiatives that effectively address workplace adversity (De Vos, 2013:82).

Member checks referred to the process during which the researcher validated the emerging findings with research participants, which enabled them to give details to correct, expound or dispute the findings of the study (Rosseman & Rallis, 2012:65). The researcher shared some of the findings with the participants and also gathered insight concerning support programmes for teachers or intervention initiatives that might be required in addressing workplace adversity (De Vos, 2013:82).

Referential adequacy referred to the material used to document data. The researcher collected data via semi-structured and focus group interviews (Malindi, 2009:110). She recorded and transcribed the semi-structured and focus group interviews to preserve the data for easier reference afterwards.

### 3.10.2 Transferability

Transferability referred to the degree to which findings were transferred or generalised to other settings and contexts or similar groups of participants (Babbie & 2013:10; De Vos *et al.*, 2011:10). To help readers decide whether the findings can be applied to other groups of participants or to other contexts, the researcher provided enough detail about the setting so that some generalisation (instead, transferability or inference) might be possible, always bearing in mind that generalisation was not the aim of this qualitative research (Gilgun, 2007:44-45). In this study, the findings were corroborated with other research studies internationally that reported similar findings in their investigation of workplace adversity and resilience of teachers (De Vos, 2013:83). This was facilitated by:

- Purposively sampling teachers, both males and females of all ages, in order to maximise the range of specific information that could be obtained (Malindi, 2009:111).

### 3.10.3 Conformability

Conformability referred to the degree to which other independent parties confirmed or verified the findings of a study (Malindi, 2009:112). This minimised the bias of the researcher in the conclusions, interpretations and recommendations that were made. Conformability in this study was achieved by supporting findings with the literature review that was regularly updated (De Vos, 2013:83).

The researcher was vigilant and honest about the findings of the study to not mislead or misrepresent findings. She appended the raw data with the inductive codes or themes that she developed and she rendered them accessible for the readers to revisit them and confirm the accuracy and adequacy of the interpretations (Malindi, 2009:113). She discussed the findings with the participants and asked them to comment critically. Furthermore, she returned to the participants to query her data and to ask them to clarify her understanding (Malindi, 2009:113).

### **3.10.4 Dependability**

Dependability denoted the extent to which the data collected can be relied upon (Babbie, 2013:161; De Vos, 2013:60). The researcher, in an effort to enhanced dependability, described the context and circumstances of the research in detail, reflected previous research findings were similar or different to the study (De Vos, 2013:346). The researcher described the whole research process and context carefully so that other researchers can follow similar steps (Babbie, 2013:162; Myburgh & Strauss, 2012:22).

The researcher used audio taping to objectively record the qualitative data that was collected through semi-structured and focus group interviews to ensure that she was precise (Malindi, 2009:113). She transcribed the data verbatim from the audio tapes and further analysed the data to develop the inductive codes (De Vos, 2013:76; Malindi, 2009:113).

### **3.11 RIGOUR IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

De Vos (2013:81) stated that consistency of data referred to whether the findings were produced in the same manner when applied to the same subjects or in similar context, determining the trustworthiness and dependability of a qualitative study. After the entire data gathering was completed, the researcher discussed the findings of the study with the supervisor (Machenjedze, 2014:37).

### **3.12 RESPECT**

According to Machenjedze (2014:38), a good study was possible only if there was mutual respect between the investigator and participants. Machenjedze (2014:38) further states that respect for human dignity was a cardinal ethical principle underlying research and it was intended to protect the interest and the physical, psychological or cultural integrity of each participating individual. Vulnerable persons such as teachers participating in this study were entitled special protection (Berg, 2012:15; Chen, 2017:4). To ensure respect in this study, the researcher did the following:

- Outlined in writing the guiding principles of voluntary participation;

- Explained that she would respect the decision should any the participants feel they did not want to continue with the study at any point in time;
- Explained that she would also respect the participants choice of language when conducting the semi-structured and focus group interviews;
- Undertook to protect the participants' identity in order to respect their privacy; and
- She used pseudonyms when conducting the study.

### **3.13 JUSTICE**

The principle was based on the assumption that all people are equal (Bless *et al.*, 2013:142) and justice connotes fairness (Machenjedze, 2011:38). All participants who took part in the study, irrespective of their age and gender, were treated equally. All of them received the same interview questions at the same time.

### **3.14 FIDELITY**

The principle of fidelity implied faithfulness and kept promised or to agreements, specifically between the researcher and the participants (Bless *et al.*, 2013:142). Thus when participants felt deceived or that there was a breach of confidentiality, the participants held the researcher accountable for ethical violation of their rights. In deception, the researcher hid the true nature of the study from the participants. The researcher handled fidelity in the following way:

- She made sure that no one was deceived so as to avoid long-term risk;
- She explained the true nature of the study to the research participants;
- She made sure that no one was left with bad feelings or uncertainty.

### **3.15 BENEFICENCE**

It was important that research not only does no harm but also potentially contributes to the well-being of others (Bless *et al.*, 2013:141) and to generate

new knowledge that was going to produce benefits for participants themselves (Machenjedze, 2014:39;Roubaix,2011:13).

### **3.16 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Research was conducted within ethical bounds. In this study, the researcher solicited permission from the Department of Education and ethical clearance from the Central University of Technology, Free State. Most ethical issues in research fall in one of four categories, namely the participants' rights to human dignity, privacy, confidentiality, protection from harm and informed consent (Babbie 2010:80; Leedy &Ormrod, 2010:101; Strydom *et al.*, 2011:15; Terre Blanche, 2007:56).

#### **3.16.1 Protection from harm**

Participants in a study can be vulnerable to emotional and or physical harm (Strydom, 2011:58; Babbie, 2010:15). Participants should not risk losing life or limb, nor should they be subjected to unusual stress, embarrassment, or loss of self-esteem (Leedy &Ormrod, 2010:101).

The study bears no potential for physical harm; however, if the participants indicated to the researcher that they need emotional support, she was going to refer them to relevant sources of such support since she was not a psychologist. Data was gathered after school hours and outside of work to protect the participants from being victimised (De Vos, 2013:85).Participants were requested to identify a preferred time for consultation. Most interaction with the participants was in the afternoon after school hours.

#### **3.16.2 Informed consent**

The participants were made fully aware that their participation was fully voluntary and that they could withdraw their participation at any time (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:101;Strydom, 2011:58;Babbie 2011:50). In order to obtain informed consent from the teachers, a covering letter was compiled by the researcher, informing the teachers of the nature and purpose of the research. Informed

consent forms were ideal in getting the participants to consent to taking part in a study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:101; Terre Blanche, 2007:75).

Most participants were blacks, so this may require the researcher to make provision for those participants who preferred to be interviewed in their own language. Interview questions were included in a consent form and were asked in research study before participants gave their consent (Smith *et al.*, 2009:53). Participants were allowed to ask whatever question pertaining to the study. They were notified that the research interviews were audio-recorded.

Ethical considerations in research were always changing, so it was important that researchers remained up to date with the latest thinking about research ethics.

### **3.16.3 Right to privacy**

It was important that the basic human rights of the participants were respected in research. Likewise, the researcher respected the participants' right to privacy (Strydom, 2011:61). The participants were assured of their confidentiality and rights to human, dignity and privacy. The researcher therefore used pseudonyms in order to conceal their identities. The researcher assured them that if at any point they felt that their human rights were compromised, they had the right to withdraw from the study.

### **3.17 SUMMERY**

The chapter discussed the research design. This was followed by the research procedure and then a discussion regarding the paradigm approach and specific qualitative methods that were used to collect data. The chapter concluded with the discussion regarding trustworthiness and the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter 4 is a present a description of the research findings, analysis, interpretation literature and discussion.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The foregoing chapter expanded on the research design and methodology. Furthermore, the research approach, sampling technique, data collection and data analysis were explained. Likewise, the need to unravel teachers' workplace adversity and resilience were outlined.

In this chapter, the data that was gathered through focus groups and one on interviews. Firstly the researcher wanted to determine the basic understanding of workplace adversity and resilience. Secondly the researcher needed to identify the factors that predicted workplace adversity. Thirdly the indication of the extent to which teachers face workplace adversity. Fourthly to evaluate the availability of mechanisms or regulatory framework directed at resilience. Lastly to outline the support system that is at the teacher's disposal. The data that collected was analysed and interpreted by means of a thematic qualitative research strategy. The aim of this chapter was therefore to interpret the findings in the context of teachers' workplace adversity aligned with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. Simultaneously, situated how teachers' resilience assists in how they overcome workplace adversities. A thematic data analysis was used. First, raw data from the focus group through a voice recorder was transcribed, categorised and analysed through emergent themes.

The following was a brief outlook on a research method opted for to guide the research study.

#### 4.2 DATA POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Santhakumaran and Sargunamary (2008:31) asserted that a group of individuals under study was called a population or a universe. Joan (2009: Online) added that a research population was generally a large collection of individuals or objects that were the main focus of a scientific inquiry. The research population in this study were the teachers in the Lejweleputswa district, residing in the Free

State Province of South Africa. The teachers were purposively selected to participate in the study.

The aim of the study was to explore workplace adversity among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district and the need for support programmes for teachers. The study included a total number of (n-34) teachers. This section of the study documented the actual findings, analysis and interpreted the data collected.

This section presented data that was collected using a focus group interview of four (n-4), Focus group 1 and 2 consisted of 7 teachers in each group. Focus group 3 and 4 consisted of 8 teachers in each group and a semi-structured interview of two (n-4) individual male teachers. In Chapter 3, the research methodology and data collection strategies were explained.

This chapter discussed the findings that emanated from participants' reports regarding their experience of workplace adversity and resilience. The interviews were conducted in the language that the participants felt comfortable with, which was Sesotho. Some teachers preferred English. The researcher transcribed and translated where necessary.

### **4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS**

The participant group consisted of teachers from Lejweleputswa district in the Free State province that was purposefully selected. Most teachers who took part in this study emanated from township schools. Table 4.1 presents an outline of the participant demographics.



**Table 4.1: Focus group 1 from School A**

Teachers	Race	Gender	Age	No of classes	Experience in years	Grades	Subjects
Teacher1	African	Female	45-50	4	20	5-7	Maths & Natural Sciences
Teacher2	African	Female	30-35	6	1 ½	4& 7	Life Orientation & Sesotho
Teacher3	African	Female	25-30	11	2	4-6	Social Sciences & Life Skills
Teacher4	African	Male	30-35	4	15	4& 7	SPECIAL, Maths & Natural Sciences
Teacher5	African	Male	25-30	6	3	4-6	Technology Sesotho
Teacher 6	African	Female	25-30	2	2	4-6	EMS& English
Teacher 7	African	Female	30-35	2	5	4 & 7	Geography & English

The participants in **Focus group 1 from School A** were composed of teachers from the Lejweleputswa district in the Free State Province. All of the teachers were from primary schools. Most of the teachers who took part in the study were between the age of 25-50 both male and female teachers. The study consisted of black teachers. Most of the participants were female teachers (n=5) and (n=2) male teachers in Focus group 1 from school A. This group consist mostly of new teachers in the field.

**Teacher 1** was a female teacher who possesses a teaching qualification and specialises in maths and natural sciences. She was between the age of 45 and 60. She was teaching four classes and has 24 years of teaching experience and teaches grade five to seven, three different grades with 45 periods.

**Teacher 2** was a female teacher who specialises in commercial subjects. She was currently teaching life orientation and Sesotho. She was between the age of

30 and 35. She was teaching six classes, different grades. She was new in the field of teaching as she only has one full year and six months teaching experience. She was struggling to get a job all these years.

**Teacher 3** was a female teacher between the age of 25 and 35. She had a Bed degree. She was also new to the field of teaching. She had two years' experience in teaching. She was teaching 11 classes from grade 4 to 6. She was specialising in social sciences and taught social sciences and life skills at her school. She likes music very much and has started a school choir at her school.

**Teacher 4** was a male teacher who graduated with his BEd honours. He was between the ages of 30 to 35. He had 15 years' of teaching experience. He was a mathematics teacher and also an expert in natural sciences. He had changed careers for quite some time, before settling on teaching. He taught four classes from grade 4 and 7. He liked football and coaches a team at the school.

**Teacher 5** was a male teacher who specialised in technology and Sesotho. He was between the ages of 25 and 30. He taught six different classes from grade 4 to 6. He completed a marketing diploma. He then graduated with a Post Graduate Certificate in Education the following year. He had three years' experience in teaching. He was busy with his BEd Honours.

**Teacher 6** was a female teacher. She was between the ages of 25 and 30. She handled two classes and had two years of teaching experience. She taught EMS and English to grade 4 to 6 learners. She did a public relations course prior to becoming a teacher.

**Teacher 7** was a female teacher between the ages of 30 to 35. She had two years' teaching experience. She taught two classes. She specialised in commercial subjects and was teaching geography and English.

Table 4.2 depicted the demographics of Focus group 2 from School B.

**Table 4.2: Focus group 2 from School B**

Teachers	Race	Gender	Age	No of classes	Experience in years	Grades	Subjects
Teacher8	African	Female	45-55	4	30	4-5	English
Teacher9	African	Female	45-55	6	25	5 & 7	Life Orientation & Sesotho
Teacher10	African	Female	40-45	11	15	4-6	English
Teacher11	African	Male	30-35	4	15	3 & 7	SPECIAL, Maths & Natural Sciences
Teacher12	African	Male	35-40	6	12	4-6	Technology Sesotho
Teacher 13	African	Female	30-35	2	10	4-6	EMS& English
Teacher 14	African	Female	30-35	2	11	4 & 7	Geography & English

Most of the participants in Table 4.2 were the most experienced and they all teach fundamental subjects. Their age category ranged from 30-55. The participants in Focus group 2 consisted of seven (n7) teachers. The sample involved both male and female teachers. The participants in the study teach mathematics and natural sciences; Sesotho home language, social sciences, life skills, life orientation; geography; EMS; English and technology, while the other teachers taught learners with special needs.

**Teacher 8** was a female teacher who teaches four classes to learners from grade 4 to 5. She was between the ages of 45 and 55. She had 30 years' teaching experience. She taught English. She specialised in languages. She graduated with her Honours degree. She was enrolled in a computer course to improve her administration skills. She also took part in community projects that were aimed at helping youths to empower themselves.

**Teacher 9** was a female teacher between the ages of 45 and 55. She taught life orientation and Sesotho to grade 5 and 7 learners, and she had six classes. She

had 25 years' teaching experiences. She enjoyed drum majorettes and had a team of majorettes at her school. She was enrolled at the University of the Free State for mathematics and sciences. She enrolled because she realised that there was a shortage of qualified teachers for these subjects in the country.

**Teacher 10** was a female teacher. She was between 40 and 45 years old. She taught English. She had 11 classes in different grades from grade 4 to 6. She had 15 years' teaching experience. She liked tennis and she loved debate. She was trying to help learners to be more self-confident and to improve their vocabulary, as it was a problem in township schools. She also loved to enter competitions and even though she had not won anything yet, she was not intending to give up until she won something for her school.

**Teacher 11** was a male teacher, who was between the ages of 30 and 35. He had been allocated four classes. He taught mathematics and natural sciences and had 15 years of teaching experience. He taught grade 6 and 7. He was enrolled for the computer course that took place over weekends. He wanted to improve his technological skills. He wanted to start a cricket team at his school, but they did not have equipment available for this sport at that time. He was also trying to find ways to win sponsors.

**Teacher 12** was a male teacher between 35 and 40. He was allocated six classes. He had 12 years' experience in this profession. He taught grade 4 to 6 and his subjects were technology and Sesotho. He had love for music and he conducted the school choir together with female teachers at his school.

**Teacher 13** was a female teacher. She was between the ages of 30 and 35. She had two classes. She also had 10 years' teaching experience. She taught EMS and English for grade 4 to 6. She was enrolled for a Microsoft course. She was attending classes only on weekends.

**Teacher 14** was a female teacher. She taught geography and English, grade 4 and 7. She was between 30 and 35. She was been allocated two classes and was in the teaching profession for 11 years. She was enrolled for her BED Honours degree. She was also involved in community projects.

Table 4.3 showed the demographics for Focus group 3 from School C.

**Table 4.3: Focus group 3 from School C**

Teachers	Race	Gender	Age	No of classes	Experience	Grades	Subjects
Teacher15	African	Female	45-50	4	20	4-5	Maths & natural sciences
Teacher16	African	Female	30-35	6	1year 6months	5 & 7	Life orientation & Sesotho
Teacher17	African	Female	25-30	11	1year	4-6	Social sciences & life skills
Teacher18	African	Male	30-35	4	15	3 & 7	SPECIAL, maths & natural sciences
Teacher19	African	Male	25-30	6	3	4-6	Technology Sesotho
Teacher 20	African	Male	25-30	2	2	4-6	EMS& English
Teacher 21	African	Female	30-35	2	5	4 & 7	Geography & English
Teacher 22	African	Male	40-55	3	15	6&7	English

**Teacher 15** was a female teacher between the ages of 45 and 50 and had 20 years' teaching experience. She handled four classes in grade 4 and 5. She was a mathematics and natural sciences teacher. She was also a member of the school governing body at her school.

**Teacher 16** was a female teacher between the ages of 30 and 35. She was still new in the field of teaching and had one year and six months teaching experience. She was allocated six classes, which are grade 5 and 7. She was enrolled for her BEd Honours at the Central University of Technology. She loved working with children.

**Teacher 17** was a female teacher between the ages of 25 and 30. She was allocated 11 classes. She was also new to the field of teaching. She taught grade

4 to 6 and was qualified to teach high school from grade 8 to 12. She was enrolled for a short course at the University of South Africa. She was teaching social sciences and life skills.

**Teacher 18** was a male teacher, who taught mathematics and natural sciences. He was qualified to teach learners with special needs. He was allocated four classes. He had 15 years' teaching experience. He was between the ages of 30 and 35. He was enrolled for a short computer course that was taking place only on weekends.

**Teacher 19** was a male teacher between the ages of 25 and 30. He was allocated six classes. He had three years in the teaching profession. He taught grade 4 to 6. He taught technology and Sesotho. He was busy with an engineering course at Tosa Goldfields TVET Welkom College. He was intending to leave the teaching profession soon. He liked sports.

**Teacher 20** was a male teacher between the ages of 25 and 30. He was allocated two classes and had two years' teaching experience. He taught grade 4 to 6. He taught technology and Sesotho. He was busy with his BEd Honours. He loved rugby, but there was no equipment at his school. He enjoyed working with children.

**Teacher 21** was a female teacher between the ages of 30 and 35. She was in the teaching profession for five years. She was allocated two classes. She taught grade 4 and 7 and she taught geography and English. She loved art very much. She designed her own clothes and would love to pass on this skill to her learners one day. Then, the school did not have the equipment needed for teaching the learners those skills.

**Teacher 22** was a male teacher between the ages of 40 and 55. He was allocated three classes. He had 15 years' teaching experience. He taught English to grade 6 and 7 learners. He graduated with his BEd Honours in 2010. He was busy with his master's in Education at the Central University of Technology. He enjoyed soccer very much. They had a team of young boys at his school.

See Table 4.4 for a review of the demographics of Focus group 4 from School D.

**Table 4.4: Focus group 4 from School D**

Teachers	Race	Gender	Age	No of classes	Experience	Grades	Subjects
Teacher23	African	Female	45-50	4	20	4-5	Maths & natural sciences
Teacher24	African	Female	30-35	6	1year 6months	5 & 7	Life orientation & Sesotho
Teacher25	African	Female	25-30	11	1year	4-6	Social sciences & life skills
Teacher26	African	Male	30-35	4	15	3 & 7	SPECIAL, Maths & natural sciences
Teacher27	African	Male	25-30	6	3	8-9	Technology Sesotho
Teacher28	African	Female	25-30	2	2	8	EMS& English
Teacher29	African	Male	30-35	2	5	10 & 11	Business and economics
Teacher30	African	Male	25-30	4	4	10,11,12	History

Note that Focus group 4.4 from School D consisted of teachers from both high school and primary school. The reason was that all the teachers in this group wanted to be interviewed on the same day and at the same time.

**Teacher 23** was a female teacher between 45 and 50. She was allocated four classes. She had 20 years' teaching experience. She taught maths and natural sciences to grade 4 to 5 learners. She was a member of her school's governing body. She was doing a mathematics course at the Potchefstroom University at the moment.

**Teacher 24** was a female teacher between 30 and 35. She was allocated six classes and she was still new to the teaching profession. She had one year and

six months experience and taught grade 5 and 7. Her subjects were life orientation and Sesotho. She loved netball.

**Teacher 25** was a female teacher with the allocation of 11 classes. She was between 25 and 30. She was also new in this profession as had been taught for a year. She taught social sciences and life skills to learners from grade 4 to 6. She graduated with her master's in education at the University of the Free State. She was also a member of a community project where they fed the elderly in her community.

**Teacher 26** was a male teacher between the ages of 30 and 35. He was allocated four classes. He had 15 years' teaching experience. He taught mathematics and natural sciences to learners from grade 4 to 7. He enjoyed soccer. He was planning to start a team at his school.

**Teacher 27** was a male teacher between the ages of 25 and 30. He was allocated six classes. He had three years' teaching experience. He taught technology and Sesotho home language to grade 8 and 9 learners. He graduated with a degree in education.

**Teacher 28** was a female teacher between the ages of 25 and 30. She was allocated two classes. She had two years' teaching experience. She taught EMS and English to grade 8 learners. She was registered for her BEd Honours at the University of the Free State.

**Teacher 29** was a male teacher between the ages of 30 and 35. He was allocated two classes. He had five years' teaching experience. He taught business and economics to grade 10 and 11 learners. He graduated with a degree in education.

**Teacher 30** was a male teacher. He was between the ages of 25 and 30. He was allocated four classes. He taught history to grade 10, 11 and 12 learners. He was busy with his master's in education at the University of South Africa. He loved sports.

Table 4.5 shows the demographics of the in-depth one-on-one interviews of four different schools.



**Table 4.5: In-depth one-on-one interviews from four different schools**

Teachers	Race	Gender	Age	No of classes	Experience	Grades	Subjects
31	African	Male	50-55	3	30	4-6	Social sciences
32	African	Male	40-45	3	25	4-6	Maths
33	African	Male	30-35	5	7	4 & 7	Maths
34	African	Male	25-30	8	2	5-7	EMS & Creative arts

The teachers in Table 4.5 were from almost all of the age categories. All the participants in the table are African male teachers. All the teachers reported that they also experienced adversities at work, but that they do not dwell too much on the negative. All those teachers came from township high schools.

**Teacher 31 in School A** was a male teacher between the ages of 50 and 55. He was allocated three classes. He had 30 years' teaching experience. He taught grade 4 to 6. He specialised in history and geography and was teaching social sciences. He had enrolled for a short course on special needs education where he had learnt the basics about special needs learners. He worked with disabled learners for the past three years.

**Teacher 32 in School B** was a male teacher with a degree in education. He had 25 years of teaching experience in a public township school. He taught grade 4 to 6 was allocated three classes. He took a short course in special needs education to equip him-self so that he would be able to work with learners that need special care.

**Teacher 33 in School C** was a male teacher between the ages of 30 to 35. He was allocated five classes, grade 4 and 7. He specialised in mathematics. He had seven years' teaching experience in this field. He registered for a course in special needs learners and had two years' teaching experience with the special needs learners. He accepted this post because he wanted to help local people with disability. He grew up in a small village where he saw how people with

disability were deprived by not attending school a number of years ago. Many of these children were left to wander around in the streets. They were teased by their peers, who also had little knowledge about the condition back then. His aim was to change peoples' perceptions about people with disability.

**Teacher 34** in **School D** was a male teacher who specialised with EMS and Creative Arts. He was between the ages of 25 and 30. He was allocated eight classes from grade 5 and 7. He was still new in this field with only two years' teaching experience. He i enrolled in the course of disabled learners. The reason for that decision was because he had a nephew who was disabled and he would like to help him learn like other learners do.

It was very important to note that those teachers were initially not qualified to teach learners with special needs. All of them were allocated classes of special needs children, although they knew nothing about children with developmental disability. They had no choice but to enrol for courses in order to be able to assist these poor learners. These are the kinds of adversities that teachers have to contend with on a daily basis.

#### **4.4 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

In this section, the presentation of the research findings elucidated the key findings. Table 4.6 demonstrates the thematic categories which were explained at length later on in this research study.

Under **workplace adversity** (1<sup>st</sup> category), we found the following themes:

- Factors that predicted workplace adversity
- working conditions
- school management approach
- working environment
- not getting paid on time
- handling of learners with disability
- teaching material
- shortage of teachers and special needs teachers

- shortage of classrooms
- underprivileged learning environment
- curriculum structure
- acceptance by other learners in the school community
- low wages
- expectations from parents
- Extent to which teachers face workplace adversity
- Policy or regulatory framework on resilience

Under **resilience** (2<sup>nd</sup> category), we found the following strategies and themes:

- Family and community
- Professional
- Religion
- Seminars/workshops and further studying

See Table 4.6 for the main themes and subthemes of the research findings.

**Table 4.6: Themes and subthemes of the research findings**

Category	Themes	Short explanation
Definition	Workplace adversity	Hardship, challenges
	Factors predicting workplace adversity	-Overcrowded classrooms -Learner discipline -Working conditions
	Extent to which teachers face workplace adversity	Extremely high
	Policy or regulatory framework	No policy in place
	Resilience	Full of life, flourishing, overcoming adversities
	Strategies	
	-Personal	Exercising

Definition	-Family community	Motivation & encouragement
	-Professional	Workshops, mentoring, doctors
	-Religion	Church, emotional support
	-Seminars/workshops & further studying	Professional development

#### 4.4.1 Workplace adversity

Workplace adversity was understood to be one of the prime reasons why teachers wanted to exit the system (McDonald, 2010:2). Despite the climate of adversity that characterised teacher workplace, some of the teachers chose to stay in teaching while other teachers decided to leave teaching (MacDonald, 2010:2).

All the teachers generally had the same basic definition or understanding of the concepts workplace adversity and resilience. Below was a general description of how teachers explained or defined workplace adversity:

**Teacher 6, 7 and 4** defined *people facing workplace adversity as people who were full of life in the conditions of hardships*, while **Teacher 2 and 5** added that workplace adversity were hard conditions at work influenced by both internal and external environmental factors. **Teacher 3** further noted that workplace adversity was the danger that teachers were faced with at work on a daily basis.

**Teacher 2** in her teaching experience description gave an example that illustrated the definition of adversity and how it shaped her as a teacher when she stated:

I believed that I build strength when I am faced with the barriers that are put in  
in my path.

She then went on to report on her early years of teaching, the moral predicament and damage teaching caused in her attempts to change her career.

**Teacher 2** then outlined her desire to become a fashion designer. She described how in her teaching years, she felt like she had lost her passion for being a fashion designer, she became confused and this confusion was the root of her adversity.

For the purposes of this study Lee, Kwong, Cheung, Ungar and Cheung (2009:450) highlighted the notion that adversity can be a useful instrument in developing the kind of character in teachers that were useful in the teaching profession. This general definition of workplace adversity by teachers was consistent with the findings of previous research which defined the concept of workplace adversity, for example, Jackson and Daly (2011:21).

It was important that teachers be assisted to develop skills that aided them in being more resilient and better able to cope with and protect themselves from the effects of workplace adversity (Jackson & Daly, 2011:25).

#### **4.4.2 Factors that predicted workplace adversity**

There were a range of factors that affected negatively on the experience of teachers in their workplaces. Adversity was the experience of life events and circumstances which may combine to threaten or challenge a healthy development (Jackson & Daly 2007:26). Teachers made mention of a number of factors leading to adversity in the workplace:

##### **4.4.2.1 Working conditions**

**Most of the teachers** mentioned *overcrowded classrooms*. The layout of the classroom is another issue that I suggested to mitigate by perhaps installing speakers or videos. *Learner discipline* was a factor mentioned by **Teacher 3**. Under *working conditions*, teachers mentioned *lack of skills to manage learners with special needs* and this simply means that teachers were unable to deal with this adversity. *Violence was very high in township schools*, said Teacher 3.

#### 4.4.2.2 School management approach

**Teacher 2** complained about *Management dissatisfactory approach towards other staff members*. Shortage of teachers was another factor leading to adversity, thus implying work overload for incumbent teachers. **Teacher 2** further explained that *the challenge that I was facing was the lack of time due to work overload and non-teaching duties such as paperwork and meetings*.

#### 4.4.2.3 Working environment

Another factor mentioned under working environment **most teachers** highlighted that there was *lack of collegiality* so, in other words, the climate was not so democratic, participatory, enabling nor friendly, where teachers were afraid of healthy competition or challenges. Another factor that **Teacher 1** mentioned was the *state of school facilities such as toilets that were untidy for both teachers and learners*. This created unnecessary inconvenience. This notion supported the previous findings of the South African study which reported on causes or factors leading to adversity (McDonald, 2010:12).

According to Malindi (2009:40), risk generally referred to the factors which interacted to increase the individual likelihood of psychopathology or susceptibility to navigate developmental outcome. It related to any event, conditions or experience that increased the probability that a problem was formed, maintained or exacerbated (Machenjendze, 2014:13). Most teachers reported worse working conditions including poorer facilities, less access to textbooks, lack of administrative support and larger class sizes. Many teachers further noted as follows: *At most of our schools, classrooms are overcrowded, making it difficult for us to control learners*. In addition, disruptive learners were another form of adversity that teachers were unable to deal with.

Furthermore, teachers who were interviewed said they were more likely to leave the teaching profession due to poor teacher status, family constraints or balancing work and family commitments.

#### 4.4.2.4 Late payment of salaries

Many of the teachers, especially **Teachers 2, 3, 5 and 6** complained about not being paid on time, and yet the Department of Education expected them to be at work every day. They also noted the following: I travel every day and I must pay transport. **Teacher 2, 3 and 4** noted that they had to pay rent and buy electricity and must go and visit their families, but it was difficult due to being paid late and sometimes not getting paid for six months.

According to many of the teachers, the risks involved thwarting resilience was *the management leadership approach and violence at schools*.

Another feature that emerged predominantly was *the discipline of the learners and lack of work-life balance for teachers*, therefore making it very difficult for teachers to be resilient against these forms of adversity.

**Teacher 6** gave **an example** of disruptive learners and their violent behaviour towards other learners and some teachers.

In my school, learners were throwing furniture, punching, kicking and biting others and they verbal abuse all the time, and truly speaking, there was nothing that I can do, because there were no policies in place that lead and guided teachers on what must teachers do when faced with such situations. These learners were aware that nothing is going to be done to them; hence they continued to disrespect and abuse us like that.

This simply meant that disruptive learners and lack of support by parents, school management teams and the Department of Education can lead to a crash of confidence in teachers.

This finding was consistent with and supports the earlier observation and categorisation of resilience as family level factor emotional ties, communication, support, closeness, nurturing, and adaptability. It was therefore be construed that job dissatisfaction may be predicted by the exacerbation of these risks.

These findings suggested that working conditions ought to be a target area for policies aimed at retaining qualified teachers in the Lejweleputswa district.

According to Jackson and Daly (2011:22), workplace adversity consisted of the following three elements: adversities were unexpected; disruptive, twisting and thwarting the expected patterns of planned action; and the level of uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding it. Here teachers' responses depicted the existence of workplace adversity in their schools.

According to **Teacher 1**, there was a lack of regulatory policy. According to **Teacher 2**, there was ineffective administrative leadership and little or no emotional and social support for teachers. **Teacher 3 and 5** cited the safety and wellness risk for teachers and learners. **Teacher 4** observed increasing non-accountability and no proper flow of communication.

**Focus group 1-4** mentioned unfair distribution of workload that was making it very difficult for teachers to sustain their work quality. **Teacher 6** opined that colleagues were spreading mean gossip to the principal about other colleagues (De Vos, 2013:91).

The narrative above highlighted the hopeless feeling of most of the teachers. Some of the teachers were exploring other avenues and they were getting ready to exit the system. Hence the need to develop resilience programmes to assist teachers.

#### **4.4.2.5 Learners with developmental disability**

The Department of Education needed to augment the number of teachers who teach learners with developmental disability. They should also create awareness in society to accept learners with special educational needs. Disability was a restriction or an inability to perform an activity in the manner within the range considered normal for a human being, mostly resulting from impairment (Barbotte, Guillemin, Chau & Lordhandicap, 2001:1049). The study interviewed two teachers who taught learners with special needs and asked about the challenges that these teachers were faced with and how they tried to overcome these adversities. Under this theme emerged the sub-themes. These were the



kinds of adversities that teachers have to contend with in their workplace on a daily basis:

- lacking teaching material
- shortage of special needs teachers
- shortage of classrooms and underprivileged learning environment
- curriculum structure shortcomings
- acceptance in the school community by other learners
- low wages
- high expectations from parents

**Teacher 31** emphasised her strife in the following way: Oh my goodness! What I am dealing with on a daily basis was so difficult, eh. I taught learners with special needs, né. I don't have teaching material and this was making my job very difficult. I needed learning equipment such as books and teaching equipment such as chalkboards, because I taught different grades. I must write and dust, write and dust all the time and these learners are very slow, so I must be patient with them. I don't know where to get these things – I am just a teacher. The government was very slow in terms of delivering equipment for these poor children.

It was evident from the above that teachers were faced with many challenges. Teachers were forced to be creative and to see to it that the learners were too. This supports the finding made by Alexander (2014:30) that teacher's should be creative and find their own methods to help learners with special needs. Alexander (2014:30) goes on to say that teachers had no choice but to wait for support from the government and it was taking a very long time to deliver.

#### **4.4.2.5.1 Shortage of special needs teachers**

Some teachers expressed their sadness or disappointment in response to this that teachers do not want to enrol in this course.

Most of the teachers are afraid of this challenge and many schools are in need of these teachers. Our school was also running short of teachers who specialised with disabled children.

It seemed as if the country was in need of teachers who specialised with disabled learners. This was also evident from **Teacher 32**, who mentioned that he was teaching different grades in one class. Even those who were qualified to deal with these learners were but a few.

#### **4.4.2.5.2 Shortage of classrooms and underprivileged learning environment**

Most of the teachers stated that: where I work there was only one classroom that accommodated all these learners from different grades and with different needs. The classes were in the same area as the normal so what would actually happen was that my learners got disturbed by these other children; they don't concentrate as their concentration span was short. The learning environment was not good for those learners with special needs in my school.

One postulated that, that is why some of the teachers with special needs qualifications opted for other jobs. It was because of these adversities that teachers contended with on a daily basis throughout the year. Previous studies found that learners with disabilities needed more space to carry out activities. The study further added that learners with disabilities had different individual requirements in order for them to learn (Alender, 2014:31). **Teacher 33** stated that *in order for me to be able to attend to all of their needs I needed extra classrooms rather than mixing the children in the same class.*

The curriculum structure...I taught them was the same thing that they were taught in their original grades as per their age and mind. You see, these learners had a problem with this content; I had to teach them the same thing. I taught four different grades in one class and I was expected to perform miracles [sigh]. There was nothing much that I can change concerning the curriculum; really, mine was just to do as instructed. Most of the learners enjoyed playing a lot and doing handwork than being serious and study. I gave them more than enough time to

play, but they just cannot seem to get enough, they wanted to play all the time. [Looking sad].

Alexander (2014:31) found that the curriculum had to be flexible for the purposes of teaching those learners who might not be interested in learning what was prescribed in the curriculum.

#### **4.4.2.5.3 Lack of acceptance by other learners**

**Teacher 34** was very frustrated when addressing this adversity how other learners at school treated these learners with disabilities:

I failed to understand why those learners mistreated disabled learners. I did not blame them really, because they were young and still needed to be taught or made aware that these children with disability were also human beings, you see. The older ones were calling them names and it pained every day, because that really affected them in a negative way. I got hurt especially when they cried and refused to go outside and play with other children. I did not have enough time to eat because I always had to watch the safety of these learners. I was even afraid to go to the toilet and leave them alone in class.

Teachers concluded by saying the school community should learn to accept these learners as they were. Management was also failing us sometimes.

#### **4.4.2.5.4 Expectations by parents**

It seemed as if many parents were anxious to see changes or development in their children immediately when they started school. According to Alexander (2014:40), they saw special needs educators as a solution to their children's difficulties. This was really sad indeed.

Teachers highlighted that parent's came to school every day. They wanted to see if their children were making progress or not. I know and understood that it was not easy for them as well, but those things take time. Parents did not have patience. They wanted to see changes immediately and that was impossible, really. **Teacher 33** added that some parents wanted their children to be able to

read and write immediately. They complained that their children have been to school for a very long time and that it seemed as if teachers were not teaching their children

Teachers concluded that parents wanted to see their children progressing to the next grade. Those parents also needed help. Children with disability developed differently than ordinary children, so their learning ability was not the same (Alexander, 2014:42). Therefore, counselling was needed for those parents as well.

#### **4.4.3 Extent to which teachers face workplace adversity**

All of the teachers expressed that it *was difficult to even measure*. It was evident according to the teachers' responses the level to which teachers faced workplace adversity, was very extreme. This supported the previous research findings; look (Guarino, Santibanez & Daley, 2006:87; Gorard, Smith & White, 2007:104; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011:56).

#### **4.4.4 Policy or Regulatory framework**

There seemed to be no mechanism (policy or regulatory framework) guiding the majority of the township schools. Generally, all the teachers attested that in their *schools there were no policies in place for resilience*. It seemed despite the adversities that teachers were faced with in their workplace, the desire that some teachers had to work with learners was influenced by the sense of professional and personal fulfilment.

This finding revealed that it was important for school governing bodies, teachers, HODs, the school management team and the Department of Education to implement policies that would accord priority to develop the strength-based, resilience-focused interventions in order to support teachers and prevent staff turnover.

The pictures were donated by one of the staff members at one of the schools where the study was conducted. Pictures were sent to the researcher via WhatsApp by one the teachers to try and show the kind of environment and

working conditions in one of the township schools. These pictures depicted the kind of environment that the teachers have been talking about. Most of the teachers agreed that:

This was the kind of environment that teachers were living in. It was worse than this, but I could not take pictures of everything. The doors were broken, windows were broken, chairs and tables were also broken. We even ran short of furniture in the classrooms; learners had to seat on their knees when they wrote. This was really painful. Teachers in focus groups agreed.



**Picture 4.1: Conditions in schools**

We spent the whole winter with these doors and broken windows. I only took this picture from my class actually a number of classes were like this.

There seemed to be a problem with the drainage in our school, so management was finding it difficult to fix it then.

It was evident from the above that teachers' health and that of the learners were at risk. They were at highest risk of being exposed to many infections.

While this history was pertinent, a reasonable observer might have expected that almost two decades after apartheid the worst of the infrastructure deficits would

have been eradicated. The South African National Department of Education (1998) issued National Norms and Standards for School Funding in October 1998, where it committed itself to eliminate school backlogs. The National Department of Basic Education had a policy that required schools to be maintained in a condition that made teaching and learning possible (South African Department of Basic Education, 2010:50), and yet so many schools remained in a parlous conditions. This was evident from the pictures.



**Picture 4.2: A drainage problem**

In our school, there was a helper. He tried by all means to make sure that the drain was clean but it was always full of water and dirty. He was working alone. So the work was too much for him. He just could not cope on his own.

You can even go now to our toilets you will find them in an awkward condition. The toilets were not flushing we had to use buckets after helping our selves. The sanitation was of poor standards; I even struggled to access toilet paper or simple the hand wash after helping myself. Some of us decided not to go the toilets at work and that was imposing a very serious danger to our health as teachers. I and other teachers reported this to the management of the school but we never got any response as the principal assumed that it was us teachers who were causing the toilets to be like that (clapping hands), can you believe it.



**Picture 4.3: Standing water on the school premises**

The water that you saw in these pictures was the water that was standing in front of our classes on a daily basis and it smelled so bad that you could not even eat, causing teachers throat infections and other sicknesses. Learners were also playing in that water.

According to **Teacher 1**, there was little intervention on the side of the school management team and the school governing bodies to assist teachers. Most of the teachers' were of the view that there were no interventions to try and address the problem whatsoever in their schools by the school management team and governing body. Some of the teachers felt that management was contributed to the adversities that teachers were facing. There seemed to be role ambiguity and according to the teachers, school management failed to *clarify the work of the teachers clearly*. Thus this led to conflict.

In general, all teachers did not have knowledge of the intervention strategies made by the Department of Education to try and deal with workplace adversity. This view also supports the previous findings in the study conducted by Jackson and Daly (2011:25).

## 4.5 RESILIENCE

Personal resilience described the capacity to withstand significant change or adversity (Jacelon, 1997:125; Wagnild & Young, 1993:168). We all know that little was known about the resilience of teachers in the South African context. So the study set out to find out how teachers understood or explained resilience. This was how the teachers responded:

**Teacher 8 and 9** understood or defined resilience as someone who was full of life and who flourished despite adversity. **Teacher 10** added that resilience was the ability to overcome difficult and challenging situations whereas **Teachers 11 and 12** noted that resilience was a positive way of dealing with or overcoming something negative. **Teachers 13, 14 & 15** agreed that resilience was a teacher who was facing a lot of challenges and still managed to overcome them somehow. Many of the teachers in the focus groups called it bouncing back.

Given the responses of the participants above, the theme that stood out the most was the similarity of experiences among them, especially with regard to how they defined resilience. Also, one may postulate that the personal disposition of the individual teacher predicted levels of resilience. Thus, Wilson and Rice (2004:4) saw adversity at a workplace as an opportunity from which the teacher emerged stronger, revitalised and more resilient, matured, focused and disciplined. Ferrer (2009:21) asserted the same optimistic perspective on the opportunity that adversity held within the context of teaching.

The following responses emanated from the one-on-one interviews.

## 4.6 INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

The findings from the interviews were insightful and the following intervention strategies came forth from the teachers.

### 4.6.1 Intervention strategies to overcome adversity: one on one

Many teachers noted that commitment and confidence were what was needed. **Teacher 31 and 32** said building positive nurturing professional relationships with



other colleagues. Most of the teachers noted that when they were faced with adversity, they confided in their spouse while others confided in their friends. There seemed to be lack of organisational support for teachers in township schools. Some of the teachers applied an avoidance approach. You see we tried by all means to seek for professional assistance when needed. **Teacher 33 and 34** said that self-confidence was another factor that seemed to be of great assistance to teachers. Most of the teacher's relied on their families and social support. It was thus not only possible but also favourable to build resilience as a strategy to assist teachers to be more resilient. This was aligned with previous findings by Malindi (2009:179) and Machenjedze (2014:47).

There were no tangible resources emphasised by the teachers except for personal resources. **Teacher 30** was of the opinion that setting yourself professional goals, perseverance, a sense of humour and social support were good ways to keep on going, while most of the teachers believed in confidence. This was in line with previous findings in a study conducted by Malindi (2009:228).

**Teacher 25, 26 and 27** perceived that having a supportive environment and the support of school management, where teachers can be able to grow and develop. According to **Teacher 28**, to be committed and have control. **Teacher 29** was of the idea that seeking for professional assistance would have been helpful. While **Teacher 19** was of the view that collaborating and exploring for other opportunities. Under this theme, it emerged that other teachers were planning to leave the teaching profession due to inability to cope with workplace adversity. This was consistent with the findings of previous research by De Vos (2013:118). As **Teacher 34, 35, 36 and 37** further noted that, the only strategy that they applied, was leaving teaching and explored other careers.

#### **4.6.2 Intervention strategies**

The following sampling techniques suggested by Niewenhuis (2013:79) were used to sample workplace adversity and the resilience of teachers. The study applied snowball sampling, where teachers were asked to recommend colleagues who had similar experiences of workplace adversity and resilience and could potentially partook and added to this research study (Niewenhuis,

2013:80). This technique made it possible to identify and reach teachers who experienced workplace adversity and resilience in township schools.

This section described the common themes that emerged from the data. These themes reflected teachers' responses to the interview questions posed to them. Teachers' responded individually and collectively portrayed environmental factors that contributed to them being resilient, despite all the adversities. The five themes that emerged from the teachers' responses were: provision of resources; family and community support systems; professional assistance and support networking and mentoring; rapport and the role of religious beliefs and practices; supportive teacher development

#### **4.6.2.1 Provision of resources**

The underlying mental struggles and coping strategies of teachers were personal resources that influenced the ways in which they dealt with their workplace adversities. These resources were presented next as the underlying teachers' efforts to manage the unpleasant emotions and mental struggles associated with workplace adversity. Resources mentioned included being positive, determination, competitiveness, commitment, maturity and persistence amongst others. Some teachers mentioned their mental and physical toughness as helping them to get through their workplace adversities.

The love and passion that those teachers had for teaching was amazing. As this was another instrument in their successful response to adversity.

I have learnt to overcome most of the adversities by exercising regularly and eating healthy so as to improve my health. Well, I am not giving up. Quitting my job is not an option, because I knew I was going to be successful one day.

This supported the previous findings of (Larsen and Murray-Davis, 2005:24; Becky & Bobek, 2010:203) that healthy diet promoted weight loss and reduced the risk of chronic diseases.

Most teachers tried by all means to maintain a positive attitude during difficult times at work. I also try to communicate whatever difference teachers had with some of their colleagues as a way of dealing with adversity.

Hooper (2009:21) wrote the importance of positive interaction with colleagues during times of adversity. It was evident from the above that a positive attitude could help build bridges between conflicting points of view.

You saw all of us here were the members of a teachers group on Facebook where we get to share our experiences online with some teachers in the Diaspora.

This finding confirmed the work of Baym (2010;134) who suggested that social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp groups were primarily a means for relationship maintenance.

It emerged from the findings that the listening and emotional support that all the teachers received from their families and friends, showed that they really cared and were sympathetic and provided space for teachers to debrief and discuss work-related adversities.

My husband just listened and encouraged me that nothing was simple and that there were challenges everywhere.

I tried by all means to organise myself all the resources that I needed. I managed my time I even drafted myself a timetable. I tried very hard to be nice and to be easily approachable to my colleagues. The first year was very difficult of course. , I am planning to stay in this profession and see where it leads me.

This was an indication that some teachers were willing to accept new challenges while demonstrating their resilience.

#### **4.6.2.2 Family and community support systems**

Family were the members that shared a place of residence or related through blood ties or legal contracts.

The interviews revealed that all the teachers' spouses were very supportive and understanding. Throughout the interview teachers consistently articulated that the support that they got from their families encouraged, motivated and pushed them to excel in their work despite the adversities.

My family really cared for me a lot and they provided me with space to discuss work challenges. My family was always there when I needed to talk about things that were bothering me.

Initially, Rifkin, Muller and Bichmann (1988:935) and Gabb (2010:465) defined community as a group of people living in the same defined area sharing the same basic values, organisations and interests. Later, White (1982:23) defined community as an informal organised social entity, which was characterised by a sense of identity. Thereafter, Manderson, Valencia and Thomas (1992:33) defined community as a population which was geographically focused but which also existed as a discrete social entity, with a local collective identity and corporate purpose.

Teachers also felt appreciated when the parents of their learners gave them positive feedback about the impact they were having on their children. This was illustrated when most of the teachers were saying:

Some parents did come and visited us at school and told us that they were happy so far about the progress of their learners (smiling). The support that I got from both my parents was amazing I must say.

Some teachers said:

They played a very essential role in their communities as well in community planning and resilience building, where we made sure that cultural and faith-based sensitivity was built, because I for one believed if our communities can be resilient then it would be easy for us teachers as to be resilient too.

Some teachers further noted that:

Some teachers tried to develop partnerships and collaborations with existing communities' organisations, the non-profit service organisations.

It was evident from the above that teachers, in order to deal with adversities, went an extra mile of providing community education and training on diversity, tolerance and respect to professional associations, schools and others. This was shown when many of the teachers agree:

Teachers contacted representatives of each sector in the community and offered programmes on cultural competence and diversity; these programmes also allowed teachers time for discussions of resilience and preparedness.

#### **4.6.2.3 Professional assistance and support networking and mentoring**

Smith and Ingersoll (2004:683) and Bayer, Grossman and Du Bois (2014:410) stated that mentoring was the personal guidance provided, usually by seasoned veterans, to beginning teachers in schools. Similarly, Kremer and Cooper (2014:415) defined mentoring as a process by which an experienced or knowledgeable individual offered assistance to a less expert individual.

Most novice teachers noted that the induction and the mentoring activities by more experienced teachers helped them to be resilient.

Professional networking with other colleagues from different places and schools helped us to deal with other challenges that maybe at work.

The mentoring programmes helped some us novice teachers a lot, as I viewed it as a tool for human resource development. Mentors taught us about the school policies and procedures. So that really made me to adapt easily.

School orientation also helped me a big deal because, I knew what was expected of me, when and where to start.

During my first year last year I could not cope due to the amount work that I dealt with, but the reduction of that workload helped me, teacher further noted that observing experienced teachers also helped me to be resilient.

I also dealt with adversities by planning my work on time and I did not miss the chance to attend workshops as I am working on improving my professional development.

I was cope with whatever challenge because of the support that I got from some of my colleagues. Every day after school hours there was a colleague of mine with whom I shared everything with. The most important thing that made us to be more resilient was when our learners came back to us and said, teachers, we really enjoyed the lesson today. Many teachers expressed the enjoyment they gained from developing interpersonal connection with their learners and ensuring that the learners felt safe and welcome in their classroom.

This supported the finding that building relationships with learners (Castro *et al.*, 2010:625;Hirsch Korn, 2009:211; and in turn this can increase teachers' motivation and commitment towards their work (Day & Gu, 2014:4431; Kitching, Morgan & O'Leary, 2009:51; Zorzella, Muller & Cribbie, 2015:175).

Most teachers agreed:

We felt a sense of accomplishment and pride when our learners, especially those who were struggling academically, showed outstanding improvements in their learning.

It was evident from the aforementioned that learner success was the most influential form of encouragement that seemed to aid the resilience of teachers. This supported the similar findings from other studies that have found that student engagement, achievement and success can enhance teacher resilience (Kitching, Morgan&O'Leary, 2009:47; Swars Meyer, Mays & Lack, 2009:170: Zorzella, Muller & Cribbie, 2015:176;Gabi, 2015:2).

When I got sick, I don't waste time I consult my doctor immediately. I really never wanted any complications in my life, because I was diagnosed with stress, teaching consumed all of my energy.

It was widely acknowledged that teachers were able to cope with workplace adversity when they experienced a positive school culture that was collaborative

and where teachers supported each other, display trust and openness (Aelterman, Engels, Van Petegem & Verhaeghe, 2007:287; Flores and Day, 2006:227;Gu and Day, 2013:33). Despite the many unpleasant and difficult circumstances that the teachers encountered, most of them noted that they obtained benefits from dealing with adversities at work. Some of the teachers learned a lot from their experiences of adversities as they continued to say:

I have learned valuable lessons from our past experiences with adversities at work. I was able to stand in front of our learners in confidence and motivated them. I learnt how to deal with problems at work in a more matured and humble way. I was busy exploring other avenues for future as I was not intending to stay longer in this profession.

#### **4.6.2.4 Rapport and role of religious beliefs and practices**

The word “religion” came from the Latin word *re-ligare*, which meant “to link, tie or bind” (Mani, 2012:162). Mani (2012:162) asserts that the primordial function of religion and spiritual tradition was providing or restoring a triple linkage or union, namely a union of the individual with themselves, a union with other humans, and a union with God. Initially, Sinnott (2001:199) defined religion as practices and beliefs related to a particular dogma system, and add that religion may be an external sign of a spiritual orientation.

Later, Pargament (2002:240) defined religion as a search for significance in ways related to the sacred. “Sacred” referred not only to the divine, higher powers, and God, but to qualities that are closely linked to the divine, such as holiness, blessedness, transcendence, omnipotence, and infinitude (Pargament,2002:240). Thereafter, Henle and Hogler (2004:157) added a moral element in their definition of religion, and defined religion as moral or ethical beliefs as to what was right and wrong, which were sincerely held, with the strength of traditional religious views.

It was worth mentioning that hope, perseverance and religiosity were resilience resources that enabled resilience in teachers. Religion was one of the most distinctive human phenomena which can be of individual and community

growth, strength, social solidarity and resilience (Abu-Raiya, 2015:133). While on the other hand spirituality can be defined as the quality in human beings who were concerned or preoccupied with higher meaning or purpose in life rather than with affairs of the material world (Slade, 2011:2). This was evident when many of the teachers said something to this effect:

Every day when I woke up in the morning and went to church, I was always full of smile that is how I started my day, leaving all the troubles behind.

My religion taught me to be resilient and to be able to stand for whatever challenge that came my way.

My religion served as a resource of me being resilient because of what I was taught there. I was taught to be emotionally strong and we also received inspiration and the spiritual uplift.

Thus, specific religion had certain religious practices and beliefs which were key to the value formation and ethics of the individual member (Mpholo, 2015:17).

#### **4.6.2.5 Supportive teacher development**

If the Department of Education workshop teachers on many things instead of focusing only on the academic maybe our resilience as teachers would have been developed.

Most teachers agreed that in some workshops learnt to setup their classrooms to achieve a good working space, but other teachers further noted that:

I tried establishing behavioural boundaries within our classrooms, but sometimes it was difficult.

I for one believed that workshops can would have been very effective in terms of mentoring us teachers, as they offered support in terms of subject development and transfer knowledge, not only this, but they must have included other programmes such as resilience strategies for teachers and attended those workshops with our programme heads.



Some teachers highlighted that:

We also try to establish a positive, bright cheerful and inviting environment in our classrooms and in the staffroom with our colleagues.

It is evident from the above that teachers identified specific experiences, qualities and ideas that help them to be resilient. It is also evident that teachers are aware that it is important for all the stakeholders to work together to achieve the skill of being resilient.

It would be very nice if the Department of Education organised workshops that focused on the well-being of teachers and taught teachers more strategies of being resilient. We would really have appreciated that. One of the teachers was emphasising this. Others were agreeing.

The teachers saw the importance of maintaining study, professional development and training. Most teachers acknowledged that being organised and planning for your lessons daily also made their work easier. This was another strategy they used to be resilient. This finding confirmed an earlier finding by McDonald (2010:25) that one of the best ways to lower the amount of stress you dealt with on a daily basis, was to be prepared. He noted that some of the preparations required organisation. Preparation was absolutely the key to being a successful teacher (McDonald, 2010:25). He further stated that the more thought and effort put into lessons and your job, the better you would be. You would also be less stressed throughout the year.

Most teachers agreed that:

throughout their studying, they have learnt to work within the school policy so as to avoid a lot of irregularities and having to account more and it helped them a lot to avoid committing a lot of errors that would have been committed when they were working without the school policy.

One teacher said managing our personal time, setting priorities and avoiding work overload, is another strategy that I was applying to deal with adversity. According to **Teacher 31**, *some challenges were difficult to overcome. All teachers had to*

*do was just hope for the best. When it came to teaching material, teachers used anything that they found in the school. **Teacher 33** added that, teachers, had to be creative and used waste material. Teachers tried to be councillors. **Teacher 34** further noted that teachers tried by all means to educate parents about their children.*

**4.6.3 Summary of findings** the study pointed out that all teacher participants had the same understanding of the definition of workplace adversity and resilience. The other findings of the study centred on working conditions and working environment. Accordingly, there was overcrowding of learners in class on account of the small size of the classrooms, and there was lack of hygiene around the premises, especially sanitary. The study also revealed that violence and ill-disciplined of learners were the contributing factors to workplace adversity. Another factor predicting workplace adversity was lack of proficiency for dealing with learners with special needs.

In terms of school management, there was no demonstration of motivation strategies with regards to teachers or staff. There also appeared to be less regulatory policies in place on the part of many schools in the Province. A popular submission of a considerable number of teacher participants was a complaint about unfair or excessive distribution or allocation of workload.

Generally, the findings can be summed up as follows; lack of teaching lack of teaching material, shortage of special needs teachers, shortage of classrooms and underprivileged learning environment, curriculum structure shortcomings, acceptance in the school community by other learners, low wages and high expectations from parents.

## **4.7 SUMMERY**

For years teaching researchers have been concerned with the antecedents and processes associated with adverse circumstances such as stress, bullying and low wages in teaching. Little research has focused on teachers' resilience in response to workplace adversity. Thus the primary aim of the study was to

explore workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district and the need for support programmes for teachers.

In this chapter, semi-structured focus groups and one-on-one interviews were used to collect data regarding workplace adversity and resilience of teachers in township schools. From the information gathered, it emerged that teachers do face workplace adversity and most of the teachers do show some characteristics of being resilient, while others still need much assistance in terms of being resilient.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The penultimate chapter was on data presentation, interpretation and analysis of the study. This final chapter summarised and concluded the content and findings of this study. The synthesis between the hypothesis of workplace adversity and resilience of teachers and the need for support programmes for teachers. The limitations of this study were identified and recommendations for future research were detailed.

#### 5.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The first objective of this study was to conduct a literature study in order to:

- define workplace adversity and resilience;
- determine factors that predicted workplace adversity;
- determine the extent to which teachers face workplace adversity;
- comment on any mechanism (policy or regulatory framework) on resilience; and
- determine protective resources in the context of workplace adversity.

The second objective of this study was to conduct empirical research in order to:

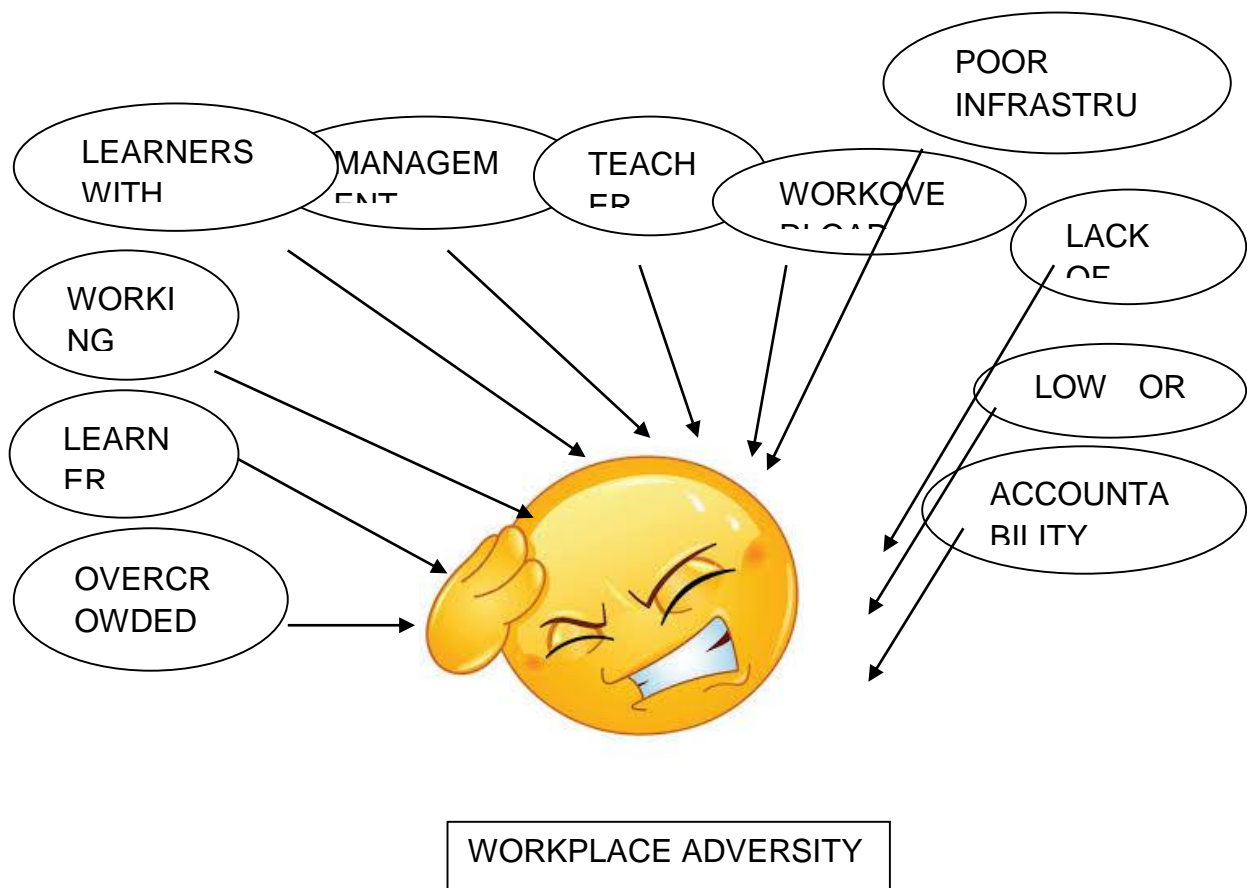
- explore the resilience of teachers in the context of workplace adversity; and to
- proposed guidelines for the development of strength-based resilience programmes to support teachers.

#### 5.3 FINDINGS

This section of the study discussed the findings that emanated from the semi-structured interviews.

### 5.3.1 Define workplace adversity

Most teachers had a general understanding of workplace adversity, as they made mention of all the hardships, difficulty and challenges that teachers were faced with on a daily basis. Those maybe both internal and external factors. There were a number of contributing factors that led to workplace adversity of teachers in schools, as the illustrated below.



**Figure 5.1: Workplace adversity**

These adversities, if not addressed, may lead to a number of teachers exiting the system and it may lead to a shortage of teachers in township schools. Some of these adversities may have had a very negative effect on the health of teachers leading to diminished productivity. The findings of the study revealed the extent

to which teachers faced workplace adversity. It was extremely high, and posing a risk for the health and well-being of teachers. The findings also revealed that there were no policy or regulatory framework that guided the resilience of teachers in township schools.

One teacher understood workplace adversity as the hard conditions at work. Some of the teachers defined workplace adversity as the dangers that they found themselves in.

Learners' discipline was upsetting too many teachers. Some teachers made mention of the fact that the environment in their workplace was not good. Some teachers asserted that the toilets in their school were a problem that led to some teachers getting sick. Most of the teachers had the same problem in their classes: there is a lack of furniture, making it difficult for them to conduct their lessons properly in the classroom. Some teachers were of the opinion that lack of stationery was a big problem.

The windows and the doors of the classes were broken and teachers and learners suffered through cold weather with these broken windows and doors. There was lack of collegiality amongst teachers, some of the teachers said. Most teachers were also complaining about too much work for too little compensation. Lack of policies that guided both teachers and learners in schools seemed to be another risk to resilience. Having to deal with special needs was one adversity that teachers were unable to handle.

### **5.3.2 Resilience**

Most teachers understood resilience to be the quality of being full of life or to flourish despite adversity. While other teachers explained and understood resilience as the ability to overcome difficult and challenging situations, some of the teachers understood resilience as a way of overcoming hardships and difficulties. Others understood resilience to be a positive way of dealing with something negative. Other teachers defined resilience as a teacher who was facing many challenges and manages to overcome those challenges somehow.

The teachers' grasp of resilience contained two core ideas: that a person has experienced serious risk and has demonstrated positive functioning in some way. This was supported by previous research done by Garmezy (1991:421), Luthar (2000:870), Werner (1989:15) and more.

Most teachers understood resilience as the human quality of being able to flourish in times of hardships. Most teachers applied the avoidance approach. While other teachers seek professional help, research has shown that resilience and risk processes are context specific rather than universal (Ungar, 2010:9; Benders & Jackson, 2012:11). This suggested that not all risks would affect teachers in the same way. Rutter (2006:56) and Masten (2014:230) found that there was a greater chance of experiencing a psychiatric disorder with an increased number of risks.

#### 5.4 INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

The teachers in the study mentioned a few strategies, ranging from:



**Figure 5.2: Intervention strategies for workplace adversity**

Most teachers uttered that family support was the most important protective factor that they relied on. Confiding in their spouse helped teachers when they were faced with difficulty. Positive social orientation – the ability to enjoy social interaction and bring forth positive consideration from others – helped. Teachers

further noted that collegiality and recognising other teachers' competences. Most teachers were of the opinion that emotional support from other teachers and school management can also be of great assistance. Exploring new opportunities was another protective factor that was mentioned by the teachers.

Professional assistance also played a major role in terms of developing and intensifying the resilience of teachers where especially novice teachers were mentored, making it easier for teachers to adapt. Seeking health professional help were also mentioned as a strategy that teachers applied as a way of being resilient.

Religion also played a pivotal role in terms of assisting teachers to deal with challenges at work. It strengthened them emotionally and spiritually uplifted them.

Seminars/workshops and furthering of their studies made an essential impact in terms of strengthening the resilience of some teachers. At workshops, teachers got the opportunity to share some of the challenges that they were faced with at work with their colleagues. In furthering their studies, some teachers learnt to persevere and focus on the subject guide so as to avoid unnecessary stress and work overload.

These statements by teachers supported previous literature that risks processes were aspects of either the individual or environmental.

The second objective of this study was to conduct empirical research in order to:

- explore the resilience of teachers in the context of workplace adversity; and
- propose guidelines for the development of strength-based resilience programmes to support teachers.

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

The findings of the study demonstrated that teachers understand workplace adversity and resilience. The study found that teachers were affected by workplace adversity and that most of them were resilient, but there are other



teachers that still needed assistance in order to develop resilience skills. The findings of this study revealed that the Department of Education should prioritise special cases such as the issue of learners with disability. It was important that the parents of these learners should collaborate for the well-being of the children. Although this study only focused on the Lejweleputswa district, the suggestion was that further research may be useful for other districts and the country as a whole as well.

## **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The following recommendations were made for future research on workplace adversity and resilience of teachers:

- This was a qualitative study that made use of a semi-structured interview. It would be prudent to make use of other data collection strategies such as mixed methods. This combination of methods would ensure that richer data was collected.
- It was suggested that the findings of the study be communicated to the Department of Education.
- More research be conducted to determine whether female teachers are vulnerable to experience workplace adversity.
- It was suggested that more research be conducted to determine the resilience of teachers.
- Training for teachers who deal with learners with special needs is needed.
- Training for teachers and principals on how to support each other to limit workplace adversity and promote resilience.
- Support programmes for teachers should be developed.
- Policies or regulatory framework which would guide teachers and schools on resilience were very important.
- Specialised training facilities for disabled learners are essential.
- Resources were also important for the implementation of special education needs.

- The Department of Education should recruit trained teachers and those who are not trained should also be trained.

## **5.7 SUMMARY**

Findings of the study confirmed that teachers in South Africa were severely affected by workplace adversity. This was consistent with previous literature. These findings guided the development of support programmes for teachers. Workplace adversity was a serious problem facing teachers in South Africa. It must be noted that school management was also contributing to high levels of adversities faced by teachers in township schools.

Lack of departmental and parental involvement for teachers had an extremely negative impact on teachers' resilience. It was hoped that the Department of Education would recognise that workplace adversity had severe effects on the health and well-being of teachers. It should also be noted that school management attitude towards teachers was another contributing factor to workplace adversity. The study proposed that strength-based support programmes for teachers be developed in order to aid workplace adversity and build resilient teachers.

## **5.8 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Based on the findings of this study, it was believed that the study contributed to the body of knowledge in the field of Humanities. The research study is one of the first studies in South Africa to investigate workplace adversity and resilience of teachers. This implied that the results of this study may provide additional insight in the workplace adversity and resilience of teachers, which can be used to ensure that schools have policies and procedures in place to prevent workplace adversity and promote resilience.

## **5.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The limitations of the study included the following:

- Only teachers from one district municipality, the Lejweleputswa district, were involved in the study;
- A single data collection method (i.e. one on one interviews and focus groups) was used to collect qualitative data pertinent to this study.
- A limited amount of academic literature exists regarding workplace adversity and resilience of teachers in the South African context; therefore, it was important that the body of academic literature related to workplace adversity and resilience of teachers be expanded; and
- There were insufficient financial resources to travel to other districts around the province.

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## APPENDIX

4 April 2017

The District Director: Lejweleputswa

Amacosa Building

Welkom

9460

RE: LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS:  
PARENTS

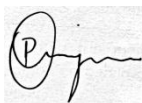
Dear Sir/ Madam

The above-mentioned matter refers; I am currently anMEd student at the Central University of Technology, Free State (Welkom campus). The focus of my research is “Exploring workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district: The need for support programmes for teachers”.

The outcomes of this research study are intended to culminate into knowledge production that will in the end make it possible that strength-based, resilience-focused interventions be developed in order to support teachers and prevent staff turnover and to be presented at different conferences during the year 2017. I intend conducting my research during the second quarter of 2017 and promise to adhere to all departmental ethical issues and conditions. I have attached the interview schedule for the purpose of your approval.

I hope my request will be granted.

Yours faithfully



Ms Phindiwe Oldjohn

## APPENDIX 2

The Director: Strategic Planning Policy and Research

Old CNA Building

Private Bag X 20565

BLOEMFONTEIN

9301

RE: LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

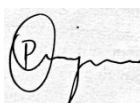
Dear Sir/ Madam

The above-mentioned matter refers; I am currently anMEd student at the Central University of Technology, Free State (Welkom campus). The focus of my research is “Exploring workplace adversity and resilience among teachers I the Lejweleputswa district: The need for support programmes for teachers”.

The outcomes of these research studies are intended to culminate into knowledge production that will in the end make it possible that strength-based, resilience-focused interventions be developed in order to support teachers and prevent staff turnover. I intend conducting my research during the second quarter of 2017 and promise to adhere to all departmental ethical issues and conditions. I have attached the interview schedule for the purpose of your approval.

I hope my request will be granted.

Yours faithfully



## APPENDIX 3

PO Box 1881

WELKOM

9460

Dear School Principal

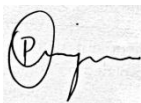
### LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am currently a Magister Educationis (MEd) student at the Central University of Technology in Welkom. I hereby request permission to conduct research at your school. The research topic is: **Exploring workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district: The need for support programmes for teachers.**

Teachers will be participating voluntarily by being involved in the interviews that will be conducted. Their privacy, anonymity and confidentiality will be observed. The research will explore workplace adversity and resilience of teachers, thereby proposing the support programmes for teachers. The research will be undertaken outside school hours and it will not interfere with the school activities.

I hope this letter will be a success

Yours faithfully



Ms Phindiwe Oldjohn (MEd)



## APPENDIX 4

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Workplace adversity

What is your basic understanding of workplace adversity?

What are the factors that predict workplace adversity?

To what extent do teachers face workplace adversity?

Please comment on any mechanisms (policy or regulatory framework on resilience) which guide schools and teachers on resilience?

#### Resilience

What is your basic understanding of resilience?

What strategies do teachers employ in response to workplace adversity?

## APPENDIX 5

## APPENDIX 6

## APPENDIX 7



## RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL

**Date: 8 November 2018**

1.1.1 This is to confirm that ethical clearance has been provided by the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee in view of the CUT Research Ethics and Integrity Framework, 2016 with reference number **[D.FRIC 22/16/5]** .

1.1.2

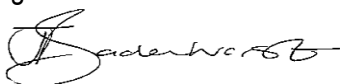
Applicant's Name	Ms. P. OldJohn
Student Number	
Supervisor Name for Student Project (where applicable)	Dr. L. J. Segalo Mr. MA Modise
Level of Qualification for Student Project (where applicable)	M.Ed
Title of research project	Exploring workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa District: the need for support programs for teachers.

The following special conditions were set:

Ethical measures as outlined in the proposal and which have been endorsed by the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee have to be adhered to.

We wish you success with your research project.

Regards



Prof JW Badenhorst  
(Ethics committee representative: Research with humans)

P Oldjohn  
16248 Lebere Street  
Thabong  
WELKOM, 9463

Dear Ms Oldjohn

## APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

This letter serves as an acknowledgement of receipt of your request to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education.

1. **Research Topic:** Exploring workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district: The need for support programs for teachers.

**Schools involved:** Ecco and Khauhelo Primary Schools, Letsete and Ventersburg Intermediate Schools.

**Target Population:** 10 teachers per schools mentioned above, of any age and gender.

2. **Period of research:** From the date of signature of this letter until 30 September 2019. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year.
3. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
  - 4.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
  - 4.2 A bound copy of the research document or a CD, should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 319, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Old CNA Building, Charlotte Maxeke Street, Bloemfontein.
  - 4.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
  - 4.4 The attached ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours sincerely



DR JEM SEKOLANYANE  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

DATE: 2019/8/20

RESEARCH APPLICATION OLDJOHN, P PERMISSION EDITED 13 AUG 2019

Strategic Planning, Policy & Research Directorate

Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein, 9300 - Room 318, Old CNA Building, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Charlotte Maxeke Street, Bloemfontein

Tel: (051) 404 9283 / 9221 Fax: (086) 6678 678

Enquiries: KK Motshumi  
Ref: Notification of research: P Oldjohn  
Tel. 051 404 9221 / 079 503 4943  
Email: K. Motshumi@fseducation.gov.za



education

Department of  
Education  
FREE STATE PROVINCE

The Director  
Lejweleputswa District

Dear Ms Zonke

## NOTIFICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR DISTRICT BY P OLDJOHN

The above mentioned candidate was granted permission to conduct research in your district as follows:

- 1. Research Topic:** Exploring workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district: The need for support programs for teachers.  
  
**Schools involved:** .Ecco and Khauhelo Primary Schools, Letsete and Ventersburg Intermediate Schools.  
  
**Target Population:** 10 teachers per schools mentioned above, of any age and gender.
- 2. Period:** From date of signature to 30 September 2019. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth / academic quarter of the year nor during normal school hours.
- 3. Research benefits:** The research study will contribute meaningfully towards efforts aimed at enhancing the economic, environmental, social and psychological well-being of teachers in township schools.
- 4. Logistical procedures** were met, in particular ethical considerations for conducting research in the Free State Department of Education.
- 5. Strategic Planning, Policy and Research Directorate** will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the district.

Yours sincerely

DR JEM SEKOLANYANE  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

DATE: 20/8/20

RESEARCH APPLICATION OLDJOHN P NOTIFICATION EDITED 13 AUG 2019

Strategic Planning, Research & Policy Directorate

Private Bag X20565, Bloemfontein, 9300 - Old CNA Building, Room 318, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Charlotte Mexeke Street, Bloemfontein

Tel: (051) 404 9283 / 9221 Fax: (086) 6678 678

# *Editing Certificate*

I, Louise Brand, professional language practitioner, hereby confirm that the research paper of Phindiwe Oldjohn, student no. 210089180, *Exploring workplace adversity and resilience among teachers in the Lejweleputswa district: the need for support programmes for teachers*, was edited by me in preparation for submission.

**Name of Editor:** Louise Brand

**Qualification:** Bachelor of Arts studies

**Signature:**

**Contact Number:** 071 209 8537

**Email address:** louisejbrand@gmail.com

**Date Issued:** 5 September 2018

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