

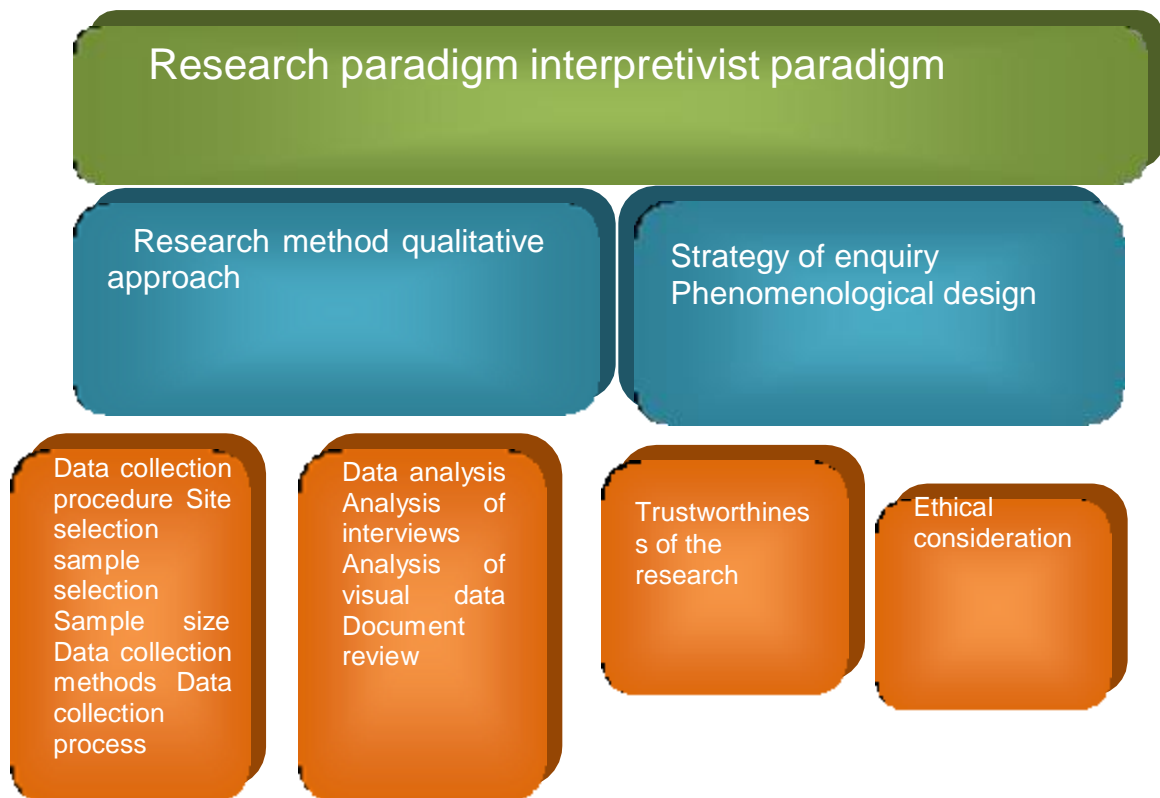
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the processes and steps used to gather and analyse data to increase the understanding of the topic of this research. This chapter also gives an overview of the research design and methodology employed as well as how they were used. Aspects covered include the research paradigm, the research method, strategy of inquiry, data collection tools, sampling research setting, data analysis and specific information around trustworthiness and ethical issues.

Figure 4.1: Summary of Chapter 4



The paradigm guiding this research is discussed below

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm intends to define approaches to social science research (Taber, 2013:287). The use of an interpretivist paradigm in this research is based on the belief that the participants become actively involved in all the phases of the processes (De Vos *et al.* 2011:7). According to Creswell (2007:20), participants seek understanding of the world in which they live. The interpretivist paradigm allowed me to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants. I used these experiences to construct and interpret my understanding from the gathered data. An understanding of the context in which this research was conducted (*cf.* 4.6.1) as this is critical in the interpretation of the data gathered as suggested by Willis (2007:4). This was based on the belief that reality is socially constructed.

Pioneers of interpretivist paradigm reject the existence of universal standards for research, they believe that –there is no particular right or correct method to acquiring knowledge (Smith, 1993: 120). Therefore, no rigid approaches were used in this research to gain understanding of the suicide phenomenon and its interventions. Instead, methods that were employed are those that allowed me to understand in depth the lived experiences of the participants. Different perspectives were sought from a number of participants who had their own interpretation of suicide interventions.

4.3 RESEARCH METHOD

The qualitative research method was used in this study as a means to understand the meanings the participants ascribed to their experiences of suicide and its interventions. This understanding was achieved by analysing the many contexts of the participants, their meanings of situations and events.

According to Tewksbury (2009:50), qualitative research seeks to provide in-depth, detailed information, which although not necessarily widely generalised, explores issues and their context, clarifying what, how, when, where and among whom behaviours and processes operate, while describing in explicit detail the contours and dynamics of people, places, actions and interactions. Denzin and Lincoln (2005:3) concur with the statement, indicating that qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. I studied the phenomenon of suicide and its intervention in its natural settings, in an attempt to make sense of it, or provide interpretations in terms of the meanings participants brought to them. The outcome of this research study was not the generalisation of results, but a deeper understanding of experiences and perspectives of the participants selected for this study.

I interacted with the learners in their natural setting which were their homes. I wanted to understand as much as possible of the home environments and settings in which the participants stayed (*cf.* 4.6.1). Naturalistic enquiry is a non-manipulative, un-obstructive and non-controlling form of qualitative research that is open to whatever information emerges in the research setting (De Vos, *et al.* 2010). Hening *et al.* (2004:6) support the fact that qualitative practitioners are committed to a naturalistic and interpretive understanding of human experience. They further indicate that qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry (Hening *et al.*, 2004:6).

This study involved secondary schools from the Fezile Dabi district of education (a site where the implementation of programmes for suicide prevention occurs or should occur) as the natural setting in which the investigation was rooted. Thus the underpinnings of the research design in this study were located in the naturalistic paradigm (Durrheim 1999 cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 40).

Qualitative research methodology describes data in words not in numbers. I was therefore interested in understanding the meanings participants constructed, that is, how they made sense of the suicide phenomenon and their experiences of suicide intervention. The emphasis was more on the quality and depth of the information and not on the scope and breadth of the information provided. Participants provided information in the form of drawings, narratives and interview responses (*cf.* 3.4).

Creswell *et al.* (2013:90) state that the researcher in qualitative research is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. I had to assume the posture of in-dwelling while engaging in qualitative research. I therefore became a part of the investigation as an observer, a facilitator providing guidance on the draw and write technique, an in-depth interviewer, but also removed myself from the situation to rethink the meanings of the participants' experiences.

4.3.1 Advantages of the qualitative method in this research

As qualitative methods are about gaining true understanding of the social aspects of how research occurs in culturally-grounded contexts (Tewksbury, 2009:38), I was challenged to find meaningful ways to work with my data. Furthermore, Tewksbury (2009:43) states that the actual tasks and actions of data collection, analysis and interpretation require some degree of creativity and innovation. I had to be creative in corroborating data from the drawings, the narratives and structured interviews. As Tewksbury (2009) Rakotsoane and Rakotsoane (2006) indicate, other advantages of qualitative research include the following: usefulness for studying a limited number of cases in-depth; usefulness in describing the suicide phenomenon and its intervention strategies; and describing in rich detail the phenomena as they were situated in local contexts.

An aspect which was a definite advantage to the empirical investigation for this study was the fact that I interacted with the participants using their ordinary

language, including its nonverbal and verbal formation. This proved particularly beneficial during the data collection stage.

4.3.2 Disadvantages of the qualitative method in this research

Because interaction is at the heart of the qualitative data collection effort, I had to rely on the participants to agree to give their time and interactions. The participants were comfortable to do their drawings at home individually. In this regard I had to give them more time. We agreed on a week, but when I came to collect, most of the drawings had not been done. I had to keep going to schools for those who promised to submit at a later stage. This process was therefore time-consuming. This is in line with Driessnack's (2005: 112) argument that with qualitative research it generally takes more time to collect data when compared to quantitative research. This method of data collection however was time-consuming in a broader sense of gaining knowledge.

The results may be more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies. I avoided bias in data collection in terms of interviewer and participant biases, including context effects by using multiple methods. As indicated elsewhere, symbolic drawings and narratives were used followed by structured interviews. I therefore had three data sets. Although I was trained as a qualitative researcher, I had no proper training as a field worker but my promoter provided all the guidance I needed.

4.4 STRATEGY OF INQUIRY

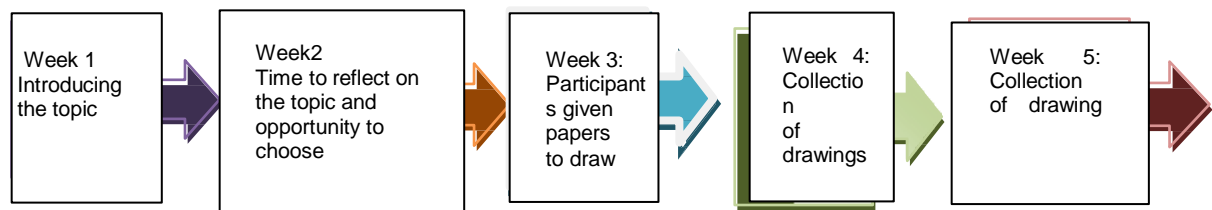
As mentioned in Chapter 1, the strategy of inquiry or design best suited for this research is phenomenology. Phenomenology aims to explain a person-conscious experience of everyday life and social action (Schwand, Lincoln & Guba, 2007:316). I therefore strove to describe the suicide phenomenon and its interventions as accurately as possible, as described in the literature and perceived by the participants. Creswell (2007:316) regards a phenomenological

study as describing the meaning of the lived experiences of a phenomenon or concept for several individuals.

One of the principles of phenomenology is that data are often presented in relatively raw form to demonstrate their authenticity. The narratives and the interview responses are presented verbatim in Chapter 5. Symbolic drawings were scanned and are presented in raw form.

Phenomenology, according to Schwand *et al.* (2007), requires the researcher to view social life in an unbiased, open-minded way and thus to —bracket his or her own knowing of how encounters are socially structured or accomplished. I bracketed my own knowledge and understanding about suicide and its interventions in order to be able to describe the way youth in school settings accomplish their own sense of understanding the suicide phenomenon.

Figure 4.2: Process of visual data collection



The draw and write technique was the key data collection tool used in this phenomenological study. The information on the data collection tools and the procedure for data collection was presented above.

4.5 DATA GATHERING METHODS

Following is a description of the research tools used as well as the rationale for using these particular gathering tools. The data collection tools included the draw and write technique, in which learners were asked to draw pictures and write narratives about their drawing, providing information about them. This research took up the issue of suicide which is difficult to articulate, with the youth using drawings in exploring their perceptions

about ways in which suicide can be prevented at schools.

4.5.1 Visual methodology

More recently interest has grown in performing qualitative research which focuses on the visual images themselves in order to explore participants' experiences and meaning making (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). According to Driessnack (2005), there is renewed interest in the use of visual images in research since traditional methods often fail to elicit the socially silenced voices of vulnerable and marginalised youth. This has led to an increasing acceptance that visual methods can provide valuable and valid data about issues of concern to the social sciences and there have been calls for the further application of these methods to psychological questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). When drawing is used as a research method, it often entails participants drawing and talking or drawing and writing (Mair & Kierans, 2007). In this research the draw and write technique was preferred.

One advantage of visual methods is that not all participants are able to express themselves verbally. Some previous experience of exploring drawings in other studies (Malindi & Theron, 2011) led me to anticipate that symbolic drawings would enable participants to express the phenomenon of suicide and its intervention in a non-threatening, creative way. Similarly, experience such as pain cannot be expressed through words and some people have a preference for visual expression (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Indeed, Bagnoli (2009) describes insight conveyed by images with a condensing quality, such as participants depicting themselves at a crossroads with different potential futures stretching ahead. This also elicits detail that might otherwise be difficult to talk about, leading to the disclosure of more sensitive issues and emotional details (Bagnoli, 2009).

The process of producing a visual image allows participants time to reflect on the topic being explored, which may not only produce rich and insightful images but also inform a more detailed interview (Banks, 2008). It is considered non-threatening to children, as virtually all school-age children are familiar with producing drawings and writing about themselves (Gibson, Aldis, Horstman, Kumpuanen & Richardson, 2010).

Sufficient time was allowed for learners to reflect on the topic of suicide and its intervention. Participants were given a week to decide. The following week some learners indicated that they did not want to be part of the study. Those who wanted to participate were given two pages with instructions. The first was for the drawing of their pictures and the second for narratives. They were also told that if they did not want to hand in their drawings or continue to participate in the research they were free to do so and they would not be asked for reasons. Learners worked individually at home. They were given a week to complete their drawings and the drawings were collected in the fourth week.

Images are intrinsically non-linear, thus allowing for a more holistic representation of concepts, emotions, and information without the need to prioritise certain elements along a temporal continuum (Gauntlett, 2004). Images also hold the inherent potential to generate metaphorical representations of identities and concepts, and thus stimulate abstract and creative thought. According to Gauntlett (2004), the drawn image often functions as a metaphor for complex emotions, perceptions, and identities. The very practice of image-making is, in a sense, the creation of visual metaphors which depict internal realities. Most of the drawings presented in Chapter 5 show emotions that the participants were going through when they were actually drawing their world into existence. Rubin and Rubin (2005) and Gauntlett (2004) opine that the physical act of creation and the bodily engagement with one's environment foster a different type of cognitive process, which transcends the domain of purely cerebral thought.

As indicated in the foregoing paragraphs, the research participants were given time to reflect on their responses. This further encouraged active conceptualisation and contemplation (Gauntlett, 2004). Finally, from a psychological perspective, this method is arguably more nuanced than traditional written or oral research strategies (Rattine-Flaherty & Singhal, 2007:88).

Thus, the analysis of such visual modes of representation reveals more subtle messages and more obscure realities than text-based research methods, as indicated in Chapter 5. Furthermore, allowing the participants to freely decide on the content and framing of their images can highlight both presences and absences-significance that lie in both the visible and the omitted (Litert, 2013).

The co-constructed design of symbolic drawings enabled the participants to take charge of framing their own realities in an expressive and personally relevant manner. The draw and write technique holds a vast potential to stimulate individual and community empowerment through the facilitation of self- and collective efficacy (Litert, 2013:89).

Within the spectrum of qualitative research methods, the draw and write technique is a comparatively more expressive, engaging and fun activity, which can turn the research study into an enjoyable experience, especially for youth. It helped to maintain the participants' attention during the five-week period when their enthusiasm was expected to decrease, as is generally the case in research with children and youth.

According to Darling, Kim, Orcutt and Rosso (2012), people learn by making things, and thus the very act of generating a creative drawing is a valuable learning opportunity. Reilly, Vartabedian, Felt and Jenkins (2012) state that the practice of participatory drawing also fits well within the new media literacies' pedagogical framework, as it exhibits all five characteristics of participatory learning: creativity, co-constructed expertise, motivation and engagement, relevance and connection.

In addition, participatory drawing can foster crucial new media literacies - primarily, but not exclusively, visualisation, simulation, and distributed cognition as well as social and emotional learning skills, as such a self- and a social awareness (Durlak *et al.*, 2011). Drawings in this research revealed the thoughts, hopes and experiences (*cf.* figures 5.2; 5.3; 5.4; 5.6; 5.7; 5.8; 5.10; 5.1.2; 5.13; 5.1.6; 5.17; 5.18; 5.20; 5.24; 5.25; 5.26; 5.31; 5.32; 5.33; 5.34; 5.35; 5.36; 5.37; 5.39; 5.42; 5.43; 5.44) that the youths themselves were unable to understand and express. They also reflected conscious or unconscious fears and anxieties aroused (*cf.* figures 5.1; 5.5; 5.9; 5.11; 5.14; 5.15; 5.19; 5.21; 5.22; 5.23; 5.27; 5.28; 5.29; 5.30; 5.38; 5.40; 5.41) by acute encounters (Kortsluoma, Punamäki & Nikkomen, 2008:286). Drawings helped the participants to organise their narratives, to plan for the future and find meaning in confusing events, as indicated by Driessnack (2005).

4.5.2 Narratives

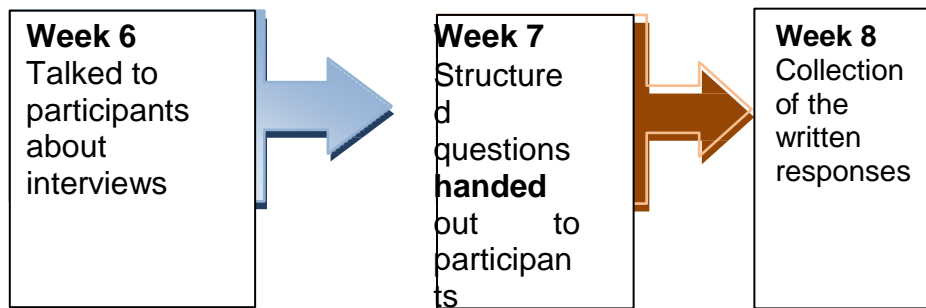
Guillemin and Gillam (2004) indicates that drawing as a research tool is often completed by verbal research methods that encourage collaborative meaning-making. The narratives allowed the drawer to give voice to what the drawing was intended to convey. The narration part allowed the youth to take control of the research process by determining what they wanted to share with the researcher (Young & Barrett, 2001). Narratives present opportunities for participants to explore the meaning of their experiences in order to understand their views (Guillemin & Gillam 2004). The narrative technique was deemed necessary to show the youth that everyone has a story to tell.

4.5.3 Structured interviews

Structured interviews have preset and standardised questions from which there is little variance. The goal in these standardised interviews is to expose each participant to exactly the same interview experience (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Any differences in responses are assumed to be due to variations among participants

rather than to differences in the interview process (Singleton & Straits, 2002). Interviews in this research followed a highly structured protocol consisting of open-ended questions presented to participants in the same order (cf. Appendix 8). This process is illustrated in the figure below.

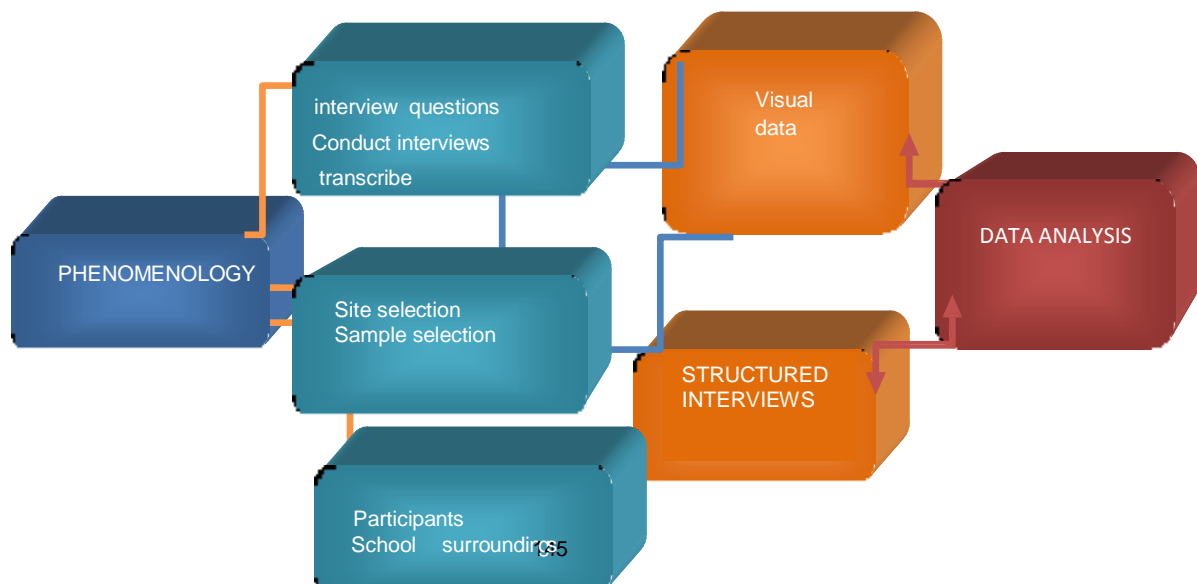
Figure 4.3 Process of structured interview data collection



The aim of conducting interviews was to gather data on the participant's knowledge of suicide. I realised that most of the learners had personal experiences about suicide and they were at risk of suicide and therefore approached them for an interview. Not all of them agreed but 23 were willing to participate. These participants were holders of rich information about their own experiences of suicide and that of their peers and family members.

The figure below summarises the research methodology

Figure 4.4: Summary of the research method



Learners who participated in structured interviews had either attempted suicide (10), had suicide ideations (8), had friends/peers who attempted/committed suicide (8), had members of their families who committed/ attempted to commit suicide (9) or members of their communities who attempted/committed suicide (8).

The interview questions were based on their family background, information about themselves regarding schooling and their experiences of suicide (*cf.* Appendix 8).

4.6 SAMPLING AND ITS PROCEDURE

As I was the primary instrument of data collection I had to immerse myself in the research and the research setting. De Vos *et al* (2011:159) indicate that sampling is the selection of research participants from the entire population, and involves decisions about people, settings, events, behaviour and social processes to observe.

4.6.1 Site selection

There are nine school circuits in the Fezile Dabi District Municipality in the Northern Free State. Five secondary schools from three circuits participated in this study. Purposive sampling was used to select these five schools. The schools were from the poorest communities; four of the schools were classified under quintiles one and two (non-fee paying schools) and another in quintile four (less funding from the Department of Education).

Four of the five secondary schools were from Mafube Local Municipality and one from Metsimaholo Local Municipality. Three schools were under School Circuit 2 (A, B & C) and one school under circuit nine (D). The fifth school in Metsimaholo fell under school circuit 3 (E).

In school A there were 1012 learners with 34 teachers. This school is classified under Quintile 1, in circuit 2. Nine Learners from this school participated in the research. In school B there were 886 learners with 26 teachers. This school is classified under Quintile 4, in circuit 2. Thirteen learners from this school participated in the research. In school C there were 678 learners with 23 teachers. This school is classified under Quintile 2, in district circuit 2. Five learners from this school participated in the research. In school D there were 581 learners with 18 teachers. This school is classified under Quintile 2, in circuit 9. Eleven learners from this school participated in the research. In School E there were 905 learners with 32 teachers. This school is classified under quintile 2, in circuit 3. Five learners from this school participated in the research.

All the participating schools were ordinary mainstream with about 10% of learners with barriers to learning. Learners with barriers to learning due to mental problems in particular are referred to resource centres.

4.6.2 Sample selection

A sample is selected in a situation where it is almost impractical to involve all members of the population under investigation. The target population selected in this study included youth from disadvantage communities. Effective sampling is one way for ensuring data quality (Taber, 2013:159).

Purposeful sampling was used, which is a means of seeking out participants with particular characteristics, according to the needs of the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:159). I selected particular elements from the population that were informative about the topic of interest. I knew which subjects should be selected to address the purpose of the research. All youth that were attending the selected schools were at risk. Participants also indicated in the briefing section that they had experiences of suicide incidents. The target population included both males and females from 15 to 18 years of age.

As the purpose of this research was to determine suicide prevention among learners in Northern Free State schools, I conducted research among youth at risk of suicide. All learners in the circuits chosen were at risk of suicide as indicated in Chapter 1 (cf. 1.7.2.4). Learners in Grades 10 to 12 were also selected because they were holders of rich information about their own experiences of suicide and that of their peers. The number of participants drawn from these schools was 43 learners (n=43). The background information of learner participants is presented below:

Table 4.1: Demographic data of the participants

School A- Fale			School B- Mfundo			School C-			School D- Twee		
Age	Grade	M/F	Age	Grade	M/F	Age	Grade	M/F	Age	Grade	M/F
18	12	M	18	12	M	19	12	M	20	10	M
17	11	M	16	10	M	17	11	M	17	11	M
16	10	M	17	11	M	19	12	F	18	12	M
16	10	M	18	12	M	15	10	F	16	10	M
17	11	M	18	12	M	18	12	F	15	10	M
17	11	M	18	12	M	TOTAL = 5			18	11	M
19	12	M	19	12	M				15	10	F
17	11	F	19	12	F	School E - Denesv			16	11	F
16	11	F	15	10	F	Age	Grade	M/F	19	12	F
TOTAL= 9						e		F			
			16	10	F	17	11	M	18	12	F
			18	12	F	16	10	F	16	10	F
			18	12	F	15	10	F	Total= 11		
			16	11	F	16	10	F			
			Total= 13			17	11	F			
						TOTAL = 5					

According to the above table, there were more male participants (n=23) than females (n=20). The reason for this was that girls were more reluctant to openly talk about suicide than boys. More grade 12 learners (n=16) participated than grade 11 (n=13) and grade 10 (n=14).

The power and logic of purposeful convenient sampling is that the few cases studied yield many insights about the topic (MacMillan *et al.*, 2001:401). It is for this reason that purposeful sampling was chosen for this study. A small sample was selected because they were knowledgeable and informative about suicide as indicated in their interview responses and narratives regarding their experiences of suicide. Therefore, the usage of the draw and write technique and semi-structured interviews ensured depth of data generated.

The background information of learner participants is presented below:

Table 4.2: Family and school background of participants

Parents	Raised by	Deceased parent/s	Failed a grade
Both (Nkosana)	Both parents	None	No
Mother (Malindi)	Mother	Father	No
Both (victor)	Both parents	None	Yes
Mother (Sipho)	Grandmother	None	No
Mother (Ndaba)	Uncle and aunt	Father	No
Mother (Madibo)	Mother and a stepfather	Father	No
Both (Sipho)	Grandmother	None	Yes (Gr 4)
Father (Zapata)	Father and a stepmother	Mother	No
Both (Loyiso)	Grandmother and aunt	None	Yes

Mother (Dibuseng)	Mother	Father	No
Both (Masole)	Mother (separated)	None	No
Both (Sekele)	Both	None	No
Mother (Thenjiwe)	Grandparents	Father	No
Both (Mhlope)	Both	None	No
Father (Tumelo)	Grandfather and aunt	Mother	No
Father (Oliphant)	Grandmother and uncle	Mother	No
Both (Selomets)	Both	Both	No
Mother (Matsole)	Grandmother	None	No
Both (Lindokuhle)	Both	None	No
Mother (Mphuthi)	Mother and grandmother	None	No
Both (Siphiwe)	Both	None	No
Mother (Sonti)	Mother and grandparents	None	No
Both (Katleho)	Both	None	No
Both (Lesego)	Both	None	No
Both (Tsetetsi)	Grandmother	None	No
Mother (Motsoeneng)	Grandparents	None	No
Both (Beauty)	Mother (divorced)	None	No
Goodman	Mother (separated)	none	No
Hlubi	mother	father	no
Kabelo	mother	father	no
Ian	mother	father	No
Moleboheng	Both	none	No
Makhubu	Both	none	No
Evelyn	Father	mother	No
Relebohile	Both	none	No
Lebohang	Both	none	No
Nthabiseng	Both	none	No
Refilwe	Mother (separated)	none	Yes
Zuane	Both	none	No
Rampai	Both	none	No

Morena	Both	none	No
Moyeni	mother	father	Yes
Nteso	Both	none	Yes

4.7 DATA GATHERING PROCESS

Permission to conduct research was sought from the Department of Education in the Free State Province. A reply granting permission was received (*cf.* Appendix 3). After receiving permission I approached principals of the high schools to request their permission to conduct the research at their schools. I first phoned the principals to make appointments. I personally went to each of the schools where principals had agreed to the meeting. In the first school I introduced myself to the principal, indicating that I was a student of the North-West University Vaal Campus and I requested permission to conduct research at the school. I told the principal about the title of my research and the aims. I also indicated that the participants in my research were learners from grade 10 to 12. I then handed out letters requesting permission. The same procedure was followed in all the other schools. After permission was granted I started the process of building a rapport with grade 10 to 12 teachers.

It was difficult for me to approach parents before talking to learners. I therefore decided to talk to grade 10 to 12 teachers, asking for permission to talk to learners in their classes. When the teachers agreed I set up an appointment with them so that I could meet with the learners in the afternoon after school. Learners assembled in the school hall. I introduced myself and the study and asked for their permission to conduct research. Those who agreed to participate were then given letters of consent to hand to their parents (*cf.* Appendix 5). I then told learners to gather in the same area the following week

with the signed consent forms from parents. The same procedure was applied in all other participating schools.

In the second week I spoke about the title and the aims to ensure that all participants understood what the research was about. I also talked about their roles and what was expected of them as participants. I then gave them a week to think about their participation in the research. In the third week they were given two papers, one in which to draw and another for the narrative. Each participant was assigned a number, such as 1, 2, 3 etc. This was to avoid using their names. The drawings and narratives were collected in the fourth and the fifth week as indicated above. I therefore made seven visits to each of the participating schools.

One more visit was undertaken to each of the schools for structured interviews. The participants used the same number they were assigned for the drawings and narratives. This made it easier to staple the participant's drawing, narrative and response to the structured interview together.

4.7.1 Data capturing

The drawings were not collected all at once but over two weeks. After collecting the first batch from each school I put them in an envelope and marked it School A or B. At home I first checked whether they were visible enough. If not, I asked the participants to use an inked pen, not pencils, to trace on top of the drawing. As the two pages were stapled together, I first unstapled them, scanned the drawing and stapled it to the narrative again. This was done with each of the participants' pages, I neither wanted to lose the data nor misplace the narratives. That would have happened if they were stapled with the wrong drawing. I checked whether they were all visible and clear enough. I saved all the scanned drawings on my computer.

After scanning the drawings, I transcribed all the narratives one by one and linked each one to the participants' drawings. After I had looked through the

drawings and linked them with narratives I proceeded with conducting interviews with the participants.

The structured interviews added to the data I had to transcribe. In the transcripts the number assigned is indicated. The information could be easily linked to the participants' drawings.

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Adèr, Gideon and David, (2008:15), data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming and modelling data with the goal of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions and supporting decision making. Data analysis is also described by Babbie and Mouton (2004:4) as the process concerned with reducing the amount of collected data in order to provide meaningful statements of information. Data analysis in this study entailed a process of systematically searching and arranging all the data collected from drawings, narratives and structured interviews.

4.8.1 Analysis of symbolic drawings

As Bagnoli (2009: 601) indicates, what is important in a drawing is not the visual in question but the meanings the drawing conveys for the individual and the world in which he or she lives. Images that help are those that have powerful messages rather than their beauty. Participants used the objects in their drawings and included their direct meanings. The meanings were analysed by means of content analysis.

4.8.2 Analysis of textual data

I was actively involved in the collection of all the empirical data and was also the primary instrument in the data analysis. My subjective knowledge and understanding, as indicated by Henning, *et al.* (2004:7), produced the analysis and sense making of data.

Data were analysed in coding topics and categories which Niewenhuis (2007:107) defines as the process of dividing data into parts by a classification

system. I started this process by reading through the transcripts and immersing myself in the data. I then broke down the raw data, putting it back in new ways by highlighting the text in different colours. I wrote all the highlighted words and phrases on separate pages. I then went back to the transcripts to check if there were any other important phrases and words that I had missed. Words that were left out were added to the pages for codes. This was the first level of coding, called open coding, where data were labelled or tagged.

I read through these codes and phrases several times until I was able to group them into categories. Words and phrases that could not fit into a category were left out until there were other words and phrases that could be linked to them to form a category. Ader, *et al.* (2008:78) refer to this process as a thematic analysis, which entails working with codes to identify patterns and similarities and differences between them.

The next step was that of thematising. I had to read through all the categories to check how they connected with the study. There was a need to bring some order and construction into the categories identified. Rakotsoane and Rakotsoane (2006:28) suggest that it is necessary to reduce categories of data after becoming familiar with the data to make the data manageable. I had to rearrange the themes and put them under different categories if they could not link with the study. I had to refine them several times until I was satisfied that firstly, all codes were correctly placed and secondly, that they addressed the research question (What are learners' views on how suicide can be prevented among youth at risk?), and thirdly, that no data were lost.

The reason for choosing this strategy was that it allowed for the categories and patterns to emerge from data and was not decided on in advance. This data analysis therefore was inductive in nature. It facilitated the interpretation of smaller units as the analysis started with the researcher reading all the data to gain a sense of the whole. The coding process then allowed me to familiarise myself with the text in order to start making links by constantly asking myself

questions about the data. Data analysis also provided an opportunity to get close to the data in order to generate and draw up findings and conclusions for this research.

The table below depicts the inductive process employed in this research in the classification of themes.

Table 4.3: The coding process in inductive analysis

Reading through transcripts	Identification of codes	Group the codes to form categories	Reduce overlap and redundancy	Read through transcripts to identify quotes to support
Many pages of transcripts	Many codes identified	16 themes	10 themes	5 themes

Adapted from Creswell (2003: 266)

The 20 pages of the transcripts are attached as appendix (Appendix 9) in this thesis.

The data yielded six themes as indicated below:

- Causes of suicide (*cf.* 5.3) – This theme came as a surprise on me. I did not ask them about the causes but in the drawings I wanted them to elaborate on the interventions. They volunteered this information. To me this meant that youth were familiar with suicide phenomenon and that they were aware that knowing about the causes could be the start of curbing incidents of suicide.
- Strategies to increase social support (*cf.* 5.4) – I was expecting such a theme. I was aware of the difficulties in terms of access to mental health facilities and lack of counselling services in their communities.
- Strategies to increase faith (*cf.* 5.5) – This is another theme that came as a surprise, especially when participants suggested that religious

education should be taught in schools. This is an indication of the value that these participants put in their religion.

- Strategies to reduce stress (*cf.* 5.6)- Considering the living conditions that participants were in it was not surprising that they came up with such an intervention. This theme also highlights the importance of recreation and physical activity on mental wellbeing.
- Strategies for awareness and education (*cf.* 5.7) – I was not surprised that participants proposed this strategy. I knew that there was a lack of information regarding suicidality in schools and in communities. What was astonishing was their suggestion of gate keeping by teachers, peers and parents. This was an indication to me that these participants were aware of the suicide phenomenon and its devastating effects.
- Experiences of suicide (*cf.* 5.8) – I was not expecting that the participants would have such a vast experience of suicide. This meant that these participants were at a higher risk than I initially thought.

4.9 QUALITY CRITERIA

The four constructs suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1999), namely credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, were used to evaluate the quality of this research. This was done to ensure trustworthiness of the procedure followed. According to Niewenhuis (2007:113), trustworthiness is the test of data analysis, findings and conclusions.

Credibility - Credibility in this research was assured by means of triangulation of different methods of data collection. Data from multiple sources were collected. The data from these sources were symbolic drawings, narratives explaining what the drawings entailed and structured Interviews on their experiences regarding suicide phenomenon. An in-depth description of the setting (*cf.* 4.6.1) and interaction of participants (*cf.* 4.6.2) were presented. There was prolonged engagement with the participants and school settings. I continuously engaged with the participants for more than two months. Peer debriefing was also done in

this research where peers examined my transcripts. One of the peers is also a PhD student who completed her data analysis before I started collecting my data. This was a person who had gone through the process, and was therefore experienced. The second peer was a socio-pedagogue who was working closely with the schools and who participated in my research as a professional councillor for vulnerable learners in these schools.

According to Patton (1990), the credibility of the researcher is especially important in qualitative research because the researcher is the major instrument of data collection. In this study I included biographical information, personal and professional information relevant to the study (*cf.* 1.6). A referential adequacy as suggested by De Vos *et al.* (2011:104) was established. I tested the analysis and interpretations against symbolic drawings, narratives and interviews.

Transferability - Transferability refers to whether the findings of this research can be transferred from the Northern Free State to other regions. Hence I tried to accumulate detailed descriptive data that would allow comparisons and include each site at which the data were collected, to allow the reader the opportunity to identify with the setting in which the research was conducted. Besides multiple data gathering methods used in this research, multiple informants (*cf.* 4.6.2) of different ages and gender were engaged. Although the case of youth in the Northern Free State may be unique, it could be an example within a broader group; therefore it was my responsibility to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the field work site was provided to enable the reader to make such a transfer, as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2005).

Dependability - Dependability in this study was about whether the research process was logical, well documented and audited and addressed the issues of dependability of my data. I put myself to account for the ever-changing context within the research conducted to make sure that data collected overlapped methods. The method used was to ensure that weaknesses were compensated by the strength of others. The process of data collection in this study was well

documented (*cf.* 4.7). An audit trail representing a means of assuring quality this research was developed in line with Lincoln and Guba's (1999:158) guidelines. This audit trail documented the course of the development of the analyses and all research decisions and the activities throughout the study. All decisions taken about the methodology analytic choices were stated explicitly. I maintained a log of all the research activity, documented all data collection and analysis procedures throughout the study, as indicated in the foregoing paragraphs and appendices. This was done to enable any observer to trace the course of the research step by step via the decisions made and procedures described.

Confirmability - Confirmability is about whether the findings of this study could be confirmed by another. In that sense I had to provide evidence that corroborates the findings and the interpretations by means of auditing. In order to reduce the effect of my own bias I made use of triangulation. I made use of a member check by giving participants the opportunity to verify if their symbolic drawings, narratives and interviews had been analysed accurately and if the data was a true reflection of what transpired.

4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Research ethics refer to the set of widely accepted moral principles and rules that guide research. Research ethics prevent research abuses by placing emphasis on the humane and sensitive treatment of respondents and participants (Strydom, 2005:63). Qualitative researchers therefore need to be sensitive to ethical principles because of their topic, face-to-face interactive data collection, an emergent design and reciprocity with participants. Criteria for research design involve the selection of informants-rich participants, efficient research strategies and adherence to research ethics. Then ethical guidelines include informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and others (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:420).

As I had to conduct the research in an ethical manner to enhance quality and trust-worthiness (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004:111), I had to apply for ethical

clearance from the Faculty of Education at the North-West University. The permission was granted and an ethical clearance number FH-SB-2012-0019 was awarded. The researcher also obtained permission from the Department of Education to conduct research at the five clustering schools (*cf.* Appendix 2). Permission was also obtained from the principals of the five schools and parents (*cf.* Appendix 4). The researcher then described the purpose of the study and tried to alleviate or eradicate fear of betrayal and deception by assuring the principal, SMT members, educators and SBST members of confidentiality and anonymity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:421).

4.10.1 Informed consent

According to De Vos *et al* (2011), obtaining informed consent implies providing adequate information on what the research is about, the expected duration of the participants' involvement, the procedures to be followed, possible advantages and disadvantages of participation, dangers to which participants may be exposed, and the credibility of the researcher's communication with potential participants. A written informed consent form with accurate and complete information about the goal of the investigation was provided to participants. To ensure that participants fully comprehended the details of the investigation, the information was read to them, and they were given opportunity to ask questions. I then distributed the consent forms to the learners who were willing to participate to give to their parents. The instruction was that if the parents needed clarity they were free to call me at any time and I would visit them their homes to further clarify the contents. Participants were given time (a week) to think about their participation in this research, about their role as participants and about the information to share, as this is sensitive topic. Research ethics requirements flow from the three principles, which are autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence

(Willis, 2007:112). It means the researcher has to respect and protect participants' right and has to describe the intent use of data.

Participants were not under any obligation to return the consent form if their parents or they themselves did not want to participate. I had to be at the school the whole time on the agreed date so that learners could come to me at any time they felt free to hand in their consent forms. All consent forms collected would be kept safe in a locked cupboard in my supervisor's office for five years as per university rule. A sample of an informed consent letter sent to parents is attached to this research (*cf.* Appendix 6). Although informed consent letters were sent to parents, learners were not under any obligation to participate even if the parents signed the forms. Learners were made aware that they were at liberty to withdraw at any stage of the research.

4.10.2 Confidentiality

It was explained to all the participants that confidentiality would be observed. Confidentiality was about keeping the information private as it was not intended for others to observe or analyse. The data collected in this research would be used for the purpose of this research only. The information about articles that would be written was communicated in the informed consent form. The original copies of the drawings, narrative and structured interviews would be kept safe in my researchers' locked cupboard. The consent forms were kept separately from the data, as surnames of the parents appeared on these forms. It would be difficult therefore for anyone to link the consent forms to the drawings, narratives and structured interview responses as the latter are only identified by means of numbers and pseudonyms.

Personal privacy was ensured by not using participants' real names, instead pseudonyms were used. The names of the schools were withheld to protect their identities. They were referred to as schools A, B, C, D, and E. Only my supervisor and I were aware of the participants' identities. The class teachers'

of grades 10, 11, 12 were made aware of the implications of violation of privacy and confidentiality of information; they therefore made a commitment to treat the research with confidentiality.

4.10.3 Debriefing of participants

A debriefing session was held with the participants to render them the opportunity to work through their experiences and its aftermath. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:475), problems generated by the research experienced can be corrected through debriefing. During this session participants were encouraged to discuss their feeling about the research immediately after data collection was completed. I had to engage the socio-pedagogue who worked as professional counsellor employed by the Department of Education. My role in this session was to encourage the participants to talk about their experiences and to brief them on the results of the study. The role of the socio- pedagogue was to offer group counselling and to continue with these sessions as she deemed fit. Participants had access to the findings of this research and that they could contact the researchers if they had problems concerning the study.

4.10.4 Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation in this study was based on Guillemin and Gillam (2005:71) premise that participation should at all times be voluntary. The information about voluntary participation and the potential impact of the research was communicated to participants beforehand. This information offered the participants the opportunity to withdraw from the research if they wish to do so.

4.10.5 Avoidance of harm

Participants may experience concrete harm with regard to their family life and relationships. According to Babbie and Mouton (2007:27), the ethical rule of social research is that it must bring no harm to participants. Everything we do in life can possibly harm someone and therefore I had to weigh the risks against the

importance and possible benefits of the specific research project. I had an ethical obligation to protect participants within all possible reasonable limits from any form of physical discomfort that might have emerged from the research project (Creswell, 2003:64). In some cases negative effects exist for participants every day in natural situations.

4.10.6 Avoidance of deception

According to Struwig and Stead (2001:69), deception refers to misleading participants, deliberately misrepresenting facts or withholding information from them. It also involves offering incorrect information in order to ensure the participation of participants. It happens when the researcher misleads participants through verbal instructions, or the actions of the researcher and/or certain aspects of the setting.

The information in this research was not plagiarised; all sources were acknowledged. Participants were told about the research and everything they needed to know about their involvement in the study. Parents gave written consent for the participation of their children and learners' consent was verbal. At no stage were participants misled and the data presented in this study is a true reflection of what transpired during data collection.

4.10.7 Competence of the researcher

According to Wiersma (2000:148), researchers are obliged to ensure that they are competent, honest and adequately skilled to undertake the proposed investigation. Even well-intentioned and well-planned research can fail or can produce invalid results if the researchers and/or field workers are not adequately qualified and equipped, and if there is no adequate supervision of the project (Wiersma, 2000:159).

Although I had not been trained in data collection methods in qualitative research specifically, I attended a workshop on qualitative research as a method. In the data collection, analysis and interpretation phases I worked closely with my supervisor who is a qualitative researcher. I also worked closely with the socio-pedagogue during field work. Although I am an experienced teacher, I had to engage the services of a health professional, not only for counselling of the participants but also for advice.

4.10.8 Publication of the findings

The data gathered should be formulated and conveyed clearly and unambiguously to avoid or minimise misappropriation of participants (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:126). Care was taken that no biased language was used regarding gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability or age, as suggested by Creswell (2003:67).

Findings should be revealed to participants as a form of recognition and to maintain good future relationships with the community concerned. It is not only I who gained knowledge about the phenomenon, but also the participants about themselves. As indicated above (*cf.* 4.8.3), during the debriefing session the findings of this research were conveyed to participants. On 26 October 2015, in a teaching practice symposium which was hosted by the School of Educational Sciences on the Vaal Triangle campus of the North-West University, I presented the findings of the study (*cf.* Appendix 11). The study was well received by seasoned academicians, researchers and educationists who attended the symposium and listened to my presentation. I received valuable information that helped me in the finalisation of this study. After the thesis has been accepted by the North-West University I will continue communicating the results with teachers and parents of schools where I gathered the data. I will disseminate the information to the officials of the Department of Education in the Fezile Dabi municipal district, especially those who are in the support services.

4.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the method of research employed in this research which is guided by the interpretivist paradigm. The method of research which was deemed suitable was qualitative, explorative research. The data collection methods included the draw and write technique and structured interviews. Schools were selected in three circuits in the Fezile Dabi district where a sample of 43 participants was drawn. Five high schools participated with learners from Grades 10-12 volunteering to participate.

The research sites and participant background are presented in this chapter. In addition to the background offered in Chapter 1, the aim was to highlight the context of the research.

The next chapter presents research results.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports on the responses of participants in this research. As indicated previously there were 43 participants who took part in a draw and write technique that was one of the data collection tools employed in this research. Twenty four of these participants were interviewed individually. The drawings are presented first, followed by the narratives and lastly the interview responses.

Six themes that were identified by means of inductive data analysis included:

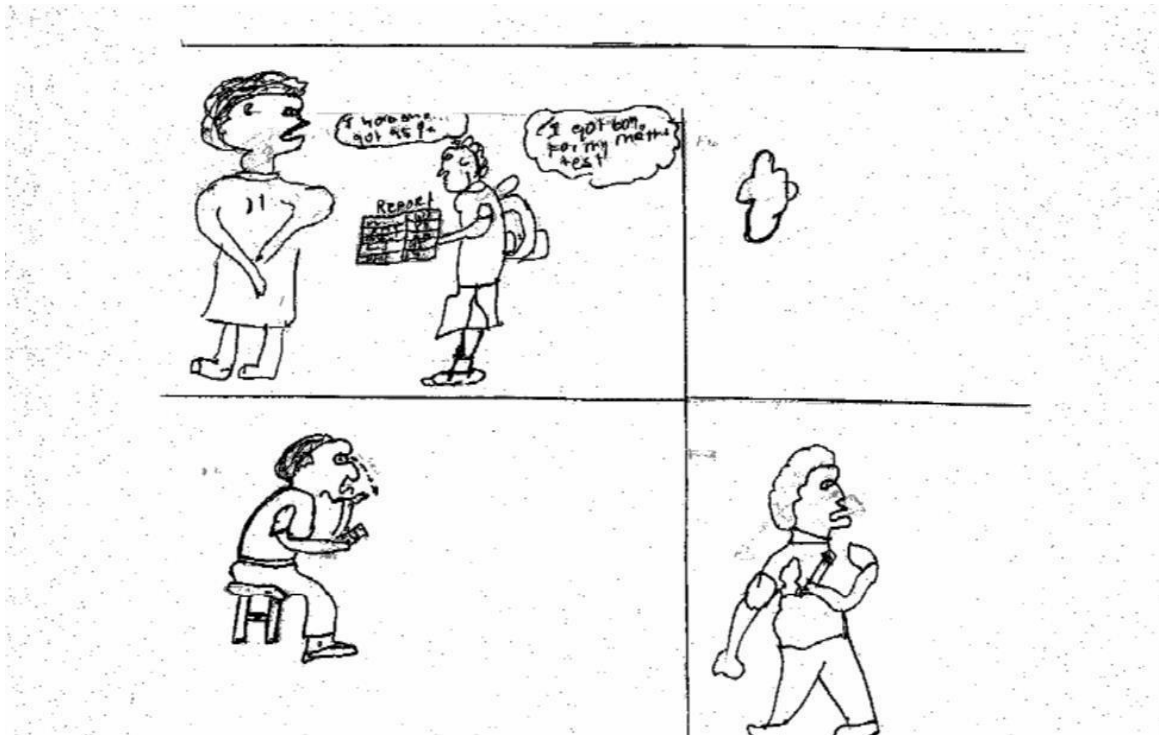
- Causes of suicide
- Strategies to increase social support
- Strategies that are faith-based
- Strategies to reduce stress
- Strategies for awareness and education
- Experiences of suicide

The first theme pertaining to the causes of suicide was supported by twenty four participants. These participants were grouped under this theme because of their main focus on the sources of suicide. Although others also mentioned a few causes their focus was on intervention.

5.2 CAUSES OF SUICIDE

The first drawing is that of **Loyiso**, which he divided into four parts. The first part depicts a mother figure and a learner talking. The second part of the drawing depicts something resembling a cloud. The third part shows someone sitting on a chair crying. The fourth part is of a male looking behind him while the whole body faces front.

Figure 5.1: Loyiso's drawing



Loyiso's narrative part 2: *-Parents are the source of suicide. Some parents do not understand and do not appreciate the marks that their children have obtained".* With reference to part 2 Loyiso indicated that: *-Social networks can make a person to be negative, especially facebook, whereby somebody can post or blackmail another leading to suicide".* With reference to part 3 he indicated that:

"Alcohol is harmful to children under 18 or youth. They can harm each other."

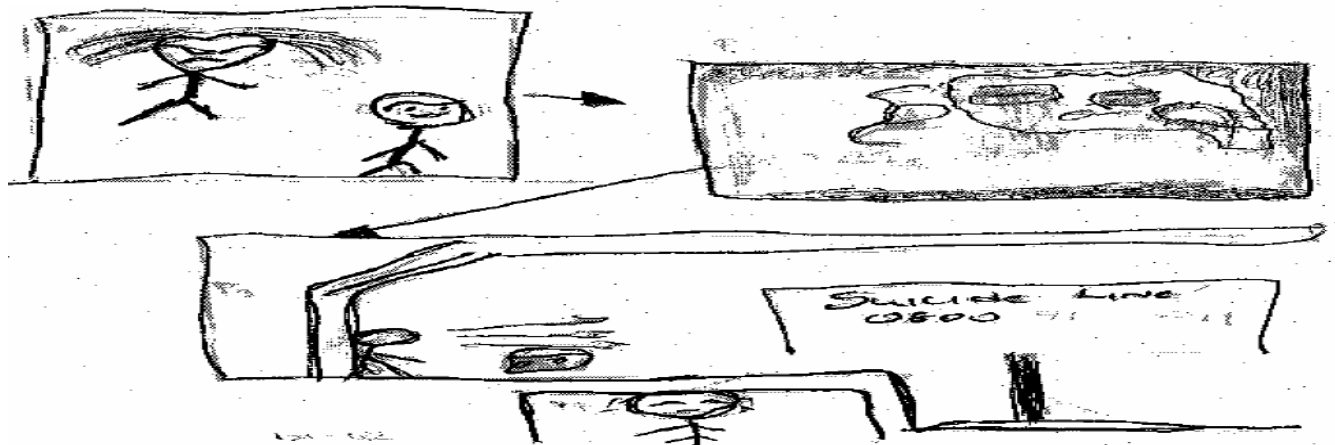
The sources of suicide, according to Loyiso, include clashes between parents and children over school performance, cyber-bullying and alcohol. Loyiso perceived suicide as caused by interpersonal and personal factors. The

interpersonal problems he mentioned were between parents and their children and between children and their peers.

All four causes of suicide indicated by Loyiso are supported by literature. There is an association between completed suicide and drug abuse and substances such as alcohol; drug abuse and smoking can be triggers of suicidal behaviour (*cf.* 2.4.2.2). Literature also indicates that cyber-bullying and cyber-harassment increase the risk of suicide among youth. The example given by Loyiso indicates that youth can be intentionally targeted by others in the form of harassment or humiliation by means of cellular phones (*cf.* 2.4.4). Literature warns us though that cyber-bullying in itself cannot be identified as a sole predictor of suicide in youth; it can only increase the risk of suicide by amplifying feelings of isolation, instability, and hopelessness for those with pre-existing emotional, psychological or environmental issues (*cf.* 2.4.4). South African law regarding alcohol consumption is not watertight; youth still buy liquor regardless of the minimum drinking age (*cf.* 3.2.1.4).

Sekele's drawing is divided into four parts. The first part shows an angry adult and a child crying, the second part shows a child with a Rattex rat poison container. The third part shows a child leaning against a wall looking at a board with a suicide helpline number on it. The fourth part shows a child looking happy.

Figure 5.2 Sekele's drawing



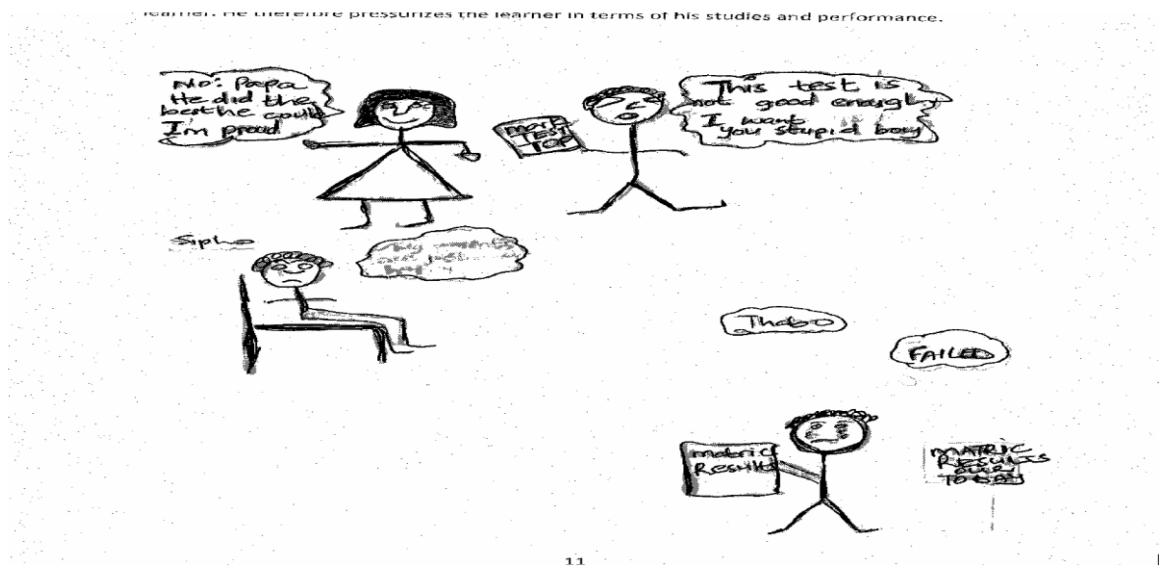
Sekele's narrative: *-Parents are always arguing with their children and this makes them to feel down. They believe that they are not being loved".* In part 2 he stated that: *-The child feels abandoned and excludes himself from the world choosing to be alone. This gives him more time to think about nasty thoughts that leads to suicide."* In part 3 he indicated: *-In order to refrain from suicidal thoughts you need to consider reading information from the local notice board that is alternatively giving toll free number that you can dial for help."* In part 4 he specified: *-When seeking for information based on suicidal, you need to follow the instructions and adhere to the rules."*

Sekele highlighted conflict between parents and children as reasons for suicide, which makes children feel unloved and abandoned. According to him suicidal thoughts, isolating themselves and feeling down are the results of such emotions. Sekele offered two solutions: make use of helpline centres and follow the advice of helpers. It also seems that the helpline numbers have to be accessible to the youth.

Sekele's strategy is that of using a helpline, which is indicated in the literature as safe for youth as they can talk about their problems, thoughts and feelings with ease because they do not see the counsellor in person (*cf.* 3.3.1.1). The conflicts and arguments within the family are directly associated with the prevalence of suicidal phenomena (*cf.* 2.4.5.2). It is therefore important to reduce these squabbles if possible for peace to prevail.

Motsoeneng displayed a drawing with four sketches showing a mother who seems to be happy about the performance of her child, and a father who is not. Both parents are standing and the child is sitting. In another part of the picture the child is holding something like an academic report.

Figure 5.3: Motsoeneng's drawing



Motsoeneng's narrative: *-A lot of learners tend to commit suicide because of the pressure they receive from their parents, especially about issues like school work, where a child would feel so pressured to please their parents and when they fail, they feel as if they are not good enough just like the case of Siphso. To help remedy the situation, parents should try to be more understandable and more supportive. Some of the issues that contributed to suicide in learners are the matric results that are published in newspapers. When a learner has failed their matric, they feel like they have been humiliated on National stage. The disappointment becomes more overwhelming which will lead them to commit suicide. In this regard the government could help by releasing the results privately and also deploy counsellors at schools to help with the counselling for those who failed by motivating them and giving them alternative options."*

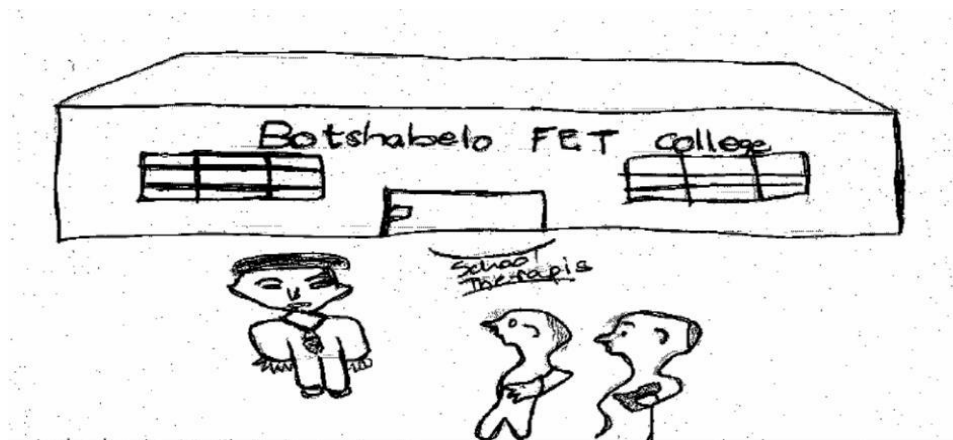
Motsoeneng mentioned the following causes of suicide: pressure on children to perform academically to please their parents; the feeling of humiliation when one has failed matric; and a feeling of not being good enough. All the problems highlighted are related to academic performance. It seems that not only parents put pressure on learners who are failing but also the community. Motsoeneng offered solutions to the problems, including that parents should be understanding

and supportive, that the matric results should not be published in the media and that when the results are out matric students be offered counselling services. Counselling services for matric students are not yet in place in South African schools. Thus, the main cause of suicidal behaviour among youth, as indicated by Motsoeneng, is academic failure.

Literature highlights that youth feel overwhelmed when there is lack of support and ways of coping with adverse circumstances in their lives (cf. 1.1). The academic failure seems to be too much for some learners to handle while others cope well, depending on their circumstances. Poor performance could be caused by lack of focus on school work, lack of understanding, distractions competing with school activities and or poor attendance. Poor school attendance, negative attitude towards school and school work and school failure are positively associated with suicide attempts, suicide ideation and increased prevalence of suicidal phenomena (cf. 2.5).

Madibu's drawing displays a Further Education and Training (FET) College and people in front of the college.

Figure 5.4: Madibu's drawing



Madibu's narrative: *"Most of the time older children who repeat the same grade several times are usually the ones that have corrupt behaviour at school. This is*

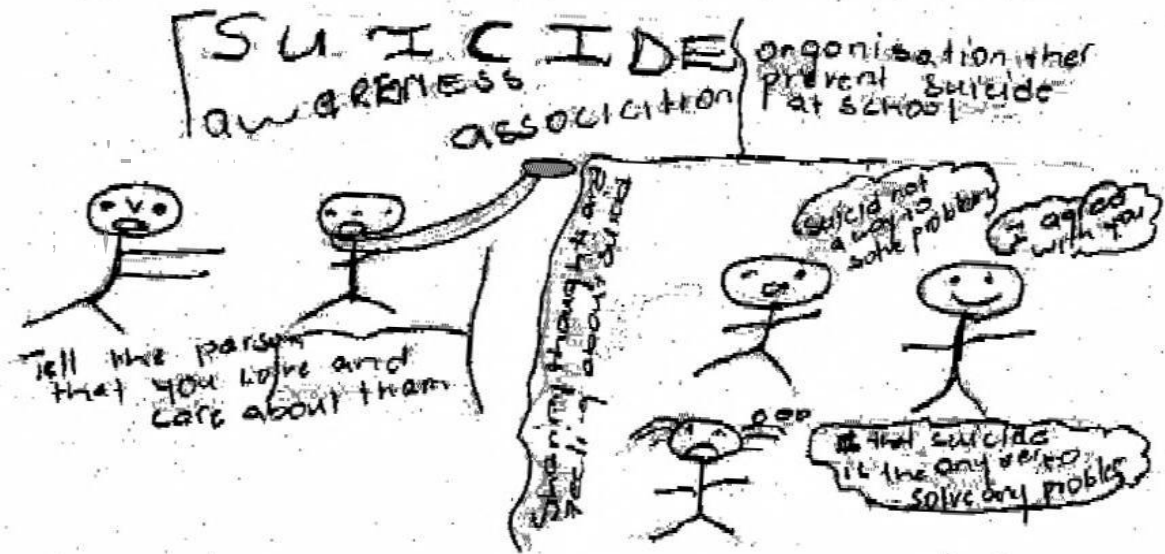
all because of their personal vendettas and in some cases their behaviour is caused by the need for attention from teachers that act as parents to any child at school. But in less fortunate situations, teachers tend to let them down or ignore them because of their age. Rejection makes a person to feel devalued; they'll start thinking about doing drugs, crime or even worse, suicide. That is why older children have to be sent to FET colleges the time they reach the age in which is not suitable for the particular grade. At puberty stage, children with small bodies tend to get bullied and they become very shy about it. As time goes and the bullying gets worse they aren't able to talk about it, instead they consider suicide. If schools had supplementary therapist that would be able to make children open up, the suicidal issues at schools would decrease at a fair rate from where it is now."

The causes of suicide, according to Madibu, include failure to progress academically, and rejection leading to a feeling of being worthless. Bullying was also mentioned as a contributory factor. The problems at school contribute to drug use or abuse and suicide. The causes indicated by Madibu are related to school pressures, similar to the causes indicated by the previous participants. Madibo offered two school-related solutions, such as transferring older learners to FET colleges if there is no academic progress at school, and having counselling service at schools.

Learners are entitled to a safe learning environment. Teachers have a responsibility to ensure a safer environment that is conducive to education. Learners should be protected from all forms of violence and be in an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being (cf. 3.4.1.3). If bullying is rife in schools that could mean that learners are not safe and would therefore be exposed to factors that lead to suicidality.

The picture drawn by **Tsotetsi** displays an awareness board and children who seem to be talking about suicide.

Figure 5.5: Tsotetsi's drawing



Tsotetsi's narrative: *Doubtful yet true, learners all over the world get to a certain stage where they are faced with peer pressure. Suicide is caused by peer pressure and pressure from families. Preventing this from happening is very much likely foreseeable, applying the factors that influence effective communication. Ineffective communication causes suicide to take place. Appropriate expression of views and feelings can also be abided within the school premises by a certain code of ethics. Learners can also prevent each other from committing suicide. Learners can also encourage each other even if they do not agree on certain terms. They can respect and try to understand each other. Promoting social support, preventing loneliness, improving the feeling of self-worth is a start."*

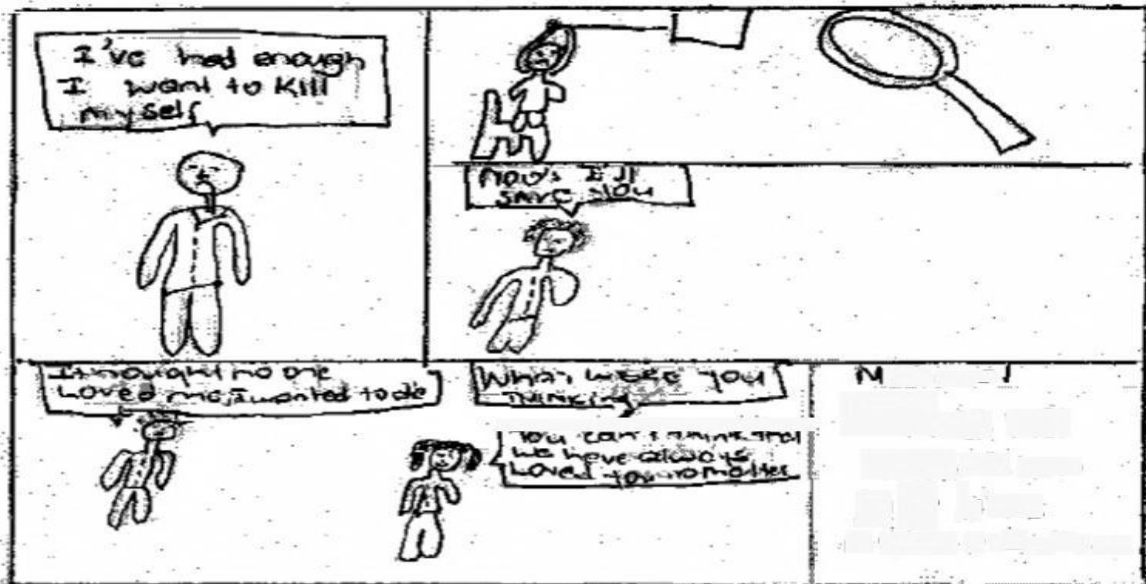
Tsotetsi offered suicide causes and solutions. The causes included peer pressure, pressure from parents and the inability to communicate and express feelings. The solutions comprised effective communication, an environment at schools conducive to the expression of views and feelings, increased support and enhancement of self-worth. Tsotetsi also realized that peers could be on the forefront of preventing suicide as they communicate almost daily. Strategies suggested by Tsotetsi are all school-based. These interventions, except for social support, can be implemented

through the curriculum.

The causes mentioned by Tsetetsi are supported in the literature. According to literature, feeling sad, lonely and down are some of the symptoms of depression (cf. 2.4.1.3). Literature also indicates that depression is an illness caused by negative life experiences; it is not a sign of weakness (cf. 2.4.1.3). If depression is left untreated it can lead to bipolar disorders. The feelings of humiliation can be overwhelming during this developmental stage of emotional turmoil (cf. 2.4.5.2).

Hlubi's drawing is divided into five parts. In the first part there is a person having suicidal thoughts. Part two shows a person standing on a chair hanging himself. The third part shows another person standing. The fourth part shows two people talking and the fifth show suicide prevention helpline numbers.

Figure 5.6: Hlubi's drawing



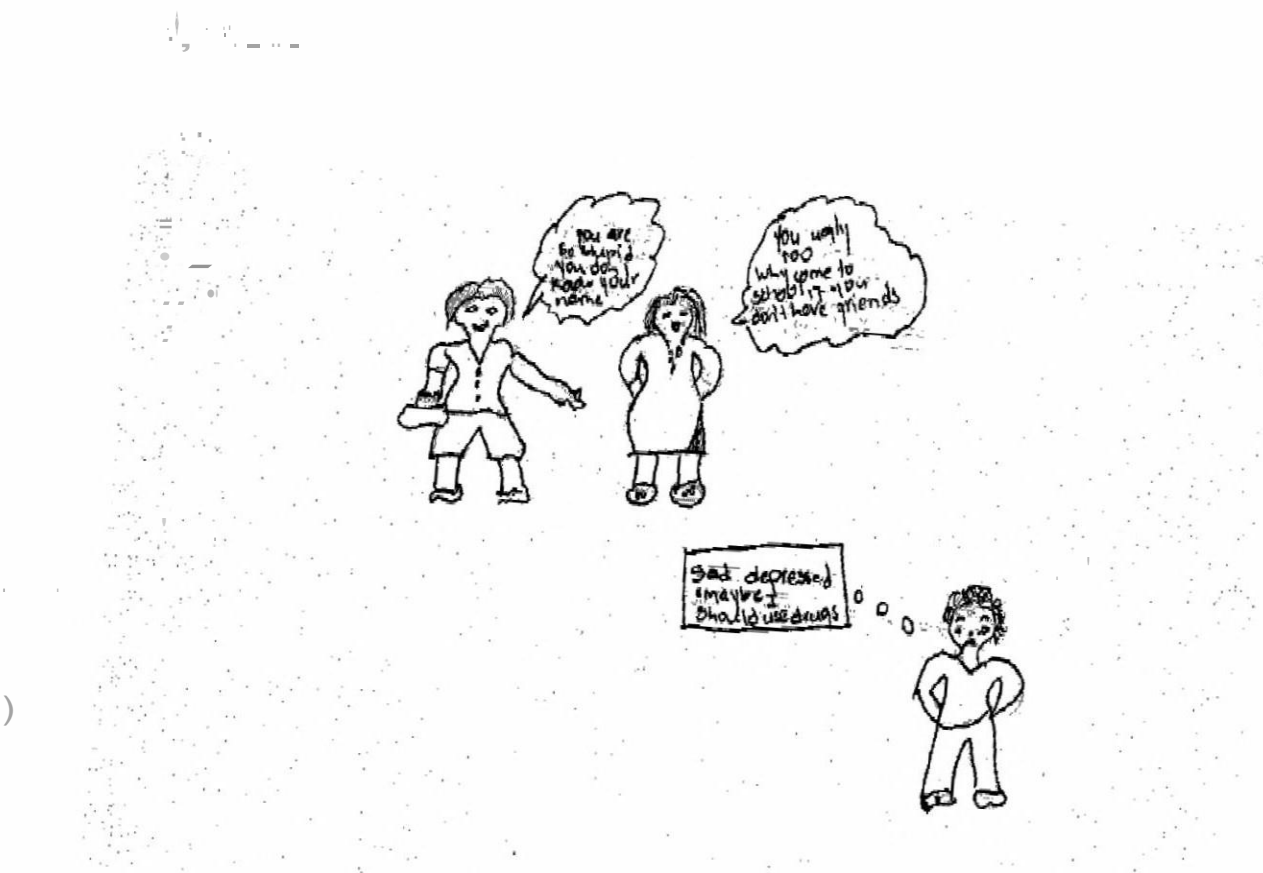
Hlubi's narrative: *“Basically this cartoon is about a teenage who tried to kill himself because he thought he was always left out in everything and was bullied at school. He tried hanging himself but one of his relatives arrived on time to save him. In order to avoid such this teenager should be involved in community work or play sports or if you have a teenager who behaves in this way you can contact organizations such as National suicide prevention life line.”*

Hlubi offered causes, prevention and means of committing suicide. The reasons comprised feelings of being left out or ignored and being bullied. Hlubi reiterated what Loyiso and Madibu realised as a root cause of suicide in schools: bullying. Like Madibu, he mentioned hanging as the means of committing suicide. It seems that suicide by hanging is common in their communities. He suggested involvement in community work, sport and making use of organisations that prevent suicide in the community. According to Hlubi the resources in the community and recreational activities should not be ignored.

Literature states that hanging is usually reported to be the most common, as victims aged 10-34 years mainly use hanging (*cf.* 2.7). It seems to be the number one method of committing suicide in the communities the participants are from. Involvement in collective physical activities, such as team sports, can also increase young people's communication and interpersonal skills, connectedness, belonging and enhance their self-esteem (*cf.* 3.4.1.3.2).

Beauty's drawing displays three people, two talking together and the younger one standing at distance thinking, with the following in his or her mind: sad, depressed, use drugs.

Figure 5.7: Beauty's drawing



Beauty’s narrative: *“Suicide may be caused by feeling risk abounding or being bullied by friends. Not having friends may make you feel lonely and it may lead to depression. Most of the youth, when they face depression tend to commit suicide or even abuse drugs. The only way to prevent it is to encourage the youth to be proud of who they are and strive to be better and successful.”*

Beauty, like other participants, offered both causes and solutions. The causes according to her include being at risk, being bullied and feeling lonely. She believes these factors lead to depression. It seems that she thinks of suicide as happening in stages one after the other. This continuum can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 5.8: Beauty’s developmental stages of suicide



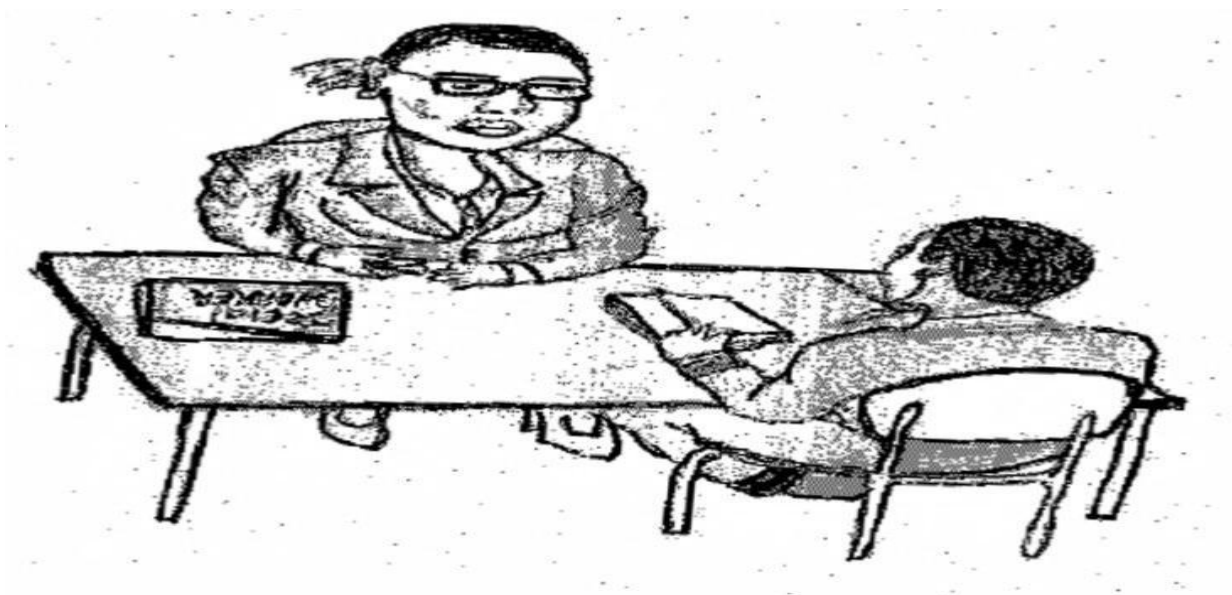
It seems that multifarious causes such as those mentioned in number 1 and 2 overwhelm youth, leading to suicidal behaviour.

Beauty suggested preventative measures encompassing an enhancement of self-esteem and motivation.

In some teens the normal feelings of sadness, loneliness and humiliation caused by upsetting life experiences can precipitate depression, anxiety or another mental disorder, which in turn increase suicide risk (cf. 2.4.1.4). Literature also indicates that youth may abuse drugs or alcohol, often in an attempt to medicate their depression (cf. 2.4.1.4).

Thenjiwe's drawing shows an adult wearing formal clothes sitting on a chair talking to a younger person. There is something like a book in the middle of the table. The adult seems to be listening attentively to the young man talking.

Figure 5.9: Thenjiwe's drawing



Thenjiwe's narrative: *"Many children commit suicide because they don't have anyone to talk to about problems that they are having. So basically what my*

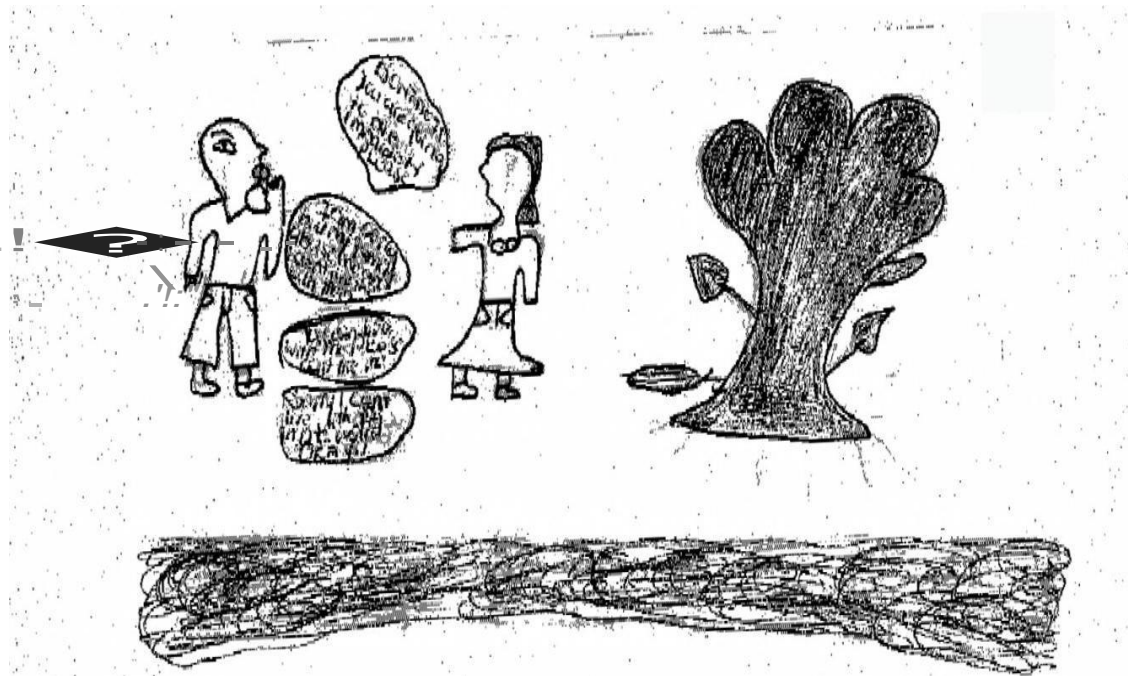
drawing is suggesting is that at school, the SMT along with the department of education can organize social workers and psychologists to visit schools at least twice a month to have one on one counselling sessions with the pupils. They can pick up children that are emotionally troubled and thinking of killing themselves. I have drawn a picture/portrait of a social worker. I think social workers can help because they talk to you then they try to help you feel safe and not to commit suicide and tell you the outcomes of the decisions you will be taking. My mind map is about things or people who can help in preventing youngsters from committing suicide. Teachers help by counselling learners not to commit suicide.”

Thenjiwe offered the following cause: not having people to talk to about problems. She then came up with a number of solutions that should be implemented collaboratively with a number of stakeholders. She sees a need for the formation of a support structure for learners, involving psychologists, social workers and teachers. The main problem highlighted by Thenjiwe is that of not having people to share problems with, which can be solved through provision of one-on-one counselling services at schools.

Thenjiwe’s recommendation is in line with literature that indicates that closer cooperation between educators and health service providers is necessary to achieve more successful prevention of suicidal behaviour in young learners (cf. 3.6.1). However, literature cautions that counseling can’t cure problems, but it is a way of finding ways to cope and maybe resolving some of the issues that may be contributing to a person’s suicidal tendencies. Referring youth who are at risk of suicide to someone who is equipped to offer them the help they need, while educators continue to support them (cf. 3.5.2) is said to be a better option. The problem arises when the referral systems are not in place.

In **Qhekeka’s** drawing there is a big tree, two people talking/arguing and a rising sun. There is something like a road in front of the people.

Figure: 5.10 Qhekeka’s drawing



Qhekeka's narrative: *People kill themselves with poison. Children kill themselves because others have problems at home like especially abuse and rape. Poison is dangerous in this country, and most people kill themselves using poison because it is easy to find. Many people sell poison that kills rats at home. But if we can look at this in general, many people buy it so that they can poison other people or themselves. We can solve it by having counselling through social workers. In this country we must stop selling things like poison and staff that people kill themselves with. Others kill themselves because of peer pressure."*

Qhekeka highlighted two solutions: one is to limit access to poisonous substances. A rat poison sold by street vendors in South Africa is not regulated, anyone can buy it. Its street name is *mafeneta*, meaning it kills instantly. Qhekeka advocates for the regulation of this rat poison. His second suggestion is for the involvement of social workers.

Qhekeka's proposal is in line with literature which states that there should be an intensive control of availability of toxic substances including pharmaceutical drugs (cf. 3.2.1.4). *Mafeneta* is a highly lethal poison sold at by the street vendors anywhere nearer busy shopping areas in South Africa. There seems to

be no control on this rat poison as anyone including children, can buy it. People who would buy this rat poison would be those with intent to complete suicidal.

A summary of causes of suicide as indicated by the eight participants are presented in the table below:

Table 5.1: Summary of the causes of suicide as perceived by participants

Participant	Interpersonal conflicts or problems	Personal	Reasons
Loyiso	Parents and children having problems, cyber-bullying, being hurt and in trouble	Drugs, hurt and being in trouble	Failure to perform academically
Oliphant		Alcohol and Drugs	Academic failure
Sekele	Problems between parents and children	Easy access to poison	Relationship
Motsoeneng		Pressure to perform to please parents; feeling of humiliation when failed, not being good enough, desperation to be loved	Failure to perform academically, relationships
Madibu	Rejection, feeling devalued, being bullying	Failure to progress academically, drug use	Failure to perform academically, family problems
Tsotetsi	Peer pressure, pressure from parents	Inability to communicate and express feelings	hardships
Hlubi	Feelings of being ignored and bullied		
Beauty	being bullied, not having friends,	Feeling lonely and	
Thenjiwe	Not having people to talk to about problems, to protect themselves from others		Bad behaviour
Qhekeka	Abuse and rape, peer pressure		
Tumelo			Bad behaviour
Moleboheng			Family problems, academic failure
Selometsi			Relationships
Zepata			academic failure
Siphiwe			Family feud
Matsole			Depression, stress
Sonti			Ill-treatment by relatives after death of
Skosana			Relationships
Victor			Grief, contagion
Lindokuhle			Family problems,
Katleho			Relationships
Sipho1			Academic failure
Sipho 2			Family problems, abuse
Mkhumbeni			Not making progress in life

The table above indicates that most of the causes as perceived by participants relate to interpersonal factors. Most of the root sources mentioned were academic failure which resulted in conflict between children and parents, family problems and those of relationships. The first and the latter causes can be addressed at personal level. Bullying was also mentioned as a factor which has the potential of being aggressive and violent. Although, according to literature, schools offer an opportunity to aim anti-bullying messages at youth and there are also sites for the identification and early intervention of bullying distress (*cf.* 3.4.1.1), it seems that teachers do not take up their responsibility to intervene when learners are bullied.

5.3 STRATEGIES TO INCREASE SOCIAL SUPPORT

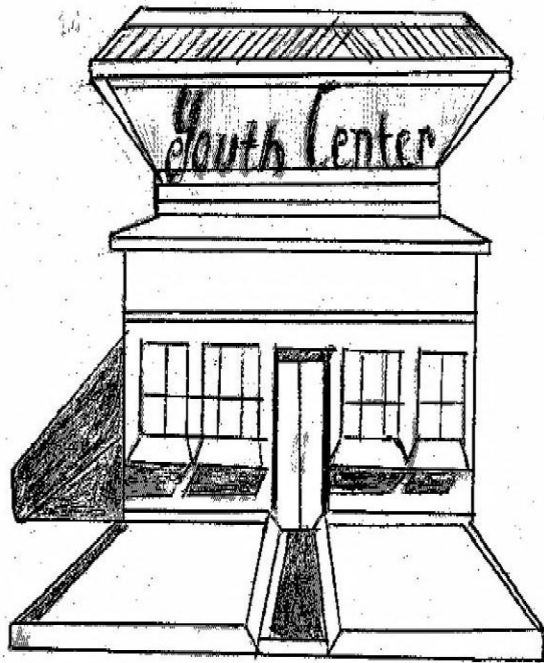
In this section the participants identified several strategies that intensify social support. Social support was either perceived or actualised assistance by parents, peers and community members. There was a plea from the participants to be cared for, assisted and to be part of a supportive social network. These strategies are divided into four sub-themes: support by community members, parents and family, teachers/schools and peers.

Community support

Participants indicated reliance on community resources provided by Non-Governmental Organisations. Drawings that fell into this category were done by Lesego, Tumelo and Goodman. Two of these drawings depicted community youth centres

Lesego drew a community centre that she thought would be pivotal in preventing suicide. Her picture contains a nice huge building, with big windows and a door. There is a visible sign on top of it that would be difficult to miss if this was a real building. The building is well structured and neat and attractive.

Figure 5.11 Lesego's drawing



Lesego's narrative: *-Community Centre will help the youth to share their problems with other people e.g. health professionals in terms of counselling, training and to showcase their talents e.g. arts, sports etc. They will get life lessons from the life coaches to help them with self-esteem and also teach them about the importance of working together as young people. They can learn how to be great future leaders of their communities. To teach them about self-motivation: not to give up easily and to embrace criticism sometimes,||*

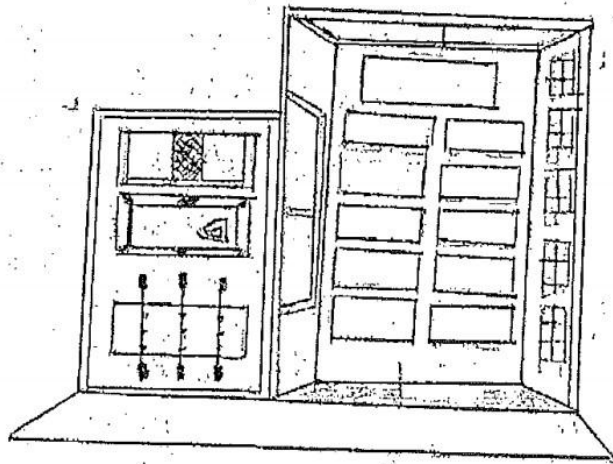
A community centre as depicted by Lesego is a resource centre where there are people with expertise with whom problems can be shared. It is also recreational because of sporting codes that exist that one may be part of, and youth can also be supported by professionals in enhancing their self-concept. The youth centre that is envisaged by Lesego therefore has resources that youth might need in

order to escape the realities of life. Although there are youth centres in poor communities, the question is whether they do have what Lesego is looking for in a centre. These centres are run by Non-Governmental Organisations that depend on funding from the government nationally. In cases where the funding dries up, the centres close.

According to literature erection of recreational facilities helps learners to engage in physical activities and also increase the release of beneficial chemicals in the brain, possibly preventing the onset of mental health problems (*cf.* 3.4.1.3.2). Another important realisation is that of comprehensive eclectic strategies that are multi-faced implemented by different institutions. It seems that these community centres can also provide a platform for self-discovery. It is indicated in the literature that a strong self-esteem and a realistic assessment of self-worth are perhaps the most vital assets a person can take on his or her journey through life (*cf.* 3.4.1.3.1).

The figure below was drawn by **Tumelo**, who also believed that community centres are vital for suicide prevention. Tumelo's building looks like it has six-storeys, if one counts the windows. It does not show a door like Lesego's but it appears to be wide open.

Figure 5.12: Tumelo's drawing



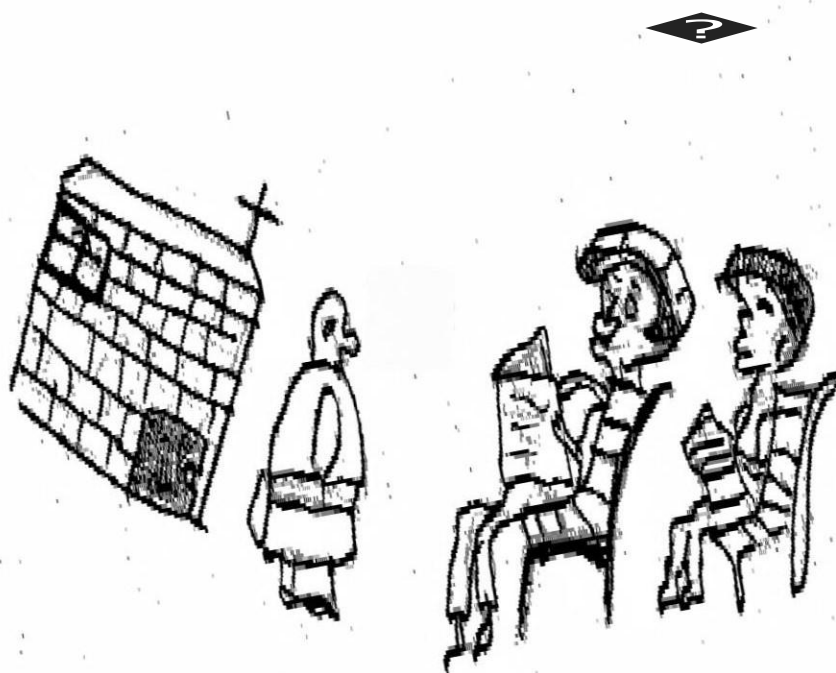
Tumelo's narrative: *-The best way to prevent suicide is all the school learners after school hours from 16H00 till 19H00, to be in the community centre .even if we don't have the centre in our location but the government have to do the rest to build it. After school hours, all the children/learners from grade 7 till grade 12 have to be taken to the centre where all of them will be studying and after studies they will do some sport to refresh their minds and have to be taken to their homes with the transport. All the teachers must try to be friendly with the learners' too.*

Tumelo's idea is of a community centre that provides space for after-classes for studying and recreation. The implication of Tumelo's notion could be that learners have to be kept busy without time for other things except studying and playing. This idea is similar to that of Lesego; the difference is that Tumelo did

not include many activities in the centre although his building seems to be having a lot of areas. It would seem that these areas are for accommodation of all the learners from the grades he mentioned. Tumelo took his idea further by suggesting the involvement of the government for the building of youth centres and transportation of learners from schools to the centres and to their homes.

Goodman's drawing shows a building with a cross on top and people sitting in chairs with helmets on and a man he indicated as a pastor.

Figure 5.13: Goodman's drawing



Goodman's narrative: *-According to my picture/drawing we can be able to help youth to prevent suicide by asking for help from the pastors. They can call children to their churches and tell them about their safety and what must they do to keep themselves in a good space with other people. Social workers can help you with your problems. Sometimes you find that young people commit suicide for having problem with their parents that are addicted to alcohol. When she/he comes home she/he doesn't care about her/his children the only thing they care about is alcohol. After that when their children ask them money to buy food they*

say I don't have money for you, why don't you quit school and go find a job so you can be able to buy yourself food with your own money. That is where you will find youth wanting to commit suicide."

Goodman's idea is for youth to get advice and guidance from the pastors and social workers in the community. This idea reaffirms the importance of drawing resources from the community indicated above (*cf.* 2.3).

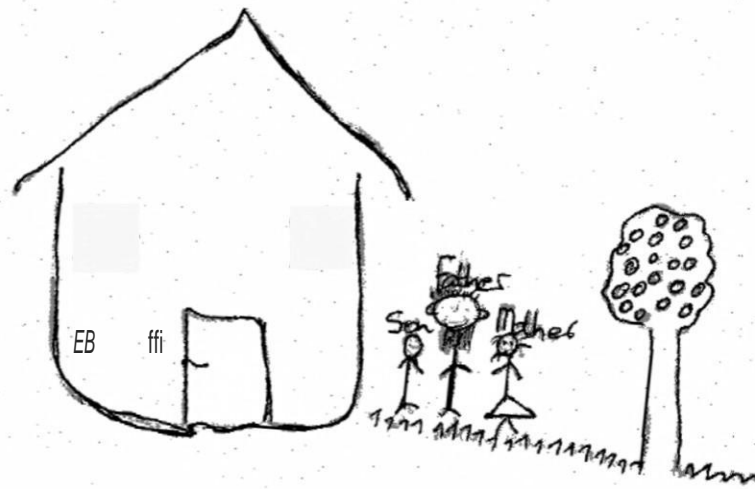
In summary, community support was based on what the communities could offer: a physical structure where activities could take place; human resources in the form of social workers, pastors and people with knowledge about mental health issues. Learners attending these centres would get advice, guidance counselling and would have access to different sporting facilities.

- **Support from family members**

Three participants indicated the importance of support from families and extended family members.

The first drawing in this theme is that of **Kabelo** depicting a beautiful round hut, a tree and a family of three composed of a mother, a father and a son. All three people illustrated in this picture are short and have thin bodies, but they look happy.

Figure 5.14: Kabelo's drawing



Kabelo's narrative: *Having a happy family could help to reduce suicide in our country. Parents should be supportive towards their children. Some parents do not understand that children need their time. We all make mistakes and we learn from them, no one is perfect. Parents should sit down and talk to their children about everything that is happening in their children's life. Being open to your parents is the most important thing because you can let them know how you feel about something.*

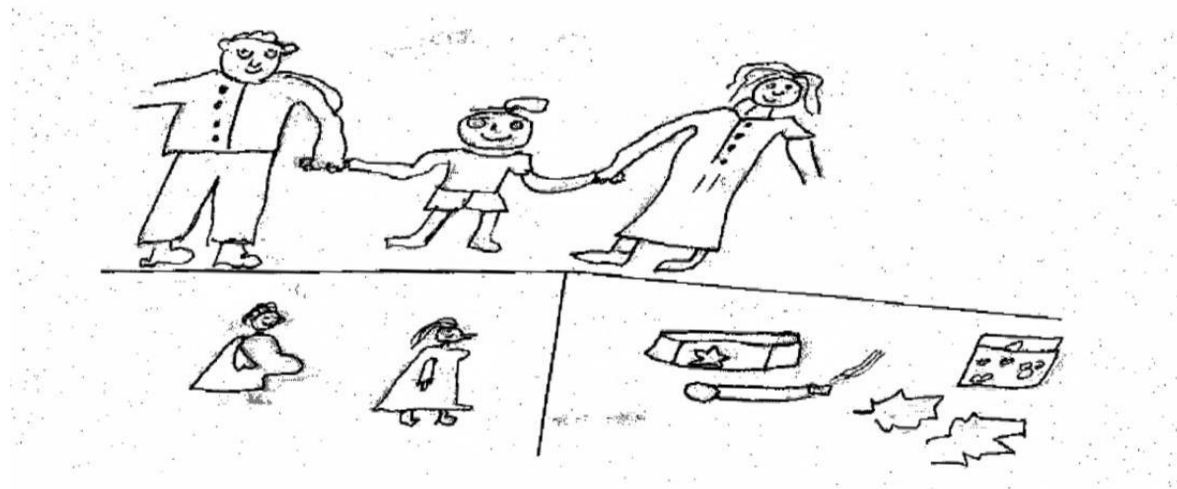
Kabelo's idea is that of a happy family with both parents who are supportive. An open and two-way type of communication was also regarded as important to Kabelo. He also voiced the importance of parents' understanding of their children: thus, family plays an important role in preventing suicide.

Open communication between children and their parents or caregivers could be a protective factor. According to literature adolescents who

indicated that their communication with their mothers and or fathers was difficult had an increased likelihood of suicide ideations (cf. 2.4.5.2).

Oliphant's drawing is divided into three sections: the first depicting a family of three, as in Kabelo's drawing above. The difference between the two families is that Oliphant's family is clothed and much bigger. The second part shows two women, one appearing to be pregnant. The third drawing is not clear, but there are two pieces of paper and something looking like a cigarette or a rolled *zol* or maybe *dagga* or *nyaope*.

Figure: 5.15 Oliphant's drawing



Oliphant's narrative: *“Supporting family, parents and friends it will prevent suicide amongst children. If children are not alone, feeling unloved, unwanted and not cared for they will not commit suicide. Children must be disciplined and raised by parents and receive counselling and guidance from health educators to prevent pregnancy amongst teenagers and pressure to commit suicide. Educate kids at homes and at school to retrain from using drugs, not having money to carry on with the need for drugs that will develop and committing suicide.”*

Oliphant advocated for a strong family structure that is supportive of its children. It seems as if Oliphant knows that the breakdown of this structure can lead to problems for the whole family. He puts an emphasis on being cared for, raised and disciplined by parents. The ideal structure of a family for Oliphant and Kabelo is that of a man and a woman living and raising children together. There is a breakdown of such family structures in South Africa, many children are raised by single parents, grandparents and caregivers. Learners need to be aware of such realities.

Ian drew two groups of people that look like they are taking opposite directions three in front and three at the back. Both these groups seem to be chatting and laughing.

Figure 5.17: Ian's drawing



Ian's narrative: *"Growing up is not easy for children and teenagers. They face many tough decisions and difficult life experiences that, at times, it is*

overwhelming. It can be prevented if adults at home and friends are aware of the warning signs and know what to do. Although children are not likely to seek to help, they do show signs to their friends, classmates, parents or trusted school personnel. Never ignore this sign: YOU CAN HELP!”

Ian firstly mentions the challenges of growing up that youth face that may be the cause of suicide among them. Ian is the first to realise that adults at home and peers can play a leading role in the prevention of suicide. He mentioned two important aspects of gate-keeping: being able to identify warning signs and knowledge of the procedures to follow. Ian is also aware that youth do not seek help when faced with suicidal behaviour.

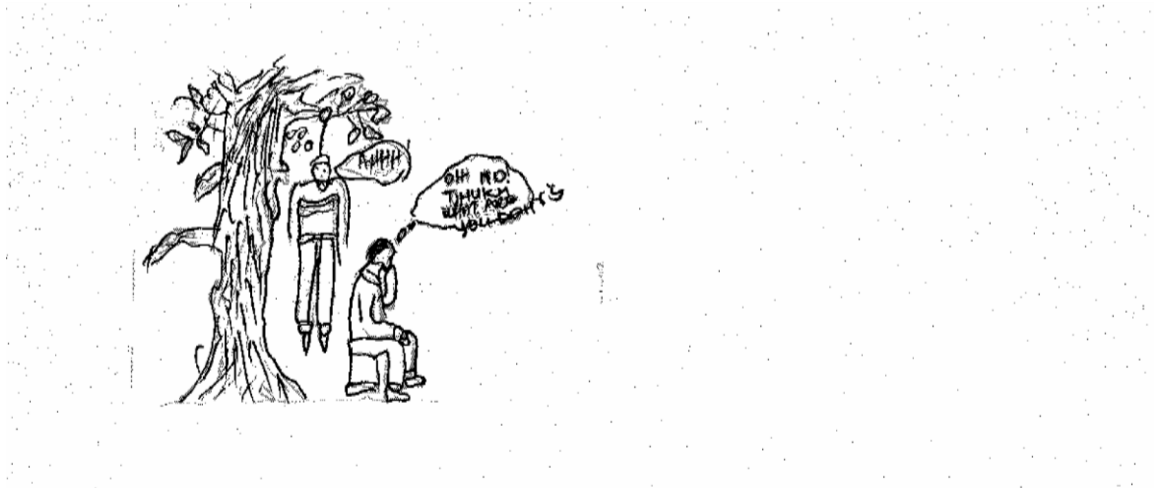
Literature concurs with Ian’s statement that youth are reluctant to seek help and warns that their reluctance to seek professional help is identified as a challenge to effective early intervention approaches (*cf.* 3.2.2.1.2).

The last drawing under this theme is that of **Moleboheng** who drew a big tree with small branches. She calls it a tree of sorrow. There is a rope hanging from one of the branches, two people, one on top of the chair next to the rope, and the other one leaning towards him or her. On the other side of the tree there are hands raised for support.

Figure 5.18: Moleboheng’s drawing

Selometsi's drawing shows two people: one hanging from a tree and another one sitting on a chair, thinking or crying. The chair is not far from the tree. Again the means of committing suicide by hanging comes up as it was also mentioned by Madibu and Hlubi earlier. It seems that suicide by hanging is the easiest method of suicide in their communities.

Figure 5.19: Selometsi's drawing



Selometsi's narrative: *"Below the boy is trying to commit suicide because of unknown reasons. Teachers must take time to understand other learners situations rather than to make it worse. The teachers must offer some help if they see things that are not alright. Counselling from social workers must also be offered to the depressed or devastated learners."*

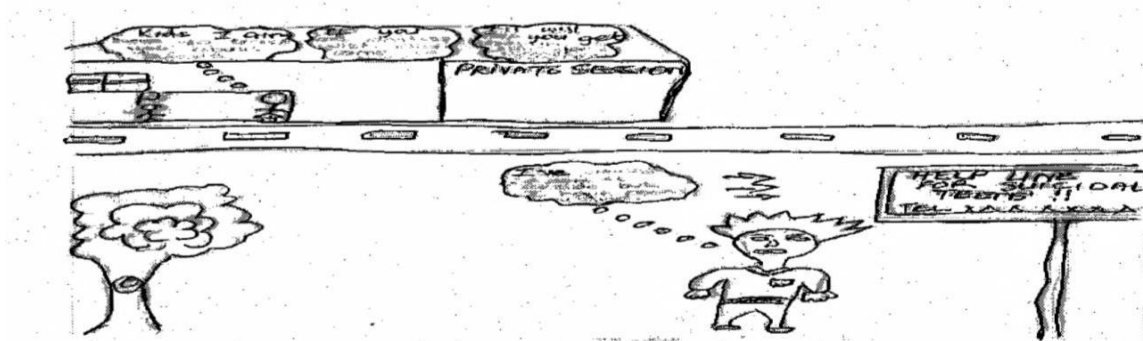
Selometsi's idea is that of teachers playing a major role in helping learners. Their understanding and assistance were indicated as key factors. Selometsi seems to be concerned about the fact that if teachers lack understanding of learners' circumstances more damage may be caused. Selometsi also mentions the involvement of social workers for counselling of learners. This could therefore be a collaborative effort between two government departments.

Literature also suggests that teachers should be highly trained to recognise mental health problems and be educated about mental health information and

services (cf. 3.2.2.1.2) in order for them to assist learners with mental health issues and to avoid aggravating problems associated with ill health in learners.

The next drawing is that of **Ndaba**, indicating a building where private sessions are being held. There is also a road, a person, and a board containing information regarding a help line. There are two people next to the building and the third on the other side of the road. The latter seems to be caught up between a big tree on his or her right and a helpline on the left.

Figure 5.20: Ndaba's drawing



Ndaba's narrative: *"As people we all go through tough situations at some point; other people get through it. Some just don't see light at the end of the tunnel. I've come to realize that as teens we don't know how to break through situations resulting in us committing suicide, believing that the pain will go away, but only our souls go away. To make one understand my drawing on previous page, I drew a school displaying a teacher and a class. This teacher is dedicated to the ending of teenage suicide, to prove her dedication she has put up a board across the school yard. The board has her contact details and of a helpline for help. The teacher can even go as far as renting a room at the school to offer sessions for*

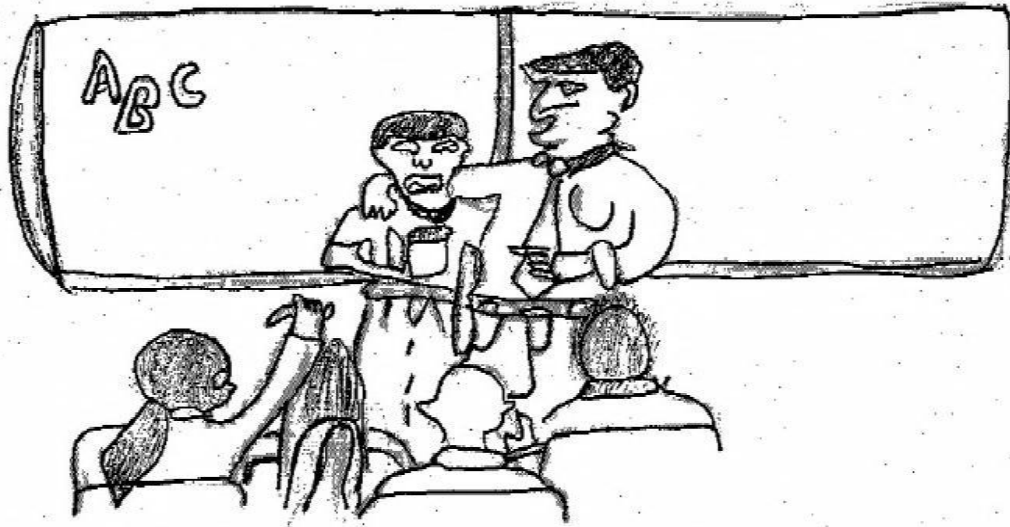
pupils who want to talk to her, to relieve themselves from the burdens they carry around. It all starts by talking.”

Ndaba starts by indicating a cause of suicide which according to her is the inability to break through situations. She then indicates teachers’dedication by intervening and providing information about helpline contacts. Ndaba’s idea is that of a teacher who offers counselling sessions for learners. Communication is also important to Ndaba. The teacher is at the centre of suicide intervention.

Literature specifies that poor personal skills limit youth’s ability to solve problems, thereby increasing the likelihood of considering suicide as the only solution (cf. 2.4.2.1). The feeling of being stuck is an indication of cognitive skills. Such skills can be developed over time, they are not inherent.

Zepata’s picture below shows learners in a classroom, some sitting and one who seems like a teacher hugging a learner. The teacher seems to be talking to this learner while others are listening and one of them is raising her hand.

Figure 5.21: Zepata’s drawing



Zepata's narrative: *“Ways of preventing suicide in schools is for teachers not to mainly focus on their job of „teaching“ but also provide love and care in the classroom. He /she should also courage learners to do well. A teacher should be a friend, parent towards his/her students. This helps to improve self-esteem of learners and kills each and every symptom associated with suicide.”*

Zapata's idea is that teachers should be involved in providing support, not only academically but also act *in loco parentis* in the true sense. He also mentions the importance of encouragement in boosting the self-esteem of learners. To Zepata the focus on teaching only will not solve the problems they are faced with as youth.

According to literature teachers in schools should be highly trained in recognising mental health problems and about mental health information and services (cf. 3.6.1.2).

Siphiwe's picture below displays a man standing behind a table, in front of a chalkboard. There are three learners, one facing the class and others sitting on their chairs. On the board is written: -We all have a choice“. It is as if this was their topic for discussion.

Figure 5.22: Siphiwe's drawing



Siphiwe's narrative: - *The teacher is teaching the students about suicide and telling them how the educator can have a one-on-one session with the student whose behaviour is changing. The class is also having a debate on the topic. The teacher tells them that suicide is a bad thing. People can get a second chance in life. The teacher is also telling them how to support their friends if they want to commit suicide.*"

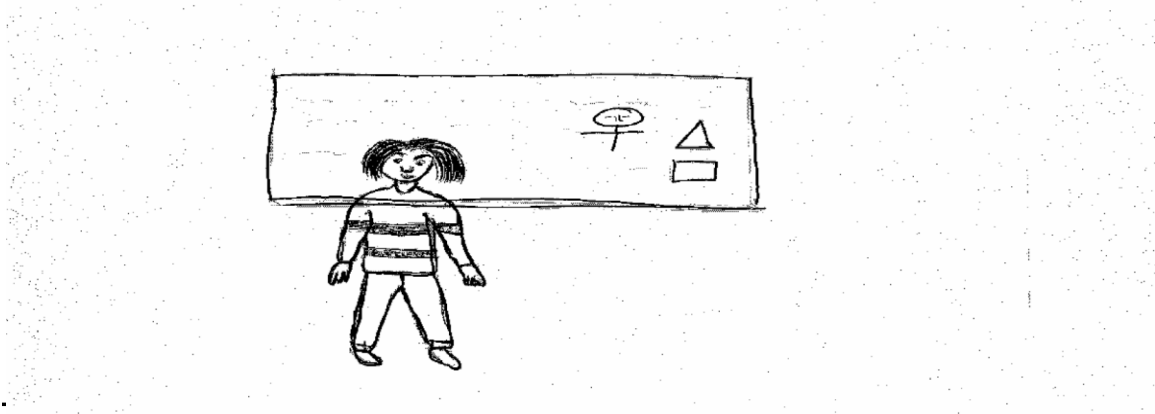
Siphiwe mentions the importance of teachers in the prevention of suicide, as well as counselling sessions, education about suicide and empowerment of learners to help each other. The teacher is the key role-player. Simphiwe also mentions using debates as a teaching method.

Literature highlights the importance of interactive methods of teaching about suicide that engage youth (cf. 3.4.1.4), thus moving away from traditional methods of presentation. Education and empowerment of learners can only materialise if ongoing and accurate information on suicidal behaviour is available, as indicated in the literature. The information will help in identifying high risk

individuals, groups and places, and in monitoring trends so that adequate interventions can be timeously established and evaluated (cf. 3.2.1.1).

Matsole's drawing displays a boy and a chalk board behind him.

Figure 5.23: Matsole's drawing

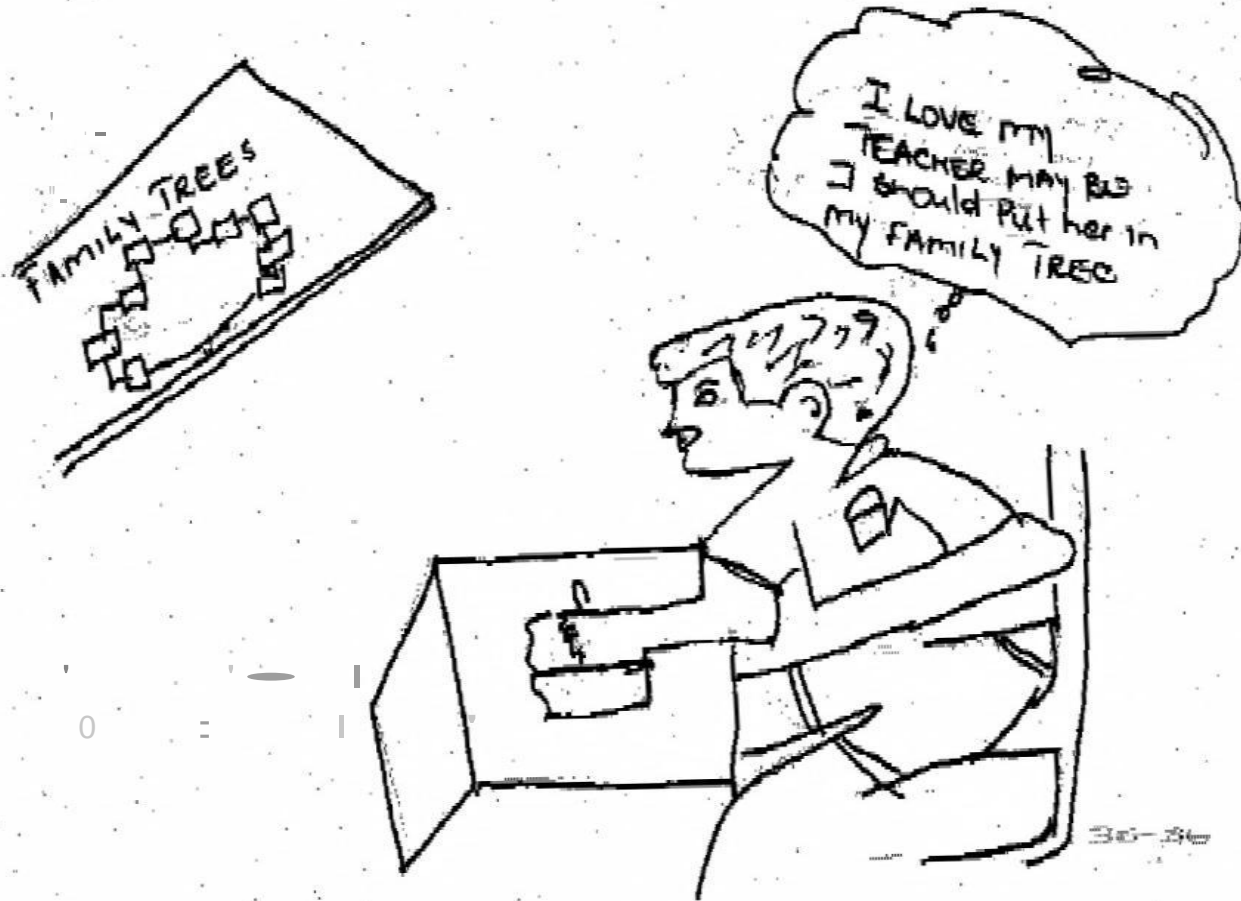


Matsole's narrative: *“Teachers must help teenagers or guide them by preventing suicide and show them the importance of not doing the suicide at school. Because is their responsibilities to do so.”*

Matsole felt it is the teachers' responsibility to teach and guide teenagers pertaining to issues of suicide. Matsole reiterated what Selometsi, Ndaba, Zapata and Siphwe said about the teacher being fundamental in suicide intervention.

Makhubu's drawing displays a boy sitting looking at a family tree, thinking about how he loves his teacher.

Figure 5.24: Makhubu's drawing



Makhubu's narrative: *“Teachers can give their students love and care instead of insulting them, for example, calling them idiots or telling their students how stupid they are. They must try to encourage and motivate learners positively so that the learners can open up to them. Teachers showing interest is a good way to prevent suicide among learners/student, meaning if teachers know their learners they can figure out when they are not behaving normal. And if the learner trust you, it will be easier to help him/her with what they are going through.”*

Makhubu indicated that teachers are at the forefront of suicide prevention as they must provide love and care, encourage and motivate them. They are also responsible for identifying signs, thus act as gatekeepers. Teachers have to prove to be trustworthy in order for them to be trusted. Makhubu's perception is

that learners opening up to teachers can be determined by the trust they have in them. Gatekeeper training mentioned in Chapter 3 (*cf.* 3.6.1) can help in explaining the importance of confidentiality and building a rapport when dealing with vulnerable learners. Mental health interventions could be hindered by a lack of trust between those who are implementers and beneficiaries of programmes.

Sonti's drawing displays two children standing together near a school, looking excited.

Figure 5.25: Sonti



Sonti's narrative: *I drew a girl and a boy who finally got help by going to school. You can see that as they unite, they have joy and peace inside them. These school children decided to tell an adult and involve school mental health professionals, such as school psychologist and that helped them to get full support from their teachers and people in the community.*"

According to Sonti, the school plays a major role in providing support to children. The support could be collaboration between teachers, community members and mental health professionals. Selometsi also mentioned teamwork between teachers and social workers. They got help because they talked about their problem.

Literature also recommends closer cooperation between educators and health service providers to achieve more successful prevention of suicidal behaviour in young learners (*cf.* 3.6.1).

Nkosana's picture below shows a boy who is crying.

Figure 5.26: Nkosana's drawing



Nkosana's narrative: *-Teachers should notice if there are any behavioural changes to the learners in the classroom on daily basis. They should also take them privately and talk to them if they notice anything suspicious; they should sympathize with them and not shout or threaten the learner/student threatened. After concluding that there is something wrong with the learner, they must at least try to solve the problem or refer the learner to the social worker."*

Nkosana also mentioned the importance of teachers as gatekeepers, counselling by teachers and a caring environment. Nkosana, as Sonti and Selometsi, realised the importance of involving social workers. It is the collaborated efforts of internal and external stakeholders that safeguard the mental health of learners.

Literature also suggests a whole-school approach to the promotion of positive mental health, including activities to create a school environment that values the

holistic needs of youth (cf. 3.6.1). This approach values the involvement of all interest groups for sharing of skills and expertise.

Victor's drawing shows a man in a tie who seems to be a teacher; there are students in front of him. Two boys who are not part of the class seem to be having a conversation of their own.

Figure 5.27: Victor's drawing



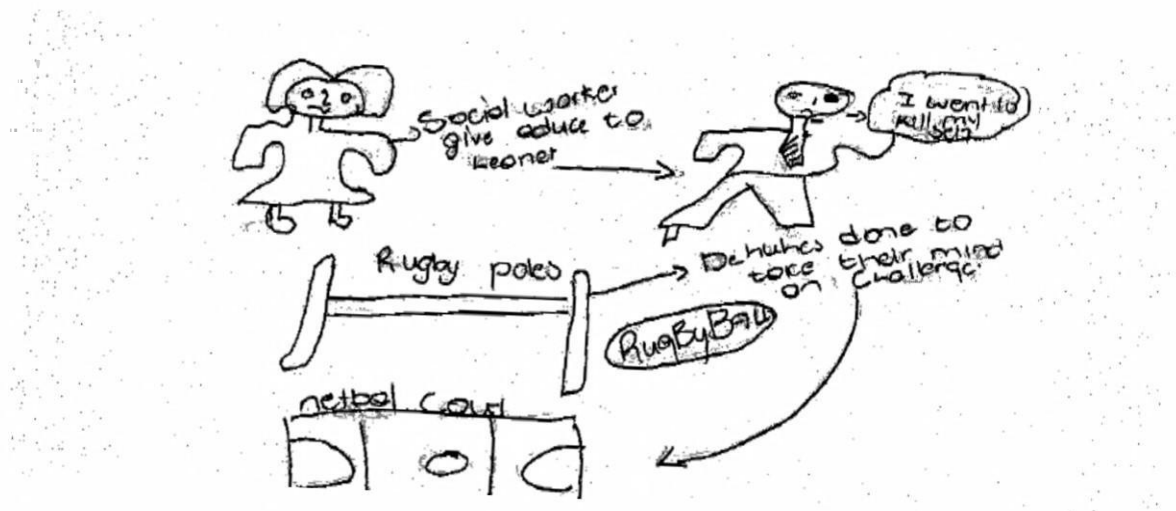
Victor's narrative: *“The drawing is showing a teacher having group session with students. This is where the students talk about how they feel about themselves. In the picture, a child is being bullied and this is one of the reasons why children commit suicide. School learners are usually bullied by learners who are older than them but in the same class and teachers should consider this matter when there is an older learner in the class. Normally in this matter younger learners are scared to tell their teachers if they are being bullied because they are afraid what the bully might do to them if they tell the teachers about them.”*

Victor made mention of the teachers' involvement in dealing with suicide. Counselling by teachers is once more regarded as a preventative measure, as also indicated by Ndaba and Sipiwe above. Victor mentioned bullying as one of the causes of suicide. Loyiso, Madibu, Hlubi, Beauty (cf. 5.1) also mentioned bullying as problematic. Victor took it further by indicating that teachers should take action by looking out for the younger learners.

The school has a responsibility and a mandate to advance and protect human rights in the school environment and to make sure that they are reflected in all school policies. It is these rights of learners that are violated (cf. 3.4.1.2) when learners are bullied without consequences to the perpetrators.

Evelyn's picture displays two people, a social worker and a learner, a rugby field and a netball court. Her drawing highlights two interventions: counselling and involvement in sport.

Figure 5.28: Evelyn's drawing



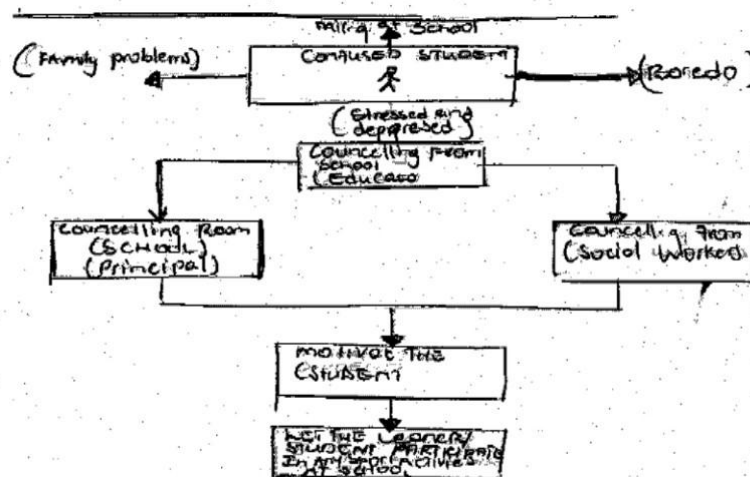
Evelyn's narrative: "Suicide can be prevented in many different ways. Killing yourself doesn't solve all your problems it brings a lot of burden to your family and loved ones. To make sure learners at school do not think of committing suicide there can be things like getting social workers at schools who can

counsel learners every day and help/guide them to make sure they do not even think of suicide. There can be daily activities that are done for fun to make sure they take their minds off challenges they face in life. Teachers can provide love and care for learners. Teachers know about the situations learners are facing in life, they can really understand them."

To Evelyn committing suicide was not a solution, instead, it would add grief to the family. It seems that Evelyn was able to think of others as well when making such decisions. She then suggested counselling by social workers and activities and sports intended to act as stress relievers for learners. Evelyn echoes the importance of involving external stakeholders, as did Selometsi, Sonti and Nkosana. Evelyn also adds the important role that teachers can play in loving and caring for learners. Another important factor is that teachers must know their learners in order for them to be of assistance.

The next drawing is a mind map showing a person caught up between family problems and happy life. The learner is confused, stressed and depressed. The arrows point to counselling by the principal and a social worker, and also to motivation and involvement in sport.

Figure 5.29: Lindokuhle

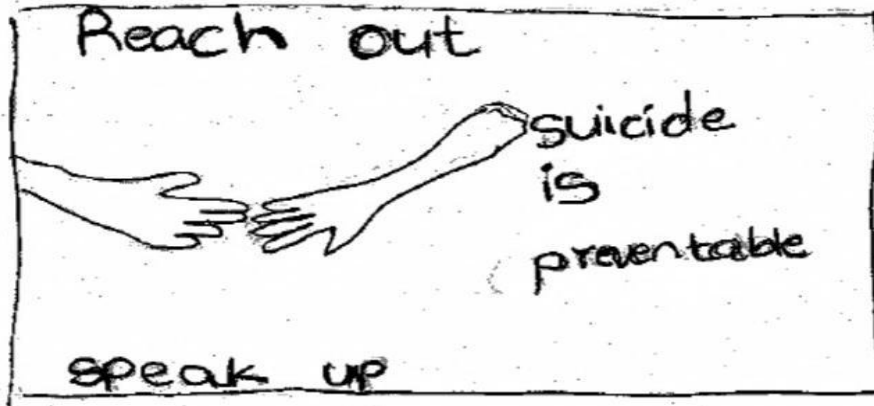


Lindokuhle's narrative: *"A learner/student who wants to commit suicide may be noticed by the following human behaviour: Boredom in class, anger for everything, failing talks in class and or crying sometimes. This is where the educator would notice such emotions and start to take action by asking the learner to remain in class after hours or to be taken to the educators' office. The educators would do counselling to the student, whereby the principal would get involved to take other steps to help the learner/student. Social workers may be called to assist in terms of further steps like visiting the student home. Student with such conditions are advised to participate in any sporting activities done at school to help ease the learners tension and stress. The educator must motivate the learner and always observe everything the student does for feedback to the principal and for the child's benefit."*

Lindokuhle emphasised the importance of a teacher with expertise in identifying symptoms of suicidal behaviour. He also realised the role the teacher and the principal can play in providing counselling to such learners. The involvement of health professionals surfaced once more, as with Selometsi, Sonti, Nkosana, and Evelyn. It is as if participants realised that without the involvement of external stakeholders, dealing with suicidal behaviour would be null and void.

Katleho's drawing below shows two hands as if trying to reach or touch each other.

Figure 5.30: Katleho's drawing



Katleho's narrative: *"Teachers must reach out and be persistent. A student may feel threatened by your concern. The student may become upset or deny that he/she is having problems. Be consistent and firm, and make sure that the student gets help that she may need."*

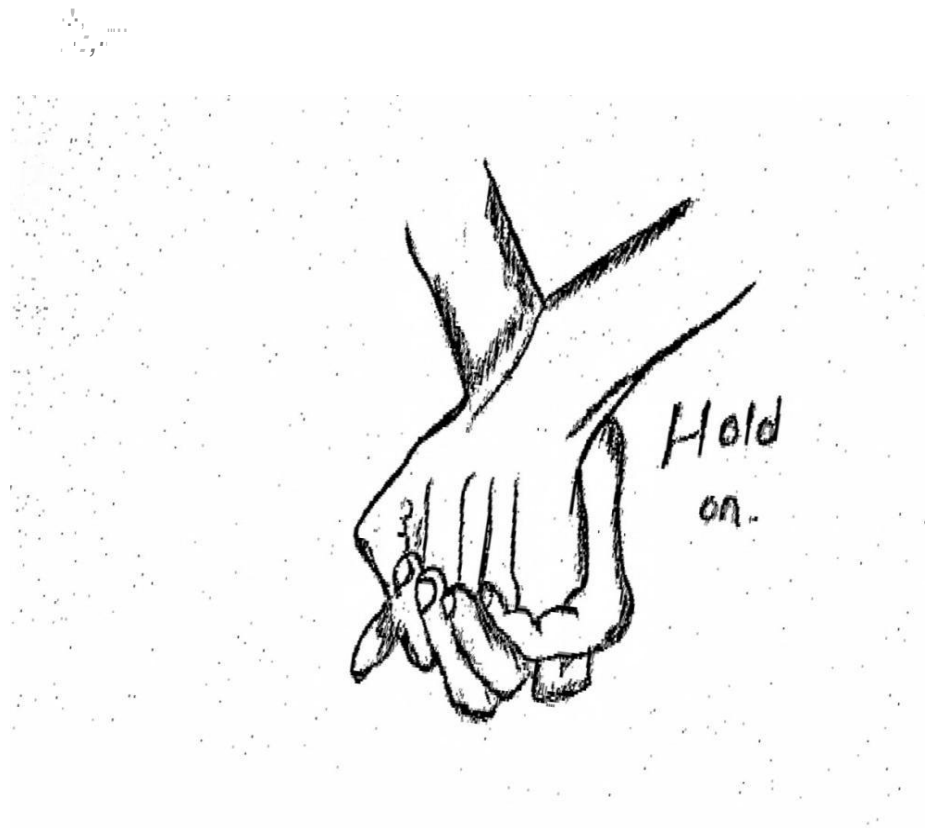
Katleho saw a teacher as the main role-player in preventing suicide. The teacher can do this by being close to students and being persistent in ensuring that students are helped.

In summary, teachers and schools were identified as forerunners in suicide prevention. About 13 participants supported this theme. Six of these participants mentioned counselling of learners by teachers as important. The participants suggested collaborative activities in terms of providing counselling services. Teachers should also provide love, care, assistance, understanding, guidance and access resources that are needed by learners. They are also expected to teach, and provide information about suicide that will empower learners, and act as gatekeepers.

Strategies for peer intervention

The picture below shows two hands locked and a sign: Hold on

Figure 5.31: Relebohile's drawing

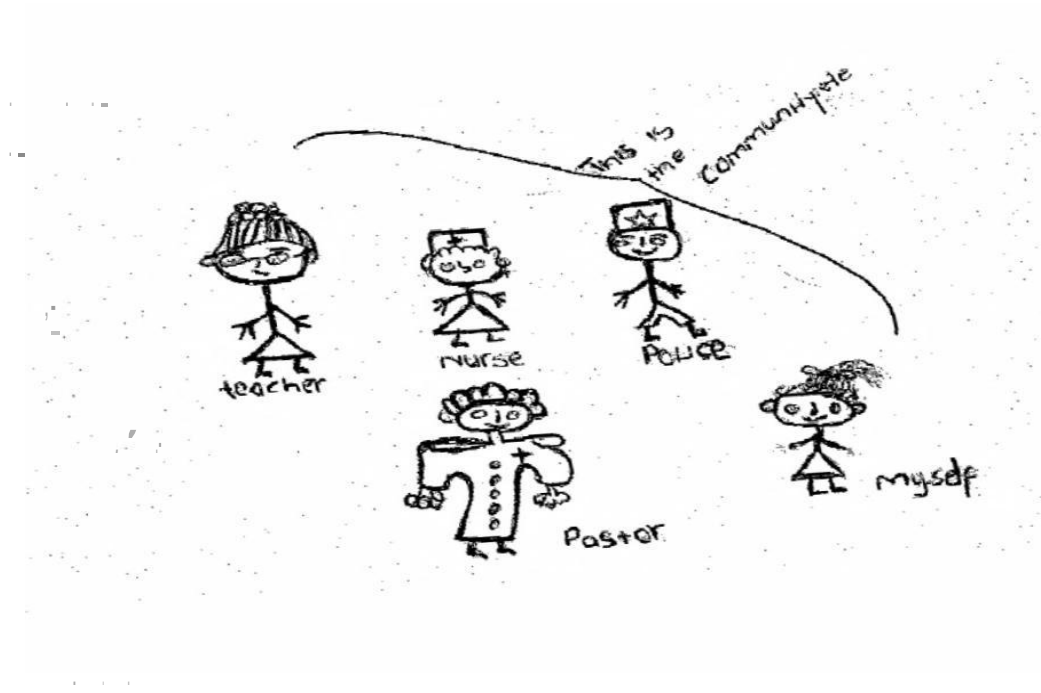


Relebohile's narrative: *-Children should help each other as well, advise each other when each is thinking of committing suicide. And work together. Hold each other's hand and encourage each other.¶*

Relebohile's idea is that of youth supporting each other. This idea is similar to the sentiment expressed previously about support groups at schools. It is as if youth should cover each other's backs. Youth cannot be able to assist each other if they lack knowledge. It can be applauded that Rebohile realised that youth cannot be just recipients of intervention but have to take a leading role in preventing suicide. The impact of buddy support in the literature is said to be greater if participants were guided in choosing their buddies (*cf.* 3.6.2.1).

Lebohlang's drawing below shows a teacher wearing spectacles and a nurse with a cross on her head, a police officer with a badge on his cap and a pastor wearing her gown, and a picture of herself.

Figure 5.32: Lebohang's drawing



Lebohang's narrative: *-Everyone can contribute to solving the problem of young people committing suicide. These days the issue of suicide is everywhere in the media and all social networking sites. Teachers are doing their best to show learners the disadvantages of suicide. The government has also done its part. As a young person I will try to reduce the rate of suicide by encouraging the young people who are suicidal, I would host counselling sessions for people who are suicidal and victims of abuse.*

Lebohang has an idea of youth taking up the fight against suicide themselves. She talks of encouragement and counselling. Unlike Relebohile whose idea is that of youth who work together, Lebohang's notion is that of youth taking the lead. Secondly, Lebohang suggests collaborated activities as all these people could work together in fighting suicide. Lebohang is also part of this partnership. It would seem that like Relebohile, she does not want to be a recipient of the interventions but to be at the forefront of prevention.

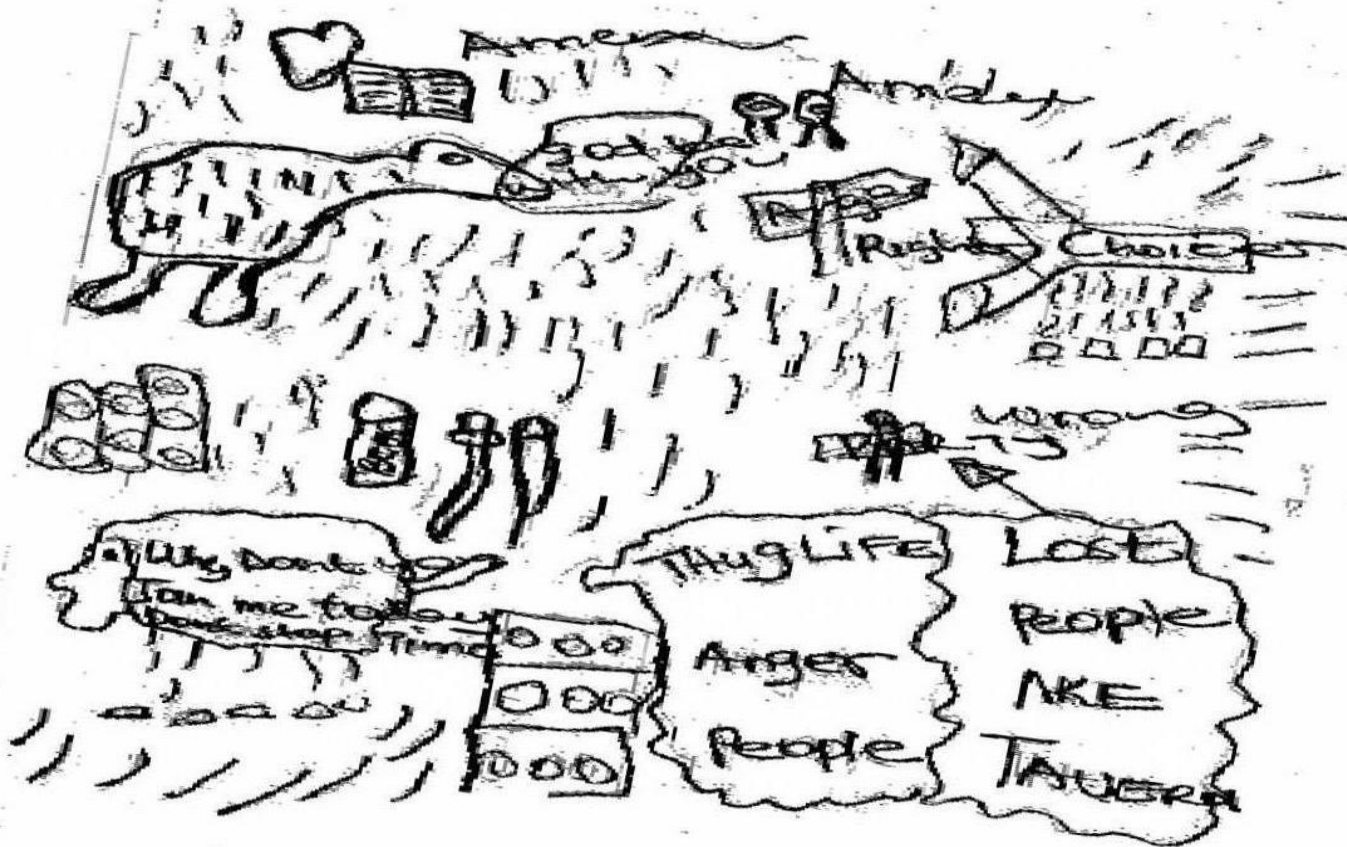
Strategies for peer intervention were supported by two participants who mentioned that youth should support each other and be at the forefront of suicide intervention. The SOS discussed in Chapter 3 (*cf.* 3.5.1) makes use of such a programme where the peer group becomes the primary sphere of social involvement and emotional investment for most youth.

5.4 STRATEGIES THAT ARE FAITH-BASED

Five drawings indicated that religion is a resource that can be used to help in reducing the rate of suicide. The contents of the drawings are quite diverse, including a church building, the cross and the significance of worship.

Nthabiseng's drawing is divided into two parts. In the first part there is a message about right choices and that God be with the people. In the second part she depicts bad things. It is as if she saying that suicide is caused by bad choices or a bad way of living. Nthabiseng's drawing emphasises the importance of making a choice between living recklessly and following God by being prayerful.

Figure 5.33: Nthabiseng's drawing



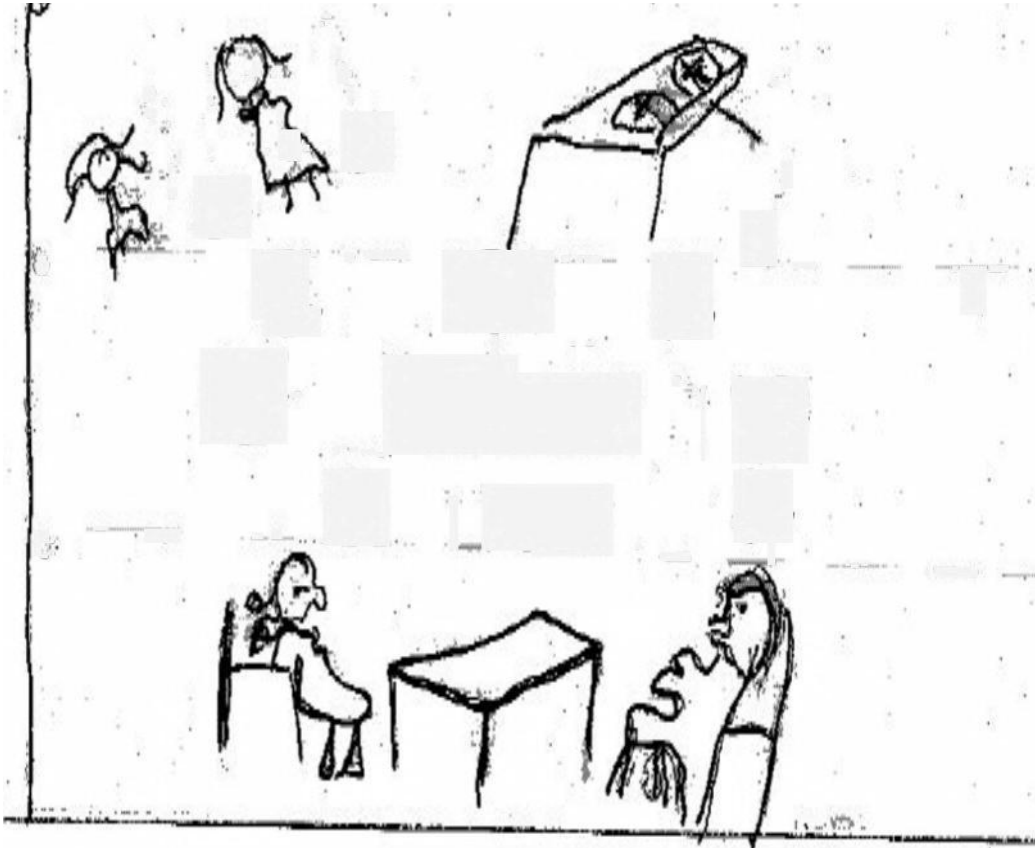
Nthabiseng's narrative: *-By His grace we can survive we escape from this escalating suicide rate".*

According to Nthabiseng it is only by having faith in God's grace that suicide can be reduced. It seems that the drawing puts blame on the suicide victim who perhaps made bad choices in his or her life, leading to suicidal behaviour. This is a judgemental way of analysing problems related to suicide.

The next drawing is that of **Refilwe's drawing** shows two crosses and a family appearing to be moving towards the crosses on top of a table. Refilwe also

shows symbols resembling people at a round table; she calls this a support group at school. There is another table with two people on each side of the table.

Figure 5.34: Refilwe's drawing



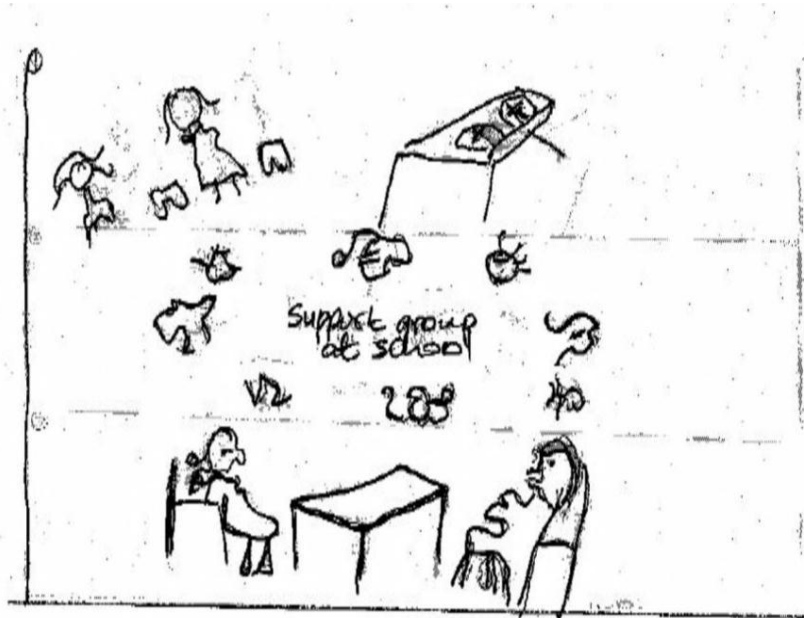
Refilwe's narrative: *-Schools must have at least bible study once or twice a week so that they can teach learners about the bible and God.....this will help them because they will know that when they go through rough time, God is always on their side."*

Refilwe's idea is that of a school that teaches religious instruction where the emphasis is on adherence to faith. Religious instruction is no longer part of the curriculum in South African schools. This approach was replaced by religion education as indicated in the National Policy on Religion Education (2002). Learners are no longer taught about faith-based issues but about the diversity of religious beliefs. Faith-based teaching is presented in schools during assembly in the morning. Because of the lack of uniformity in such processes learners in some schools are deprived of such opportunities.

The literature highlights a need for a strategy that is culturally fitting as mental illness and its causes can be interpreted differently, according to people's beliefs (*cf.* 3.2.1.3). Strategies that include adherence to faith are also culturally appropriate.

The next drawing shows **Mafokeng's** depiction of a church and a man carrying a cross.

Figure 5.35: Mafokeng's drawing



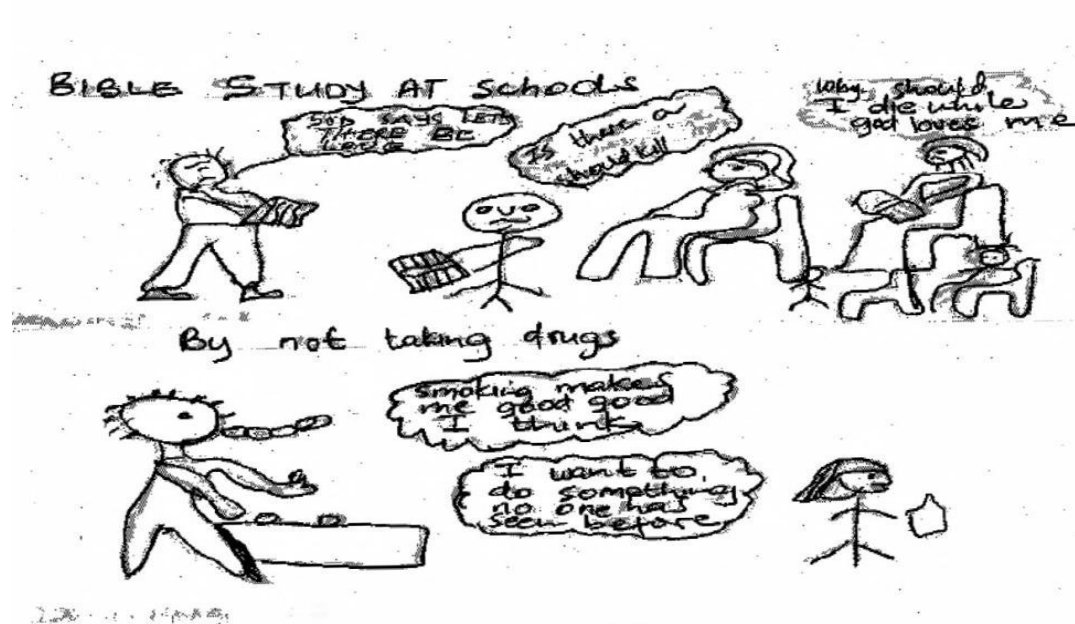
Mofokeng's narrative: *In our school children are no longer taught about the bible. I think our government must bring back bible studies in our schools to prevent the evil spirits to dominate. First of all suicide it's a sin in the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus loves us and we must make him our friend. In the church there are pastors, the congregation and is where you can talk to people or just go to the pastor and explain the problems you are encountering. Let us pray that God help us in these situations."*

Mofokeng, like Refilwe, believed that schools have a role to play in providing religious support to learners. He also believed that community churches can play the same role as schools in providing support. This idea links well with support

that can be harnessed from communities, as discussed in foregoing paragraphs (cf. 5.3). For instance, a church can provide a support structure for the members of the congregation and pastors. Mofokeng, like Nthabiseng, took a judgemental stand in indicating that suicide is a sin that may perhaps be caused by evil spirits.

The next drawing is that of **Zuane**, titled Bible study at school. The first part of the drawing shows a man standing in front of learners. The last part of the drawing is titled: By not taking drugs. There is a person who seems to be smoking and another one with a bottle in her hand.

Figure 5.35: Zuane's drawing



Zuane's narrative: -While our God loves each and every one of us, If you have something that eats you up and you feel that you can't tell anyone better yet to kill yourself or commit suicide, tell Him. There's one person who can take away your problems which is Jesus Christ. These things must be taught at school. Children must grow up knowing that God is there and He saves. Teachers have to teach learners to have faith in God.¶

Zuane, like Refilwe and Mofokeng, also thought that the teacher or school has a role to play in making sure that learners receive religious instruction. It is interesting that they indicated faith instruction as the school's role and not that of parents, as indicated in the National Policy on Religion Education (2002). Conceivably, they are not aware of the policy or they still think schools should take this responsibility.

Zuane also indicated in his drawing that drugs could be one of the causes of suicide.

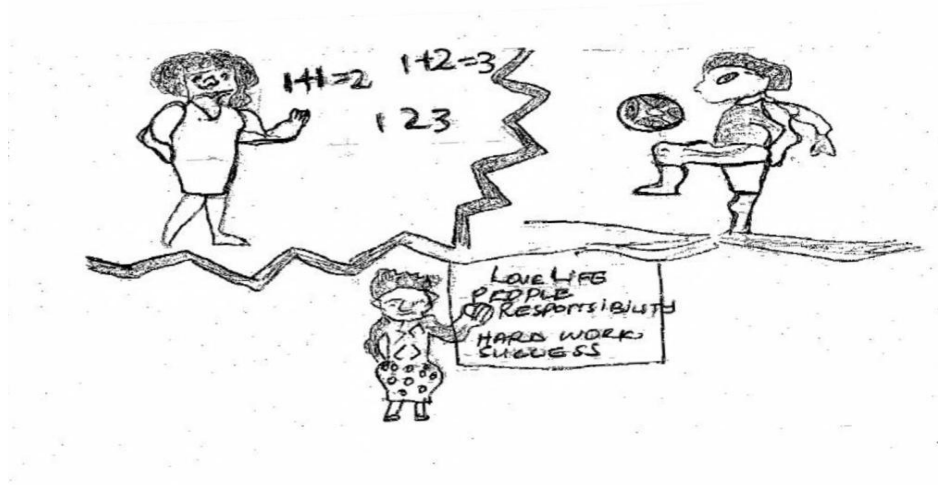
Four participants supported this theme. Three of these students advocated religious instruction which focuses on the teaching of a particular religion with an emphasis on adherence to the principles of that particular religion. Religion education that is part of the curriculum in South Africa at present does not promote any particular religion or adherence to faith. One of the participants also mentioned cooperation between schools and religious organisations in the community.

5.5 STRATEGIES TO REDUCE STRESS

A number of participants indicated a need for sport and recreational activities to reduce stress. Seven participants supported this theme.

The first drawing under this theme is that of **Sipho** who drew a teacher appearing to be teaching mathematics. A boy is playing soccer and there is another female figure talking about Lovelife.

Figure 5.36: Sipho's drawing



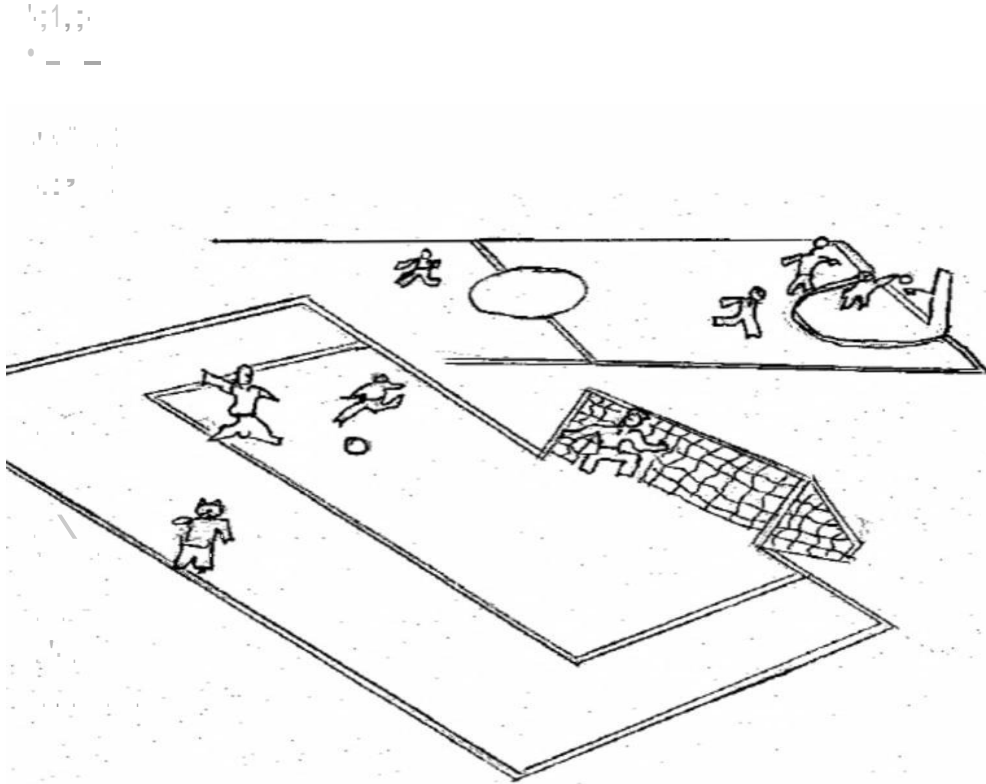
Sipho's narrative: *“Education is important, but children in schools don't get much time to exercise and play sports to relax their minds and that is why they end up having suicide mentalities. To prevent such thoughts, children need to take part in activities such as Real Talks and Sports in which they may be able to open up about issues them facing in and out of schools premises. All these can help them to refresh their minds and provide more skills to control attention when it comes to their school work.”*

Sipho emphasises what Hlubi and Tumelo said earlier about the importance of sport for relaxation and a stress reliever. It is as if he is saying that sport is as important as education. His second suggestion is that of engaging in informal debates about issues. Real Talks is the brain child of Lovelife, where people can come together and talk openly, having a discussion about aspects affecting their lives. To Sipho both these ideas are recreational.

Physical exercise in the literature is thought to increase the release of beneficial chemicals in the brain, possibly preventing the onset of mental health problems (cf. 3.4.1.3.2).

The picture below displays children playing soccer in one field and netball in the other.

Figure 5.37: Rampai's drawing



Rampai's narrative: *-The drawing is based on preventing suicide in our schools. If the school can try to have extra classes for sports and entertainment or even delegate a specific day for sport and entertainment. This will help or benefit learners by means of keeping their mind in a good shape. Different sport codes might be categorized according to the talents of learners in the school. Educational tours may also have an effect on the prevention of suicide."*

Rampai offered several interventions of suicide, all based on relaxation as a key factor. He mentions sport, entertainment and educational excursions. The

implication of such suggestions could be that learners get bored and engagement in sport would relieve their stress and boredom.

Literature indicates that involvement in collective physical activities, such as team sports, can also increase young people's communication and interpersonal skills, connectedness, belonging and enhance their self-esteem (cf. 3.4.1.3.2).

Morena's picture displays two people; one is playing drums and the other playing with a ball.

Figure 5.38: Morena's drawing



Morena's narrative: *"Schools should organize extra mural activities like sports, drum playing etc. some children can express their emotions or use these extra mural activities as stress relievers. Activities will make them feel good about*

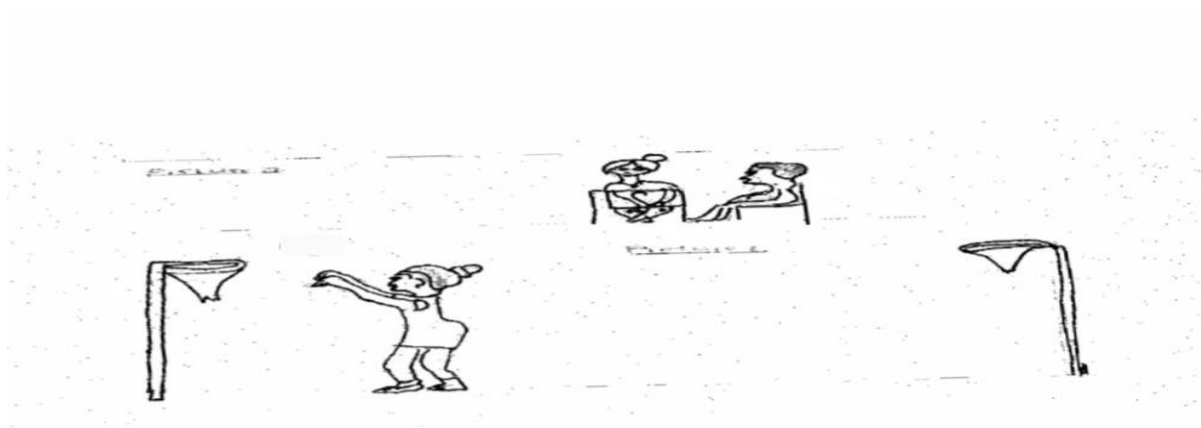
themselves and prevent them from thinking about killing themselves. Children face problems at home or at school and end up having negative thoughts about themselves.

Morena highlights, as did other participants, the importance of sports in releasing stress. He also mentions other means, such as musical instruments. Besides being an opportunity to express themselves these activities are good for self-esteem. Morena thinks that negative thoughts affect self-concept.

According to literature a strong self-esteem and a realistic assessment of self-worth are perhaps the most vital assets a person can take on his or her journey through life (*cf.* 3.4.1.2)

The first part of **Moyeni's** picture below displays a girl playing netball, the second shows two females sitting at a table.

Figure 5.39: Moyeni's drawing



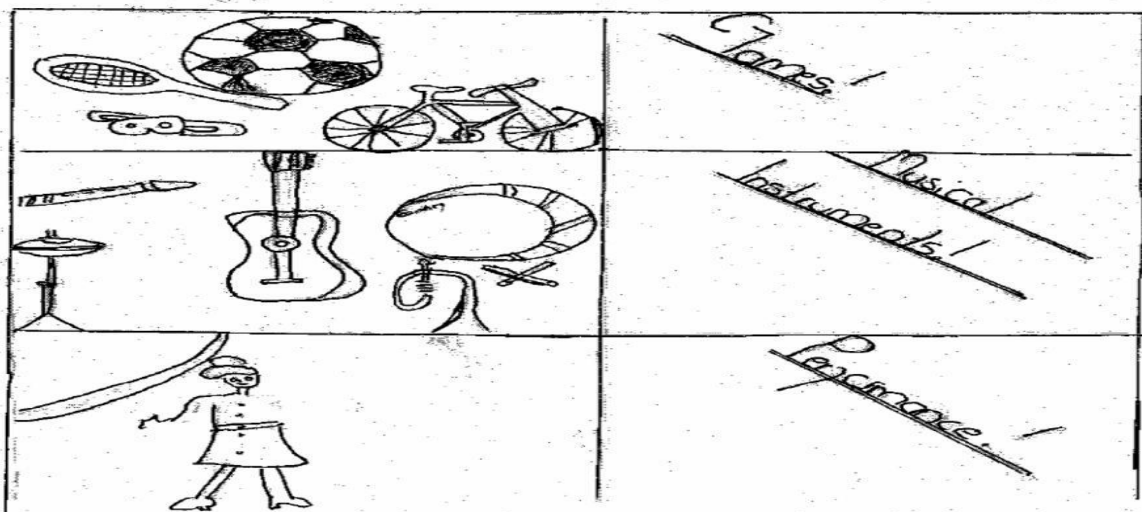
Moyeni's narrative: *“My drawing shows us some ways of how we can prevent suicide in our schools. As you can see there’s a person who is throwing a ball. This is one of the activities that can help our youth from school to keep their mind*

busy at all the times. It is also going to help them to think clearly about lot of things, like involving themselves in drugs. My second picture tells us about different groups that can be created in our community. Those groups can motivate us in some-ways, encourage us and in that way we will be able to reach what we want in our life."

Being involved in sport and support groups are the two solutions offered by Moyeni. Him, Morena and Rampai are of the opinion that engagement in sport would also help youth to take their minds off drugs. Moyeni is the first participant to suggest support groups.

Sipho's picture displays different types of sports/games, musical instruments and a girl performing on stage.

Figure 5.40: Sipho's drawing



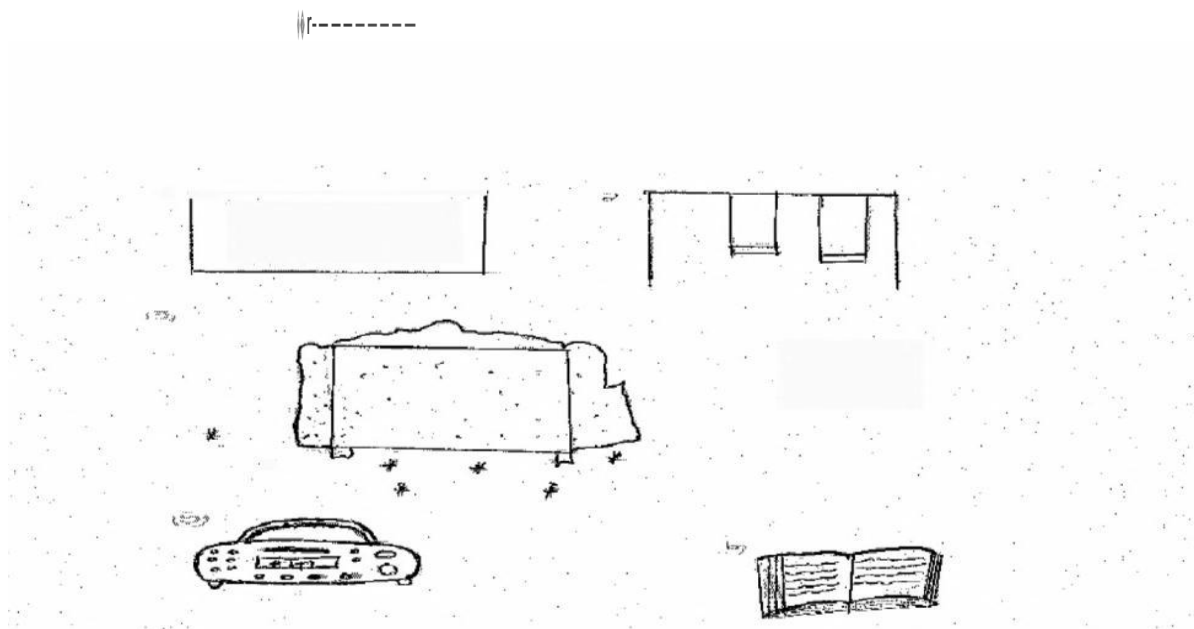
Sipho's narrative: *The intention of involving your child in activities is to avoid-negative thinking and to encourage the development of certain skills. The routine*

of attending the lessons on a regular basis enforces discipline. Other benefits are that a child will develop confidence and learn more that excites them. It can also foster child's concentration skills depending on the activity."

Sipho seems to know the benefits of being involved in sport. To him sport does not only help physically but also mentally as concentration is enhanced. Children who participate in extra-mural activities are less prone to negative peer pressure and often have higher levels of self-esteem.

Masoleng's picture displays a television, portrait, swing, a book, a radio, fruit and a sofa with dead flies at the back.

Figure 5.41: Masoleng's drawing

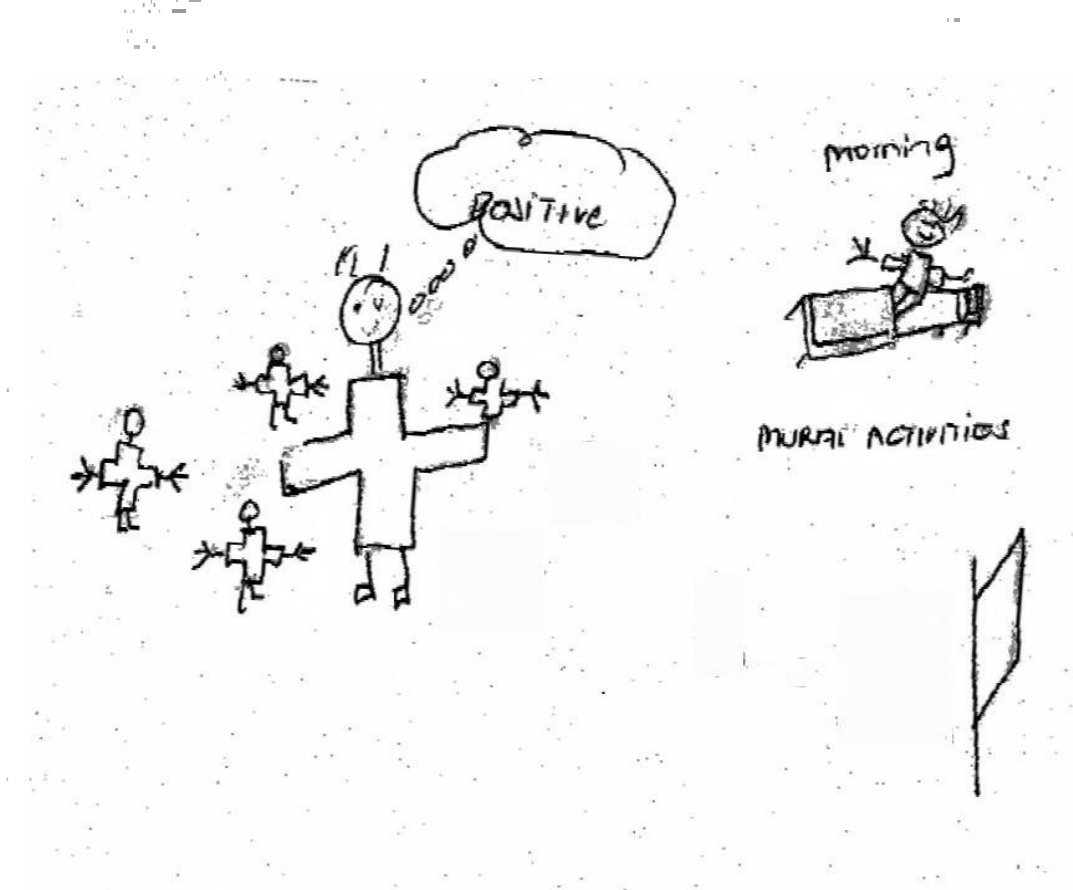


Masoleng's narrative: *"They shall watch TV. They can go and play with friends. They can clean the house. They can eat fruits. They can listen to the radio. They can read books."*

Masoleng mentioned a sequence of activities that youth can be involved in to keep their minds off negative things. In Masoleng's view these activities would help to prevent suicide.

The picture below displays crosses, a person getting out of bed and two people playing soccer.

Figure 5. 42: Nteso's drawing



Nteso's narrative: *"Always stay positive in everything, and always think positive and surround yourself with positive people. Youth must participate in extra-mural activities. That will help to prevent suicide. People must start the day with a smile."*

It seems that Nteso puts emphasis on optimism; having hope that things will be fine. Literature identifies an association between feelings of inferiority and pessimism and suicidal behaviour among youth (cf. 2.4.1.6).

Mhlophe's drawing shows two boys playing basketball together. In front there is a basketball post and on top the following words: –REASON TO BE JOLLYII. In the lower part of the drawing there is a lady called Dr. White, she is a psychologist.

Figure 5.43: Mhlophe



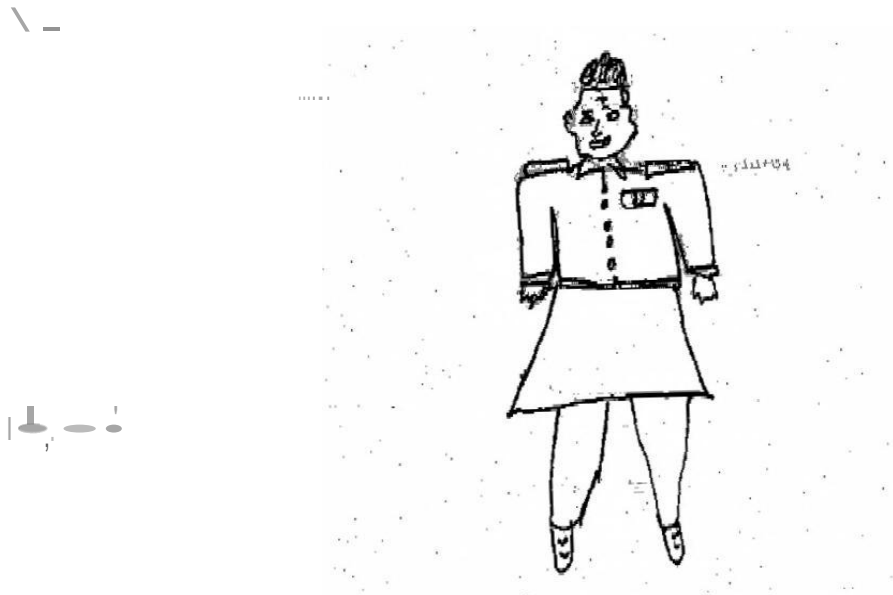
Mhlophe's narrative: *“The drawing that I’ve drawn simply explains how we can be able to prevent suicide from schools, firstly this drawing of kids playing a basketball and my title saying a “REASON TO BE JOLLY” is actually saying that you can be able to forget the negatives in life that may lead to suicide. The picture a woman “DR WHITE” is regarded as a person who can also prevent suicide in schools because I believe that she may talk about it, advising and having classes just motivating and advising learners. She can provide Counseling from intermediate to senior phases.”*

Mhlope proposes two interventions: one is involvement in sport and the involvement of psychologists in schools. Participant after participant accentuated the importance of involving health experts in the combat against suicide. Participants are aware that the fight against suicide cannot be won if only teachers are involved.

5.6 STRATEGIES FOR AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

The next drawing is that of **Mkhumbeni** who drew a female wearing formal clothing resembling a uniform.

Figure 5.44: Mkhumbeni's drawing



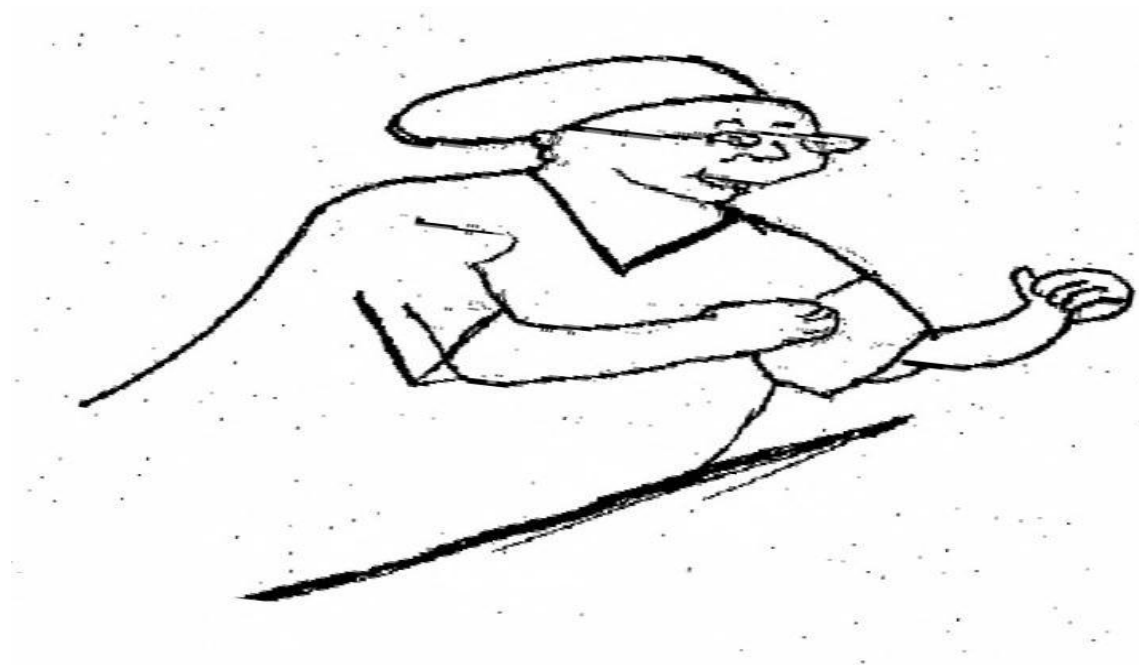
Mkhumbeni's narrative: *-Nurses should visit and teach learners about teenage pregnancy. They can teach teenagers to protect themselves from getting pregnant because other boys reject their kids. We must teach boys not to hurt girls and don't cheat on them because they are making them to be pregnant and then cheat. Nurses would help teenagers who get pregnant because of sugar daddies or married men. Remember it is better to be safe than sorry!!!"*

The involvement of external stakeholders is mentioned by Mkhumbeni as well as others previously. Nurses are to educate both boys and girls about the consequences of teenage pregnancy. Mkhumbeni seems to associate suicide with teenage pregnancy.

Education about health issues is in line with literature. It however urges us to develop programmes with caution. Only programmes that increase knowledge of mental illness and suicidal behaviour can endeavour to remove the fears and misunderstandings surrounding suicide. The information in such initiatives should be divulged in such a way that it does not provoke suicidal behaviour among vulnerable individuals (*cf.* 3.5.3 and 3.9.1).

The next drawing is that of **Dibuseng**, who drew an adult with spectacles.

Figure 5.44: Dibuseng



Dibuseng's narrative: *"People like social workers may avail themselves regularly at our school to talk to us about suicide. That will make us be more open in*

talking about our problems and the temptations of killing ourselves. If we have people like them around us who won't judge us and our problems we tend to trust them making it easy to open up. Sometimes our educators don't take us seriously and make fun of us or disclose our problems to other people they work with. We then become victims of their comments in class that makes the problem worse."

Dibuseng suggests collaboration with external stakeholders such as social workers. It seems that the participants who propose this coordination of activities understand the role health professionals can play in reducing suicide in schools. Dibuseng yearns for an environment that is free of judging where they can express themselves freely. This means that she is not in favour of counselling by teachers as she indicates that they break confidentiality, in that sense they are not professional. They also use the learners' problems against them. This is a serious violation of learners' rights.

Making fun of learners can affect their self-esteem negatively. Literature states that self-esteem is damaged when people lose an important source of gratification or when they are ridiculed. They start personalising negative information about self and perceive themselves as worthless and unproductive (cf. 2.4.1.2).

5.7 EXPERIENCES OF SUICIDE

Under this theme twenty four participants contributed, only four of the participants were females. As indicated in Chapter 4 these participants had personal experiences of suicide which they were willing to share.

In the interview Loyiso said: *"I know that people try or kill themselves because they are hurt or in trouble. My mother told me that whatever is bothering me I can always talk to her and with time things will get better"*.

Loyiso elaborated on the reasons, mentioning hurt and being in trouble as causes. Loyiso has the support of his mother who is willing to listen to him whenever he encounters problems.

According to literature a human being is part of a family; problems arise when an individual is treated in isolation to his/her important relations or support systems (cf. 2.4.5.3). It is found that according to literature adolescents who indicated that their communication with their mothers and or fathers was difficult had an increased likelihood of suicide ideations (cf. 2.4.5.3). The support of his mother could provide a buffer or him and assurance of help whenever the need arise.

In the interview Sekele said: *"It was in 2013 when the suicide happened. When all people were celebrating Christmas we were in the house looking at the window. We saw a beautiful woman passing by; there were 6 girls in all. One of them called Cindy she saw her boyfriend and he slapped her until she cried we came out and wanted to help her. She ran away going back home. While running she went to the shop and bought paraffin and drank it the same time and no one was trying to help her because she was a prostitutell.*

Sekele witnessed an attempted suicide in his community. His response highlights two important aspects: the first is that of easy access to poison and the second is about the reason for not mediating when the woman drank paraffin. This was due to her being a prostitute. It seems that being a prostitute was her social identity which caused her to be disapproved of by members of her community.

According literature blacks use self-poisoning by household utility liquids such as paraffin and various other easy to access poisons (cf. 2.7). Using a moderately poisonous substance to attempt suicide could be an indication that the intent is not to die but a way of demanding attention, evoking sympathy and or punishing the boyfriend for hitting her.

In the interview Motsoeneng said: *“Yes two girls in grade 7^A wanted to commit suicide. One girl said my boyfriend doesn’t like me. She said to me I want to drink paraffin. But we tried to solve that problem.”*

Motsoeneng had an experience of his peer who contemplated suicide. Once more paraffin was mentioned as an available method which is easy to execute. As indicated in the foregoing paragraphs, youth make use of readily available means of committing suicide. The suicidal intentions of the peer were prompted by a desperate need to be loved. These methods are not lethal. However, literature indicates that having these thoughts repeatedly may lead to an attempt.

It can also be emphasised that South Africa has a severe problem with self-destructive behaviour which needs to be addressed. Literature indicates that deliberate self-harm is more common in younger adults (*cf.* 2.7).

In the interview Madibu said: *“I remember when I was 12 years my aunt was trying to do things that she will regret but I told her not to do this. During holidays in December 2010, she went back to the family and told them she doesn’t have a husband. Her husband hanged himself. She felt that it would be better if she died. She ran to town and I followed her, she gave me a letter I took that letter and read it, that letter said I am sorry my family. She died by hanging herself.”*

Madibu experienced suicide in her family, her uncle and her aunt both having committed suicide. She has a family history of completed suicide. According to literature, a family history of suicide is among the most prevalent risk factors for suicide. Thus, Malebo could be at risk.

It is indicated in the literature that individuals who lose a loved one to suicide are more at risk of becoming preoccupied with wishing that they had prevented it, feeling blamed for the problems that preceded the suicide, and feeling rejected by their loved one (*cf.* 1.1).

In the interview Tsotetsi said: *“I have been through many things in my life and I wanted to kill myself but I won’t do such a thing because life is too short you can succeed in life you only live once.”*

Tsotetsi had suicide ideations caused by challenges in his life. However, he seems to be hopeful and optimistic about the future. Being positive about life could be a resource that will help Tsotetsi pull through and bounce back from suicidal behaviour.

In the interview Thenjiwe said: *“Moipone tried to kill herself, because that girl is bad, talks too much, rotten. She spread lies about others and tried to protect herself by committing suicide, but she didn’t succeed.”*

As much as some drop-in centres are available 24 hours per day (cf. 3.3.2.1) participants in this study do not seem to be aware of them. It seems that some youth in these use suicide as their first reaction to challenges they are faced with.

Thenjiwe experienced suicide through a peer who attempted it. To Thenjiwe, Moipone’s attempted suicide happened because she did not want to face the consequences of her actions. It is as if attempting to commit suicide was a punishment for Moipone’s bad behaviour. Thenjiwe’s response shows that people can either sympathise or not with the victim of suicide. This depends on the circumstances.

It is worrisome that many participants in this research indicate having witnessed suicide by peers. The question that arises is what impact this have in the mental health of the person who observe such acts especially considering their age. Literature states that exposure to peer suicide is related to increased suicide ideation and suicidal behaviour (cf. 2.5).

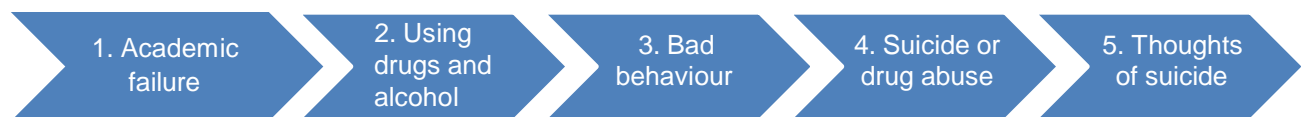
In the interview Tumelo said: *-At my street there was a brother who was trying to kill himself because he likes to talk bad about people. So everyone at my street regarded him as selfish.”*

Tumelo experienced attempted suicide in his community. The story is similar to that of Thenjiwe (cf. 5.1). The person referred to, said bad things about others, people did not like him, he may have felt bad about the situation and attempted suicide. In these cases there are two factors that play a role in suicides or attempts — the bad behaviour of the victim as perceived by the community and the response of the community.

In the interview Oliphant said: „when I was still leaving in Tsakane in 2014 when we were going to get reports, I realised that I didn't make it, then I started drinking alcohol and smoking drugs like shwag and I knew that I'm doing a bad thing. I started behaving badly, stealing and bunking school. I thought of killing myself, my life was bad”.

Oliphant became suicidal at one point in his life. The main reason for the suicide wish was poor academic performance. Loyiso, Motsoeneng, Madibu all indicated academic failure as a root cause of suicide. Another important factor is that the suicide ideation came after Oliphant started using drugs and alcohol. As in Beauty's narrative, the developments leading to suicidality in Oliphant's case happened in a continuum.

Figure 5.16: Oliphant's developmental stages of suicide



The developmental process of suicidal behaviour in Oliphant started with something that could have been avoided had he been supported in his studies. It escalated, spiraling downwards until he hit rock-bottom: suicide ideation.

Literature indicates that the use of alcohol and drugs among youth is a risk-taking or risk-associated behaviour. Drugs and alcohol can be used as a desire to

escape problems or as a yearning for self-help (cf. 2.4.2.2). Oliphant started taking drugs as a way of self-healing. Suicide ideation is common among adolescents participating in risky behaviours (cf. 2.4.2.2).

In the interview Moleboheng said: *„My friend wanted to kill himself because he was sad, because of family problems. He failed his grade 12, and his parents were angry.“*

Moleboheng understood the nature of suicide as she experienced it through her friend. Once again, as was the case with other participants, she mentions academic performance as a cause of suicide.

The Life Orientation curriculum aims to instill self-worth, positive mental well-being and resilience in young learners. The created mandated classroom time is directed towards promoting suicide protective factors, reducing risk factors, and encouraging help-seeking behaviours in youth in schools (cf. 3.4.1.4). Whether Life Orientation is effective in encouraging resilient behaviour among learners is a matter of debate.

In the interview Selometsi said: *„I have seen a guy trying to kill himself because of his cheating girlfriend but luckily enough his friend talked to him about it“.*

Selometsi experienced attempted suicide in his community. The reason for the attempt was related to relationships.

In the interview Ndaba said: *“I know suicide is when someone kills him or herself. It happened to my family. My sister killed herself in 2009.”*

Ndaba is one of the participants who have a family history of completed suicide. She is therefore at risk. The attempted or completed suicide of a close relative can, according to literature, have a tremendous impact on children and can lead them to consider or attempt (cf. 2.4.5.4) suicide themselves. Due to the close

proximity of Ndaba to her sister, the completed suicide was the most significant form of exposure.

In the interview Zapata said: *„I wanted to kill myself because I failed in term two of grade 10. I ate the rat poison, then I went to hospital in Bloemfontein. I think I fainted because when I woke I saw doctors and nurses. So I don't want to kill myself now. Thank you.“*

Zapata attempted suicide by using poison. Zapata is at risk of suicide. The reason for this failed suicide was academic failure. Zapata is the fifth participant mentioning academic failure as a cause for suicidal behaviour and the third participant revealing poison as a means of committing suicide.

Methods of committing suicide that are mentioned in literature as widespread among Blacks in South Africa are self-poisoning, drinking household liquids including bleach and paraffin, hanging and drowning (cf. 2.7).

In the interview Sipiwe said: *„In 2000 my grandfather wanted to kill my grandmother. He added poison to her food so that she would die. My grandmother knew about this she ate that food. My grandmother died in 2000/12/05 in a hospital in Gauteng.“*

Sipiwe experienced suicide in his family through his grandmother; he therefore has a history of completed suicide. Although this was murder as the grandmother did not mix her food with poison but her husband, she ate the food knowing the consequences.

In the interview Matsole said: *“I have come across someone close to me trying to kill herself. Suicide is a bad thing and it happens when someone is depressed or has too much stress. Stress is not a good. My cousin tried to kill herself for something small; we were fighting over my bracelet which was going to cost a life. If there is something bothering you talk to someone who can counsel and guide you.”*

Matsole experienced an attempted suicide through her cousin. She indicated that suicide happens because of stress and depression. The solution according to her is to talk to others about problems.

Matsole's prediction of the causes of suicide concurs with literature when it specifies that depression makes people feel hopeless, helpless and often they see no reason to live (cf. 2.4.1.3).

In the interview Sonti said: *„Duna killed himself because his family did not love him. His family was against him, they always said negative things about him. They told his teachers that he answers back and he is disrespectful. This happened after his parents passed away. They treated him like someone who is not normal“*

Sonti experienced a completed suicide in the community through a peer. The cause of suicide was ill-treatment of Duna after his parents' death. It seems that Duna was overwhelmed, perhaps still grieving the death of his parents. Children who are left without a caring loving environment after the death of parents become victims of such abuse from relatives who might also be traumatized and still be grieving the death of their loved one.

In the interview Nkosana said: *„I once thought of committing suicide because the only person I love said that she no long love me.“*

Nkosana had suicidal thoughts because of the feeling that he was not loved. As Selometsi also indicated, when there are break-ups in relationships youth resort to suicide.

It seems that break-ups in relationships is one of the stressors or add to the stress that the youth already has. This situation becomes overwhelming and without positive coping strategies they succumb to the pressures. Literature adds

that the stressors often overwhelm the coping skills of youth because of their inexperience with such life situations (cf. 2.4.1.4).

In the interview Victor said: *“I tried to commit suicide because Mr Moloji our family friend died due to illness and jealousy. When he died I also wanted to follow him because he was my motivator, God took the other part of my life.”*

Victor attempted suicide because of a close family friend who passed on. The suicide ideations started after the friend's death. He considered the friend to be part of his life. The attempted suicide might have been triggered by grief.

The most common motivating factors for people wishing to die, according to literature, include: the wish to alter an intolerable situation and relieve painful feelings, and the wish to join a dead relative or a friend to lessen isolation and provide comfort (cf. 2.4.5.2).

In the interview Lindokuhle said: *“I once thought about suicide but I managed to escape those bad thoughts. We were having problems at home, my mother and father separated, it was a difficult time. But now we are fine we are staying with my mother, she does everything for us.”*

Lindokuhle experienced suicide ideations at some point in his life. He seems to be sure that he managed to bounce back. The reason for the suicidal thoughts was the separation of his parents. It could have been a period of uncertainty for him but afterwards the situation went back to normal.

In the literature family harmony and cohesion appear to have a protective effect while marital conflict is a stronger predictor of suicide than divorce. The family disharmony in childhood may create emotional and social instability (cf. 2.4.5.2). It is not surprising therefore that Lindokuhle became suicidal. The ability of the remaining parent to coping with being a single parent could have been a protective factor.

In the interview Kathleho said: *“I know few people who tried to kill themselves their names are Goitsi and Pone. They are my class mates we are in grade 12. The boy tried to kill himself because he was in a relationship with Pone. Goitsi heard that Pone was cheating on him, this was a lie. Goitsi tried to kill himself with a rat poison. When Pone heard about this she also tried to kill herself using paraffin.”*

Katleho experienced suicide with his classmates who both attempted suicide. These attempts were due to mistrust in their relationship. Katleho mentioned two means of suicide that his classmates used: rat poison and paraffin. Both these methods were mentioned in paragraphs above (cf. 5.2).

In the interview Siphon 1 said: *„My friend killed herself when she found out that she failed grade ten (10), that’s whereby she took poison and poison herself, she died instantly.“*

Siphon experienced a completed suicide through his friend who committed suicide because of academic failure. Siphon mentioned poison as a means of death. Sekele, Motsoeneng, Zepata and Katleho also mentioned the use of poison in suicide attempts and completed suicides. Academic failure as a cause of suicide was also mentioned by a number of participants earlier.

In the interview Siphon 2 said: *„I saw my friend Bontle. She lives in Boksburg. She wanted to drink paraffin. I asked her why she wanted to kill herself. She told me that her mother didn’t like her. Her mother was abusive and also her uncle because his father died by a car accident at Metsimaholo. They beat her even when she was sleeping. I feel so bad about my friend. I told her that she must go to the social worker or even talk to my mom, so that she could get help and not drink paraffin. I no longer leave there I hope things are better now.“.*

Sipho experienced a planned suicide attempt by his friend. The main cause of this was ill-treatment at home. It also seems that Bontle had no one to talk to. The suicide method planned was paraffin.

Literature indicates that the family setting can have either a curative effect or facilitate the appearance of health problems (cf. 2.4.5.3). Suicide attempts can be avoided if there is good parent-child communication, as indicated in the literature (cf. 2.4.5.3). Literature shows that problems arise when an individual is isolated from his or her important relations or support systems. It can therefore be concluded that mental health symptoms are not only the outcome of the person's inner processes, but also of the relationship with other people (cf. 2.4.5.3). Bontle was left without any support system after her father died and the mother and uncle became abusive.

In the interview Masoleng said: *„There was a man who committed suicide in my street, his name was Mokoeana. I was very sad that day in Namahadi River. The police came and took him.“*

Masoleng experienced a completed suicide by means of drowning. He saw the corpse, which was very traumatic for him. This is the first participant who mentioned drowning as a means of committing suicide.

In the interview Mhlope said: *“I do not plan to kill myself. It is because I don't care what people may say or do. I live my life and I live it I am not concerned about other people's lives.”*

Mhlope was the only participant who said he lived his life and that he was not planning to kill himself. It seems he has made up his mind about this. It could be that he is strong or resilient, hence he said he did not care what people were saying.

Several approaches to reducing stress were supported by eight participants. It is a known fact that sport and recreation are good for mental health. A body of

literature indicates that people who participate in sport enjoy better mental health and have a buffer against the stresses of life. This could mean that less social interaction and physical activity could result in the reduction of positive mental wellness.

In the interview Mkhumbeni said: *„I have an aunt called Nthabiseng. She is 21 years old. She tried to kill herself with jik. She says that she tried with this life, she has given up. The second time she tried to kill herself with pills, on that day she almost died. She took about 20 pills at one time; my father took her to the hospital fast. My father didn't want his last born sister to die. I do not know why she was doing this.”*

Mkhumbeni experienced suicide through his aunt. She attempted suicide several times using different methods. The first was bleach and the second an overdose of tablets. It seems that the aunt had the support of her brother, Mkhumbeni's father. The reasons for these attempts were unknown to Mkhumbeni.

In summary, two of the participants had attempted suicide in their lives, four had thought of committing suicide. It is worrying that learners who had not even completed their secondary education would have had such experiences. Five of the participants had a family history of suicide, three were completed and two were attempts. The most experiences were with peers and friends. Of the seven mentioned four were attempted and two were completed suicides. Only four incidences were experienced in their communities two were completed and the other were attempted.

This data indicates that the participants experienced suicide everywhere even at school. The implication is that if the school does not take the initiative to intervene suicide behaviour among these learners would escalate at an alarming rate. This finding has implications for teaching and learning in schools.

Another data that was volunteered by participants pertained to the means for committing suicide. The mostly used method was poison especially rat poison

which was mentioned five times by participants. This was followed by use of paraffin which is cheap and easy to get as it is sold in shops in such communities. Rat poison is also readily available as it is sold by street vendors nearer busy shopping areas. Suicide by hanging was mentioned three times, while drowning and use of household detergents and overdose of pills were mentioned once. It seems that people in the communities where research was conducted opted for cheaper and readily available methods as some of the attempts and completed suicides were due to impulsivity.

5.8 CONCLUSION

Participants came up with a variety of strategies to deal with suicidal behaviour in schools. Strategies for enhancing social support are endorsed by most participants. Schools have to play a leading role. It could be due to the fact that participants are at school for the greater part of the day, where they come into contact with teachers most of the time. The strategies to reduce stress are also supported by many participants. Perhaps this is so because of the socio-economic conditions in their communities coupled with the stresses and challenges of the developmental stage they are in. Using multiple strategies such as those proposed in this chapter can optimise mental health if applied in a synergy approach.

The next chapter deals with the summaries of the findings of this research and discusses the model developed for practical implementation of the findings.

