

Exploring the experiences and coping strategies of mainstream teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties in Potchefstroom

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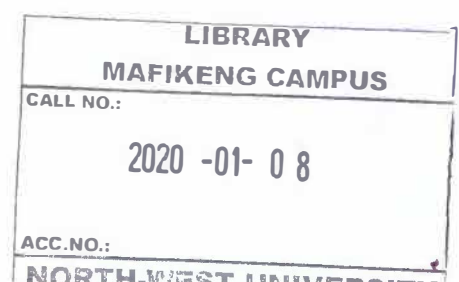
Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Theology in Clinical Psychology* at the North-West University

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Declaration

I, Puleng Agatha Masedi, declare that the mini-dissertation entitled **“Exploring the experiences and coping strategies of mainstream teachers regarding adolescents with behavioural difficulties in Potchefstroom, North West Province of South Africa”**, hereby submitted for the degree of Master of Health Science in Clinical Psychology at the North-West University has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other institution. I further declare this is my own work in design and execution and that all materials contained herein have been duly acknowledged by means of complete references.

Puleng Agatha Masedi

Date

Preface

The candidate opted for a mini-dissertation, with the support of her supervisors.



Supervisor: Ms R. G.Pila-Nemutandani

Co-supervisor: Ms P. S. Kolobe

Dedication

This study is dedicated to the loving memory of my late grandparents, Mr Johny Hube Diseko and Mrs Sarah Baleseng Diseko.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Almighty God, for resilience, strength and wisdom to undertake this study. Thank you for the grace you covered me with through this journey. Thank you for allowing my research to teach me that your timing is perfect and every challenge in our lives serves a greater purpose.

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Table of Content

Declaration..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Preface.....ii

Dedication..... iii

Acknowledgements.....iv

List of figures..... x

List of tables.....xi

List of appendicesxii

List of abbreviations and acronyms xiii

Abstract.....xiv

Chapter 1 1

 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY 1

 1.1 Introduction 1

 1.2 Problem statement.....4

 1.3 Aim and objectives of the study6

 1.3.1 Aim of the study.....6

 1.3.2 Objectives of the study6

 1.3.3 Research questions6

 1.4 Significance of the study7

 1.5 Scope of the study8

 1.6 Conclusion.....9

Chapter 2.....10

LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 Adolescence	10
2.2.1 Physical development	11
2.2.2 Cognitive development.....	12
2.2.3 Social and emotional development.....	12
2.3 Behavioural difficulties.....	13
2.3.1 Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	14
2.3.2 Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)	15
2.3.3 Conduct Disorder (CD)	16
2.4 Mental health among teachers.....	17
2.5 Teacher-learner relationship.....	18
2.6 Teacher training on managing learners with behavioural difficulties.....	19
2.7 Classroom challenges encountered by teachers	19
2.8 Coping strategies of teachers.....	21
2.9 Conclusion.....	21
Chapter 3	22
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....	22
3.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	22
3.1.1 Job Stress and Health Model (Hurrell & McLaney, 1988).....	22
3.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	24

3.1.2	Stress-coping theory	24
3.1.3	Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory	25
3.3	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS	27
3.3.1	Mainstream teachers.....	27
3.3.2	Adolescents	27
3.3.3	Behavioural difficulties	27
3.3.4	Coping strategies	28
3.3.5	Adolescent with behavioural difficulties.....	28
Chapter 4		29
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		29
4.1	Introduction	29
4.2	Research design.....	29
4.3	Participants and research context	30
4.4	Sampling procedures	30
4.5	Selection of participants	33
4.6	Inclusion and exclusion.....	33
4.7	Procedure and data collection	34
4.7.1	Data collection.....	34
4.7.2	Focus group interview	35
4.7.3	Audio recording.....	36
4.7.4	Field notes	36

4.8 Data analysis	36
4.8.1 Thematic analysis	36
4.9 Trustworthiness	38
4.10 Ethical considerations	40
Chapter 5	42
RESULTS	42
5.1 Overview of the study	42
5.2 Brief background information of participants	42
5.3 Emerging themes	43
5.4 Emerging themes from data analysis	46
Chapter 6	57
DISCUSSION	57
6.1 Introduction	57
6.2 Conclusion	65
6.3 Recommendations	65
6.4 Limitations of the study	66
6.5 Recommendations for future research	67
References	68
Appendix A	83
North-West University's Ethical Clearance Certificate	83
Appendix B	84

Informed consent.....	84
Appendix C	88
Approval from Department of Education.....	88
Appendix D	89
Biographical questionnaire.....	89
Appendix E	90
Certificate of language editing	90
Appendix F.....	91
Turnit in Report.....	91



List of figures	Pages
Figure 3.1: Job Stress and Health Model	24
Figure 4.1: Population and sampling	32

List of tables	Pages
Table 4.1: Strategies for enhancing consistency of data through crystallisation	38
Table 4.2: Emerging themes	43

List of appendices	Pages
Appendix A: North-West University's Ethical Clearance Certificate	83
Appendix B: Informed consent	84
Appendix C: Approval from Department of Education	88
Appendix D: Biographical questionnaire	89
Appendix E: Certificate of language editing	90
Appendix F: Turnit-in Report	91

List of abbreviations and acronyms

ADHD Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

APA American Psychiatric Association

CD Conduct Disorder

JSHM Job Stress and Health Model

ODD Oppositional Defiant Disorder

Abstract

Historically, research on behavioural difficulties in the school context has primarily focused on the descriptions, causes and innovative interventions to deal with behavioural difficulties displayed by learners. In the current study, the lived experiences of teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties in Potchefstroom, North West Province were examined. A phenomenological research design was used in conducting the study, while a qualitative research approach was used to obtain rich and detailed data from participants. Stratified and purposive sampling was used to strategically select the sample from a large quantity. Three female and five male participants were selected through stratified and purposive sampling. A focus group interview was used to collect data, which was analysed according to emerging themes. The findings of the study revealed five themes as follows: teachers' experiences around the school; experiences with the education system; motivators of behavioural traits among adolescents; psychological well-being of teachers; and coping strategies of teachers. It is, therefore, concluded that teachers experience a major challenge regarding adolescents with behavioural difficulties. Teachers are not provided with sufficient training and support to effectively deal with adolescents with behavioural difficulties. Teachers struggle to maintain discipline in classrooms, thus resulting in impairments in social and occupational functioning. The results also revealed that teachers experience poor psychological well-being. Teachers coping strategies seem to be influenced by the teacher's age and years of experience as revealed in this study. It is therefore recommended that research and psychological interventions should be geared towards improving coping skills and well-being of teachers.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Adolescence is one of the developmental stages known to be characterised with many challenges than any other stage of development in human life (Louw & Louw, 2014). According to developmental theorists (Erikson, 1959; Piaget & Cook, 1952), the adolescence stage is a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood falling within an age range of 11 and 21 years (Campbell, Spears, Snee, Butler, & Kift, 2012; Prinsloo, 2014). The common characteristic of adolescence is that individuals often partake in risk-taking behaviours involving testing social boundaries; which may be due to the fact that adolescents go through social, cognitive, emotional and physical challenges (Campbell *et al.*, 2012; Prinsloo, 2014).

According to Lekganyanye (2011), adolescents with behavioural difficulties in schools are described as learners going against the school's code of conduct. Learners act in violent ways such as acts of aggression towards other learners and insults addressed towards teachers (Steyn, Van Wyk, & Kitching, 2014). Learners are often disobedient towards authority figures around the school, including teachers and the school principals. Adolescents with behavioural difficulties also portray behaviours such as vandalising school properties, disturbing teaching and the learning process, which may lead to poor overall school performance (Malak, 2017; Marais & Meier, 2010). Pas, Cash, O'Brennan, Debnam, and Bradshaw (2015) state that when such behavioural difficulties are not dealt with effectively, these behavioural difficulties may further become part of classroom norms, affecting other learners who are well-behaved, hence the well-behaved learners adopt the same behaviour. In a school setting, such adolescents are often identified as learners, thus, adolescents and learners are used interchangeably in this study.

Behavioural difficulties in the school system, especially high schools, have become a serious concern nationally and internationally (Hemphill, Plenty, Herrenkohl, Toumbourou, & Catalano, 2014). Findling and colleagues (2017) moot that teachers are faced with increasing rates of behavioural difficulties in schools. For instance, Findling and colleagues (2017) reported that in the United Kingdom, a 90% increase in behavioural difficulties has been conveyed in schools. Findling and colleagues (2017) further moot that based on the increase in behavioural difficulties, New Zealand implemented the suspension of learners as one of the few strategies to maintain discipline in schools. In New Zealand, White (2013) reported a 61.9% increase in epidemic rate of high school learners suspended yearly, further indicated that teachers' efforts to implement suspension to deal with behavioural difficulties in schools may be unsuccessful. White (2013) stated that suspended learners are only deprived from education and the suspension strategy fails to address behavioural difficulties in schools. White (2013) further posits that teachers experience 23% of disobedience and about 26% rate of aggressive behaviours in most schools, which increases the school suspension rates rapidly.

In South Africa, mainstream schools consist of fully functioning learners, while inclusive education schools, educate learners with special needs (Xaba, 2011). Thus, South Africa's educational system consists of mainstream and inclusive education schools. Mainstream teachers are expected to organise, formulate and provide lessons to all learners in a classroom setting (Xaba, 2011). Teachers are provided with the National Curriculum Framework as a tool to equip learners with necessary skills and knowledge (Mokua, 2010). The primary duty of mainstream teachers is to provide learners with a supportive and safe environment, which will assist them in reaching their ultimate potential (Amusa & Toriola, 2013).

The Department of Education expects teachers to fulfil various roles in the classroom such as social work roles, career guidance counsellors, parenting roles and mentors to

learners (Benraghda, Ali, & Radzuan, 2015; Huang & Hu, 2016; Ovando & Combs, 2018). However, learners have the responsibility to participate actively within a classroom. The learner's role in the classroom is to gain knowledge and skills provided by teachers (Coetzer, 2011). Learners are also expected to be disciplined, respectful and obedient towards authority figures such as teachers in the school context (Coetzer, 2011). Teacher and learner interaction is one of the crucial elements towards establishing an effective and productive teaching and learning in the classroom (Cooper, 2017). Teachers and adolescent learners with behavioural difficulties often struggle to maintain the required interaction for effective learning (Cooper, 2017).

Research emphasises that the development of adolescents with behavioural difficulties emerges from two main factors as follows: parenting styles; and learner-teacher relationship. According to Anake and Adigeb (2015) and Doctoroff and Arnold (2017), certain parenting styles can have a considerable influence on behaviours displayed by adolescents. Lind (2014) and Stower (2017) found that negative teacher-learner relationships can determine negative behavioural outcomes from learners. The poor relation between learners, school authority figures such as teachers and attitudes towards learners with behavioural problems, has been a contributing factor towards school misconducts (Hemphill *et al.*, 2014). However, teachers experience adolescents with behavioural difficulties differently and application of teaching methods often lead to different coping strategies.

Coping strategies are methods or skills used to prevail over and reduce challenges (Alcantara *et al.*, 2017). According to Matsuo and Sato (2017), coping strategies can be identified when an individual constantly applies cognitive and behavioural strategies with the aim of handling daily life stressors. According to Chaaban and Du (2017), cognitive strategies may include the ability to identify existing classroom challenges and planning effective problem-solving skills to address challenges such as behavioural difficulties, while behavioural strategies include

implementing the problem-solving skills in a practical manner, self-care and teachers avoiding learners with behavioural difficulties while focusing on disciplined learners. However, these strategies are categorised as adaptive and/or maladaptive coping strategies. Chaaban and Du (2017) stated that the type of coping strategies used by teachers to reduce classroom challenges determine the level of success.

1.2 Problem statement

Adolescent behavioural difficulties continue to be the most challenging problem in South African schools (Bechuke, 2015; Burkey *et al.*, 2018). The common concern and challenge teachers face in many schools are learners' behavioural difficulties in classrooms (Brown, Westbrook, & Challagalla, 2005; Goldstein, 2015; Simeon, Herbst, & Nienaber, 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). South African teachers are verbally and emotionally abused by learners on a daily basis (Burton & Leoschut, 2012). According to the National School Violence Study, about 90% of adolescents with behavioural difficulties are identified as perpetrators of hostility and aggressive behaviours towards teachers (Burton & Leoschut, 2012). Research has revealed that 12.2% of teachers have experienced violence such as physical fights and aggressiveness from learners with behavioural difficulties (Burton & Leoschut, 2012). Studies report that behavioural difficulties affected teachers and the learning process in the Umfolozi District, KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa (Robarts, 2014). Teachers' lesson times are often consumed by adolescent learners with behavioural difficulties, as teachers spend most of the time battling to maintain and manage discipline in classrooms. This particular finding leads to the innovative provision of interventions aimed at paving a pathway to reducing the chances of behavioural difficulties in high schools in South Africa (Robarts, 2014). However, the long term effects of the intervention is that teachers are not satisfied with the new interventions to manage adolescents with behavioural difficulties in classroom (Robarts, 2014).

Suspensions has increased by 90% and disobedience by 10% in classrooms, which is an indication of a serious crisis in the North West area(Lekganyanye, 2011). According to De Witt and Lessing (2013), about 79.2% of teachers in South Africa, especially the North West Province (Bechuke, 2015) believe corporal punishment should be reinstated since new strategies such as implementing positive behavioural interventions, improving teacher-learner relations and support to manage disruptive behaviours have proved to be ineffective. A potential crisis in schools in the North West Province, regarding complains and dissatisfaction by teachers about behavioural problems, is increasing yearly and government's failing efforts in addressing teachers' concerns has resulted in 52.8% of teachers experiencing signs of burnout such as emotional exhaustion and demotivation towards the profession (Masekoameng, 2010). As a result, Masekoameng (2010) found that one of the major factors influencing low teacher morale is learner's behavioural difficulties which is one of the long term consequences. Furthermore, 74.2% of teachers maintain if an opportunity arises regarding joining a different profession, complete retirement from the teaching profession could be in sight (Bechuke, 2015; Dehaloo & Schulze, 2013).

Common adolescent behavioural difficulties in South African classrooms are: verbal abuse (Burkey *et al.*, 2018); interruption of lessons(Alcantara *et al.*, 2017); disrespect such as teasing and neglecting academic work(Burkey *et al.*, 2018);and disobedience, struggle to cooperate and disregarding classroom rules (Allen, Chinsky, Larcen, Lochman&Selinger, 2017). On the other hand, there is a high rate of gang violence in schools in the Western Cape Province whereby, teachers become victims of physical abuse by aggressive adolescents and other learners bullied around (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014).

Previous research has mainly focused on explaining the causes of behavioural difficulties displayed by learners such as parenting styles and teacher-learner interactions, including how parents and teachers can implement ways to reduce behavioural problems acted out at home

and at school by adolescents (Anake & Adigeb, 2015; Huver, Otten, de Vries & Engels, 2010). However, there is need for more research on teacher's subjective experiences, especially in the North West Province. It has been argued that teachers play a role (directly or indirectly) in the increasing rates of learner behavioural difficulties in the classroom environment. The direct role played by teachers with regard to coping strategies to handle stressful challenges in classrooms could provide a basis for intervention strategies. Indirect roles played by teachers could also have an effect on how coping strategies are employed. Understanding the experiences and coping strategies of teachers can contribute to general available research data, inform interventions and in a broader sense, inform policies in dealing with behavioural problems in schools.

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

1.3.1 Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences and coping strategies of mainstream teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties in Potchefstroom.

1.3.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

- a. Explore the experiences of teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties; and
- b. Examine the coping strategies in teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties.

1.3.3 Research questions

The following research questions were asked:

- a. What are the experiences of teachers regarding learners with behavioural difficulties?
and

- b. What are the coping strategies used by teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties?

1.4 Significance of the study

This study has significant impact on practice, theory and research methodology. The study will provide new and additional value towards the field of literature relating to teachers of adolescent learners with behavioural difficulties. The study can become an informative tool to increase teacher's insight on how teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties can impact the wellbeing of teachers. Previous literature has provided readers with the causes and descriptions on adolescent learners with behavioural difficulties; however, significant research has not been conducted on the subjective experiences of teachers. Ultimately, the study will create awareness on challenges encountered by teachers in classrooms.

Several studies conducted on teachers and behavioural difficulties have used a quantitative approach while fewer studies have used a qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach intends to contribute to a better understanding of the subjective experiences of teachers and explore in-depth coping strategies of teachers.

The study thus, seeks to make a meaningful contribution towards the education system in South Africa. Firstly, government, policy makers and the Department of Education may gain greater insights regarding problems endured by teachers. Secondly, policy makers may be compelled to reevaluate and alter existing policies in order to prioritise teachers and their wellbeing. Once policies are modified to accommodate the concerns of teachers and their well-being, the Department of Education could then be guided by policy to design sustainable interventions and training for the management of behavioural difficulties faced by teachers.

Thirdly, South African schools could benefit as government, policy makers and the Department of Education acknowledge the urgency to address behavioural difficulties in

schools. The fourth contribution includes the efficient and effective communication between schools and the Department of Education regarding complains and assisting teachers to reduce behavioural difficulties in schools.

The study could increase teachers' insight on how teaching adolescent learners with behavioural difficulties can have a negatively or positively impact on the well-being of teachers. Teachers thus, could start reflecting on the coping strategies previously used and to reevaluate whether such strategies are healthy or unhealthy.

The study will illustrate to teachers that there are other teachers who are experiencing similar problems and encourage such teachers to share their own experiences. The study could create awareness on how adolescents with behavioural difficulties affect the psychological well-being of teachers. As a result, the study could create sufficient awareness for teachers in handling learners with behavioural difficulties through recommendations from other teachers.

Finally, the study intends to increase awareness with regard to addressing parents expected involvement in the school. Creating adequate working parent-teacher relationship in disciplining and modifying the behaviour of adolescents. Mutual parent-teacher relationship is essential in preventing and reducing high levels of stress experienced by teachers of adolescents with behavioural problems.

1.5 Scope of the study

The study was conducted in a semi-urban and urban area within Mohadin community, Potchefstroom. The town is situated within the boundaries of Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, North West Province, South Africa. Eight teachers (black, coloureds and Indian) teaching at Potchefstroom Secondary School participated in the study.

1.6 Conclusion

The next chapter is the literature review; focus will be on adolescents and the developmental phase. Further discussion will be on behavioural difficulties and relevant disorders. Mental health among teachers, teacher-learner relationship, teacher training on managing learners with behavioural difficulties, classrooms challenges encountered by teachers and finally coping strategies will be discussed.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of secondary data in order to address the research questions, categorise the research problems thematically with a view to addressing gaps in the literature. The literature review focuses on a holistic understanding of adolescence according to human development. Furthermore, the literature review highlights concerns in global and South African literature with regard to teacher's experiences with adolescents with behavioural difficulties.

2.2 Adolescence

According to Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, and Shernoff (2014), teachers spend more time with learners than parents. Teachers need to have a holistic understanding of the development phase of adolescents and play an influential role in the transition phase of learners during adolescence. The ages of adolescence differ from child to child and can be contingent on biological, socio-cultural and individual dissimilarity elements (Louw & Louw, 2014). The authors further argue that when the age of adolescence begins and ends, focus should rather be on biological development (which is known as the beginning). Many theorists have contributed to the understanding of how adolescents function during the adolescence period of development such as Piaget & Cook (1952) and Erik Erikson (1959).

However, Papalia and Feldman (2012) posit that adolescence is a period of many physical, psychological and social growths. Physical, cognitive, social and emotional development may provide an understanding of teachers' experiences as these professionals interact with adolescents with behavioural difficulties on a daily basis. The physical, cognitive, social and emotional development impacts the behaviour of learners (Bundy *et al.*, 2018). An

understanding of physical, cognitive, social and emotional development could be important in this study; thus, further discussions will be on these developments.

2.2.1 Physical development

Firstly, during the early stages of adolescence, there is an extremely fast and large bodily development(Jepkemboi, 2018). The first external signs of puberty in girls are mostly the pubic hair and breast tissue and for boys, the expansion of the testes. During this time, it should be acknowledged that sexual maturation is present (Bundy *et al.*, 2018). The authors further state that when adolescents begin to go through certain bodily changes, different types of hormones play a role in their lives such as somatotrophin and gonadotrophin (Papalia & Feldman, 2012; Levine & Munsch, 2014).

Secondly, there are certain factors that can influence or impact the physical growth of adolescents such as secular trend, which occurs mostly because of high standard of living. For example, children who are better nourished through proper health care, will have a good physical development (Louw & Louw, 2014). Finally, it is important to understand that as these adolescents begin to go through body changes, it can affect some adolescents psychologically, thus leading to intense development of behavioural difficulties(Malan & Van Deventer, 2013).This has been supported by theorists such as Erikson (1959) and Piaget (1952).With the extreme physical developments and changes occurring within an adolescent with regard to bodily changes, subjects such as Life Orientation are often incorporated in the teaching and learning processes. (Marumo, Kok, & Van Der Walt, 2017).The Life Orientation related talks are often not done at the learners homes (Marumo *et al.*, 2017), which puts teachers in a parenting role as such topics could be dealt with in a home environment. The physical growth of adolescents often creates a misconception or confusion that learners are becoming matured and grown-up(Marumo *et al.*, 2017). Adolescents might begin to intimidate and disrespect teachers due to all the confusion in and around them. For

example, a learner who has become increasingly masculine can begin to physically attack the teacher who applies disciplinary actions on him.

2.2.2 Cognitive development

The manner in which adolescents process information and memory show that there is visible improvement regarding learning and memory (Kramers-Olen, 2015; Piaget & Cook, 1952). Impaired cognitive development could be one of the reasons for the high increase rates of poor school performances in schools (Kramers-Olen, 2015). According to Marais and Meier (2010), teachers complain that adolescent learners with poor school performance are often the same ones who display many forms of behavioural difficulties in classrooms. This is an indication that teachers are exposed and have to deal with learners dealing with this setback in turn acting it out behaviourally.

According to Louw and Louw (2014), during the cognitive development phase, adolescents are extra conscious of a variety of possibilities and options. According to Piaget and Cook (1952), some adolescents often struggle and become overwhelmed during planning and decision-making as adolescents have a variety of possibilities and options at their disposal (Louw & Louw, 2014). Thus, in trying to choose among alternatives, adolescents end up becoming perplexed. This often leads to adolescents resorting to habits, acts of impulse or not making any decision at all. The effects of the struggle by adolescents with regard to planning and decision-making can contribute to behavioural difficulties displayed by adolescents (Malan & Van Deventer, 2013).

2.2.3 Social and emotional development

It has been stated that when adolescents begin to explore identity concepts such as morals, values co-exist (Sigelman & Rider, 2012). Adolescents focus on moral standards and lessons from their parents, teachers and societal norms, focusing on conventional reasoning but other

than that, adolescents may move away or become rebellious towards the moral values of society and what is accepted (Mollborn, Domingue, & Boardman, 2014). Thus resulting in adolescents displaying inappropriate behaviours that are categorised under behavioural difficulties. In some South African schools, teachers incorporate lessons based on moral standards and societal norms such as what is socially acceptable and appropriate behaviours in a school setting (Mollborn *et al.*, 2014). However, due to the rebellious phase of adolescence, learners may fail to implement the lessons (Mollborn *et al.*, 2014). The developmental phases of adolescence make it difficult for teachers to maintain effective classroom management to reduce behavioural difficulties (Christofferson & Sullivan, 2015).

2.3 Behavioural difficulties

It is during the stipulated age of 11 to 20 years that problem behaviours could be noticed in this age group (Steyn *et al.*, 2014). Behavioural difficulties are disturbing and problematic behaviours which are acted out by learners in the classroom setting. Problem behaviours are those that reflect aggressiveness, disruptiveness, bullying, verbal and physical fighting and vandalism (Steyn *et al.*, 2014). Disobedient adolescents not complying with the requests of teachers or parents can be identified as learners with difficult behaviour. However, such behaviour can further evolve into more extreme behaviours such as delinquent acts.

Behavioural difficulties can cause clinically significant impairments in academic and other areas of functioning (Kledzik & Dunn, 2012). As these behaviours affect different areas of functioning, pathological disorders may need to be examined. Thus, such behaviours are often noticed in psychopathological disorders such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) and Conduct Disorder (CD) (APA, 2013).

Furthermore, neurodevelopmental disorders such as ADHD, ODD and CD often share disruptive characters and are labelled as disruptive, impulsive behavioural disorders in the DSM 5 (APA, 2013). Learners with behavioural difficulties, to a certain degree may present with certain symptoms found in these pathological disorders but the learners might not meet the full diagnostic criteria. Teachers witness the symptoms of the disorders acted out by adolescents with behavioural difficulties in classrooms. Severe consequences such as school dropouts could be seen, which could lead to serious social problems when effective interventions are not implemented towards the learners during the early stages (Chau *et al.*, 2016; Ghosh & Sinha, 2012).

According to Cuellar (2015), many developed and implemented treatments have been focusing more on finding results for the present moment and not really having a long-term, sustainable effect in the future regarding the disorders. The unsustainable treatment intervention plans has created frustrations and a sense of hopelessness regarding behavioural difficulties in classrooms by teachers, and decreased the level of tolerance towards adolescent with behavioural difficulties (Cuellar, 2015).

2.3.1 Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADHD has been one of the disorders or psychological explanations regarding behavioural difficulties expressed by school learners, which attributes to serious learning problems (Mohangi & Archer, 2015). The fifth edition of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental disorders (DSM-5) states that learners with ADHD display manifestations of lack of concentration, being extremely hyperactive and most of the time ,act without thinking and all these constant age-inappropriate symptoms, would affect areas of functioning such as cognitive, academic and social areas (Mash & Wolfe, 2013). These behaviours are reported to be disruptive in a classroom situation and may even affect the learning process in class as the learners tends to stand when

inappropriate, disturb other learners or even blurt out answers to teachers during lessons (Fair, Bathula, Nikolas, and Nigg (2012).

Nevertheless, Fair, Bathula, Nikolas, and Nigg (2012) argue that ADHD is mostly one of the typical and primitive neurodevelopment disorders. Although Ryan, Haroon, and Melvin (2015) argue that healthcare providers should work intensely with families who take care of such adolescents, including the adolescent themselves. Teachers spend most time with these learners and often struggle to discipline them (Ryan, Haroon, and Melvin, 2015). It could be helpful to provide teachers with relevant information regarding aspects of this disorder, including symptoms management and treatment (Ryan *et al.*, 2015). Although research has been directed at understanding the disorders, more could still be done in understanding experiences of educators in dealing with such behaviours.

2.3.2 Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

ODD is considered to have constant patterns of non-compliance, misbehaviour and antagonism towards care-givers, guardians, teachers and others who are in authority (APA, 2013). Furthermore, it is reported that adolescents with ODD lack emotional regulations, never take responsibility for their own actions, are easily irritated by those around them and peers get irritated by such behaviours as well (Kledzik & Dunn, 2012). Adolescents diagnosed with ODD are rebellious, do not follow rules, are involved in fights, especially with parents (more verbal than physical)(Blumberg, 2018; Jarrett & Hilton, 2018). Although medications and therapeutic interventions are geared towards parents and adolescent, teachers are often left out (Jarrett & Hilton, 2018).

Furthermore, problematic dilemmas of parent-adolescent relations has been one of the many causes of the development of ODD. Single parenting can also be a cause of this disorder, including genetic predisposition, where an adolescent could have inherited a gene from a

family member who has a history of such disorder (Barry, Marcus, Barry, & Coccaro, 2013; Gomez & Stavropoulos, 2018). However, since teachers almost assume this parental role in a school setting, the same outcome of rebelliousness and oppositional defiance could be expected as these adolescents could be displacing the anger from their parents to teachers (Barry *et al.*, 2013). These behavioural tendencies can be seen in teacher-learner relations as both parents and teachers are identified as authority figures (Zhao & Kushnir, 2018).

2.3.3 Conduct Disorder (CD)

Disobedient behaviours and actions are typical behaviours associated with the developmental phase of adolescence, especially when adolescents go against their parents' request in most cases (Mash & Wolfe, 2013). Nevertheless, it becomes problematic when the adolescent gets involved in extreme deviant, violent and non-compliant behaviours (Mash & Wolfe, 2013). These behaviours are then identified as conduct problems and/or antisocial behaviour traits (Sadock, Sadock & Ruiz, 2015). Teachers often experience violent attacks from learners with behavioural difficulties that might present with CD symptoms and teachers are not allowed to defend themselves in such incidents as stipulated by the South African Department of education policies (Shulman & Maguin, 2017). In a teacher-learner fight, teachers who try to defend themselves, are reported to the South African Council for Educators (SACE) (SACE, 2010) and could face serious consequences such as suspension or abuse charges of a minor (Pillay, 2017).

Conduct Disorder evolves after numerous behavioural problems and often, such adolescents indulge in criminal behaviours (Scott *et al.*, 2017), including acting in harmful ways towards others. Some adolescents are even placed in juvenile centres because of these criminal behaviours (Sadock, Sadock & Ruiz, 2015). Some adolescents diagnosed with CD would, sometimes, go against the law and those who are in authority. The above-mentioned behaviours could still be seen in school settings as reported by Ghosh and Sinha (2012).

Adolescents with behavioural difficulties, often do not meet the full criteria of the above-mentioned disorders, however, learners can present with symptoms of behavioural disorders described by teachers as behavioural difficulties experienced in classrooms.

2.4 Mental health among teachers

Teachers living with mental illnesses, often have to endure negative life experiences due to the symptoms of their condition, impairments in functioning and quality of life (Pyne, 2017). Burnout is one of the challenges that most teachers experience. According to Malik, Björkqvist, and Österman (2017), burnout is a response to chronic stress associated with factors in the educational system and teaching environment. Internal disorders such as mood and anxiety disorders, have been identified in teachers, including substance abuse (Marmorstein & White, 2018). Teachers diagnosed with depression, often have low tolerance towards adolescents with behavioural difficulties (Pyne, 2017). Teachers living with depression, often struggle to manage adolescents with behavioural difficulties. On the contrary, teachers with anxiety often become consumed by managing adolescents with behavioural difficulties while less time is spent on teaching. Furthermore, teachers begin to feel overwhelmed as they struggle to discipline adolescents with behavioural difficulties and regress in lesson planning. This results in teachers with anxiety experiencing intense anxiety symptoms, thus affecting occupational and social functioning. Teachers are moot to have a high prevalence rate of substance use and depression (Marmorstein & White, 2018) since work demands, improvement in school performance and application of disciplinary techniques for classroom management needs to be fulfilled. In most cases, teachers use unhealthy coping skills, for example, substances, thus increasing the prevalence of substance abuse among teachers (Pyne, 2017). Teachers often struggle to cope with work and family stress (Bellingrath & Kudielka, 2017).

2.5 Teacher-learner relationship

Teachers have a high influence on the academic and social development of learners (De Laet *et al.*, 2016; Verschueren, 2015). A positive teacher-learner relationship is described as one where teachers provide learners with a secure and safe learning environment. Teachers are often open, warm and supportive towards learners (Pakarinen *et al.*, 2017). On the contrary, a negative teacher-learner relationship is one where the teacher is less attentive, neglectful and unsupportive towards learners (De Laet *et al.*, 2016; Pakarinen *et al.*, 2017). This could be related to the parent-learner relationship as explained earlier. Negative teacher-learner relationship towards learners with behavioural difficulties could also contribute to further difficulties in maintaining the behaviour in the classroom.

Studies indicate that a dysfunctional family could be associated with poor teacher-learner relationship in a school setting (Moed *et al.*, 2015). History of poor teacher-learner relationship and family dysfunction could be one of the factors involved in behavioural difficulties experienced in the school setting (De Laet *et al.*, 2016). A dysfunctional family is regarded as one where conflicts occur almost daily, members display abusive behaviours and learners are often neglected (Clair, Schroeder, & Gururangan, 2015; Narayan *et al.*, 2017). Adolescents raised in families that apply different parenting styles such as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful or uninvolved parents are more prone to problems later on in life (Lenne *et al.*, 2017). Uninvolved parents do not pay attention to the needs of the adolescent, are neglectful and do not have a healthy relationship with adolescent (Georgiou, Ioannou, & Stavriniades, 2017). Adolescents raised in dysfunctional families by uninvolved parents, often develop emotional problems and behavioural difficulties, thus making it difficult for adolescents to have adequate relationships with others, who are outside the family system (such as teachers).

2.6 Teacher training on managing learners with behavioural difficulties

The main purpose of teacher training is to provide teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours to successfully carry out their duties (Ruzek *et al.*, 2016). Policymakers in the Department of Education have developed training programmes to implement classroom management courses to reduce the levels of behavioural problems in classrooms and the school in general (Christofferson & Sullivan, 2015). However, the constant complaints and low morale of teachers contribute to their inability to effectively deal with learners with behavioural problems in classrooms (Voss, Wagner, Klusmann, Trautwein, & Kunter, 2017).

The common concern and challenge faced by teachers in many schools are disruptive behaviours of learners in classrooms/schools (Simeon *et al.*, 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Several behaviour management strategies have been designed for teachers to practise. Strategies such as the positive behavioural interventions and support to create positive behavioural outcomes for learners have been reported (Pas *et al.*, 2015). However, Boujut, Dean, Grouselle, and Cappe (2016); Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) found that inadequately equipped teachers may result in teachers experiencing stress and burnouts, which later negatively affect their wellbeing.

2.7 Classroom challenges encountered by teachers

Some of the reasons why teachers get stressed-up and burnout in schools are as follows: verbal abuse from learners; harassment; and disturbance during lessons (Shek, Keung Ma, & Sun, 2011; Sun, 2015). It is reported that the teacher's focus shifts from the lesson to managing the disturbing learner, thus losing teaching time (Shek *et al.*, 2011; Sun, 2015). Behavioural difficulties are stress-provoking for teachers and disciplined learners. Teachers fall behind in terms of lesson planning, teaching progress is hindered and lessons become ineffective, thus contributing to teachers feeling frustrated and stressed (Friedman-Krauss,

Raver, Morris, & Jones, 2014). Often teachers become pressurized to complete the lesson plan and still maintain discipline in the classroom. Once this process unfolds, reports indicate that teachers begin to experience emotional exhaustion and burnout, which affects the teaching progress (Friedman-Krauss *et al.*, 2014). Teachers would be less responsive towards learners, reduce job performance and display low levels of motivation. The burnout phase of teachers increases behavioural difficulties and affects the quality of teaching and learning (Gupta & Rani, 2017).

According to Morgan and Sideridis (2013) educators in schools are facing a serious challenge of teaching learners with behavioural problems. Learners displaying behavioural difficulties are often associated with class disruption. Class disruptions such as disturbing teaching, defiant behaviours in class/school such as use of violence on peers, oppression and victimisation, often lead to difficulties in sustaining attention and even following instructions, which constitute a major problem in the learning process (Morgan & Sideridis, 2013). Minor and severe adolescent behavioural difficulties are often towards authority figures such as teachers, principals and such behaviours create intense disruptions in classrooms and school regulations (Sun & Shek, 2012).

Learner drop out during high school due to learning impairments experienced at school and the low tolerance of teachers towards such behaviours remains another challenge. Cuellar (2015) argues that adolescents could be less motivated to get involved in educational programmes later on in life. Teachers who have minimal knowledge about pathological behavioural disorders such as ADHD, are reported to likely experience stress and frustrations in classrooms and towards learners with ADHD since these teachers have some background on how to handle such learners during class (Mohangi & Archer, 2015).

2.8 Coping strategies of teachers

Teachers in most South African mainstream schools are faced with many challenges such as overcrowding (Matshipi, Mulaudzi, & Mashau, 2017). Overcrowding in schools could contribute to difficulties experienced by teachers in attempting to maintain discipline and order (Matshipi *et al.*, 2017; Mwapwele & Roodt, 2018). Oberle and Schonert-Reichl (2016) found that teachers have different ways of reacting to learners behaviours. Some teachers would experience extreme stress while others would try to find different ways to handle learners with a less frustrating and more calming reaction.

Voss and colleagues (2017) posit that the implementation of classroom management methods by teachers, determine learners' behaviours in the classroom setting. Strategies such as punishment, after class talks, relationship building and rule-setting, are often said to be applied (Coetzer, 2011). However, such strategies require teachers to maintain healthy coping skills. Teachers utilising maladaptive coping strategies towards learners with behavioural problems, reportedly have compromised well-being (Lindqvist, Weurlander, Wernerson, & Thornberg, 2017). Negatively affected emotional and psychological well-being is said to further attribute to teachers implementing ineffective classroom management strategies (Lindqvist *et al.*, 2017).

2.9 Conclusion

Multifactorial contribution to adolescent behavioural difficulties and teacher –learner challenges have been noted. Behavioural disorders such as ADHD, ODD and CD could also contribute to the difficulties, however, such learners do not always meet the full diagnostic criteria of such disorders. The next chapter focuses on the theoretical framework that informed the study.

Chapter 3

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1.1 Job Stress and Health Model (Hurrell & McLaney, 1988)

The Job Stress and Health Model (JSHM) was introduced by Hurrell and McLaney in 1988. JSHM provides an understanding of how adverse health outcomes can relate to work-related factors. Hurrell and McLaney (1988) discovered multiple sources of stress in the work environment (physical environment, role conflict, job control, role ambiguity, interpersonal conflict, work load, responsibility for people, underutilisation of abilities, cognitive demands and shift work). The occupational stress model explains that work-related stressors attribute to severe psychological, physiological and behavioural reaction, known as strains (Hurrell and McLaney, 1988). According to Hurrell and McLaney (1988), the reaction can have a short-term effect on an individuals and later transform into a long-term effect, which may result in psychological disorders or disabilities.

Individual factors such as personality, coping strategies a person chooses to use, non-working factors such as domestic/family demands and “buffer” factors (such as social support) can determine whether an individual has an acute or chronic reaction towards job stress (Hurrell and McLaney, 1988). Adolescents with behavioural difficulties are stress-provoking factors for teachers and how teachers handle the distress can influence the degree of impact the stress could have on the teachers health and well-being.

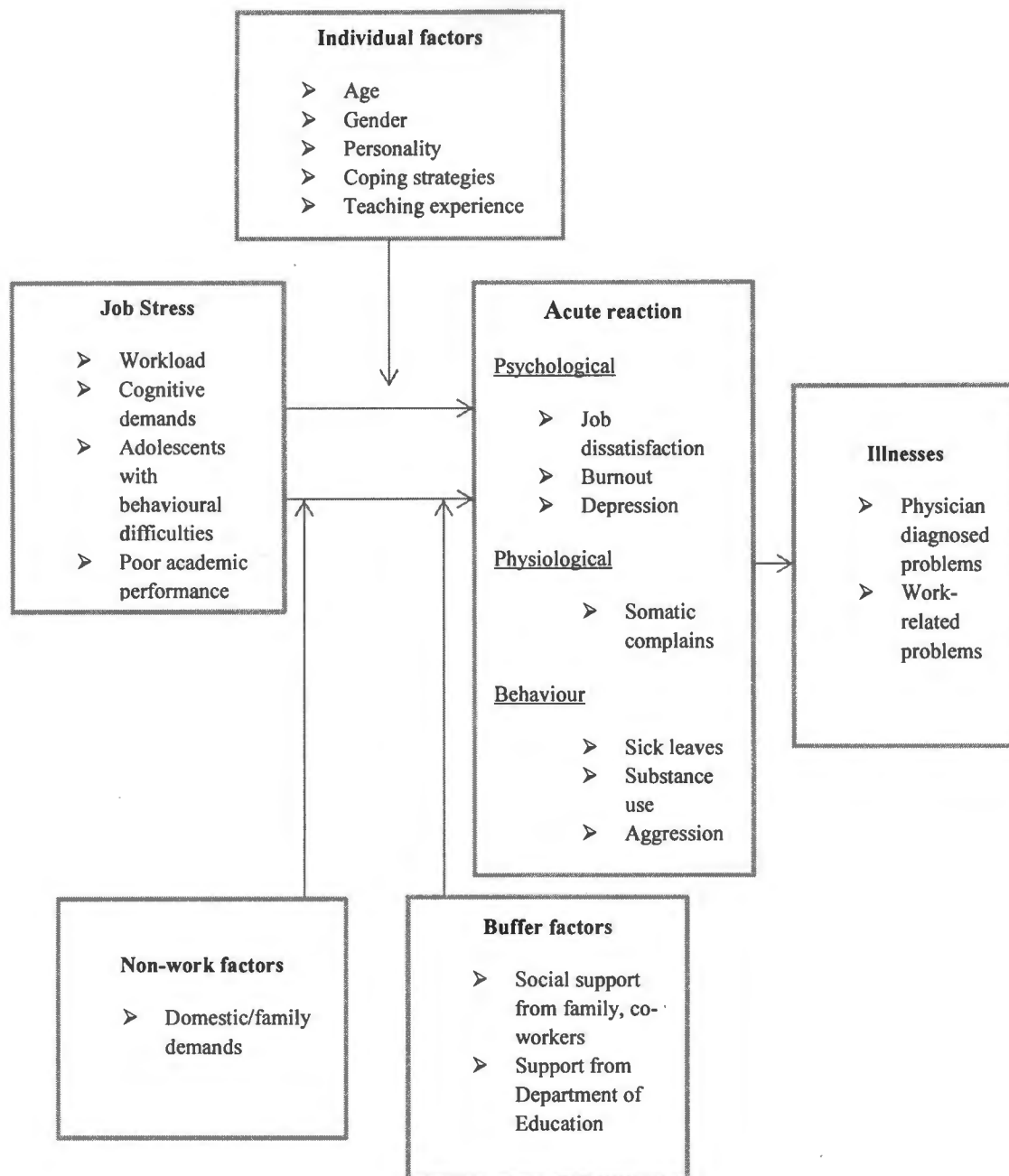


Figure 3.1: Job Stress and Health Model (Hurrell & McLaney, 1988)

3.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

3.1.2 Stress-coping theory

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that stress is considered as a dynamic and reciprocal relation, which links the environment and the person, meaning that stress might be experienced when situations are identified as consuming more on a person's resources. People can perceive stress differently when experienced. A teacher might contemplate a

school with a high rate of behavioural difficulties of learners as threatening, while other teachers might view it as challenging.

One of the causes of teachers' burnout and stress is lack of coping strategies when dealing with learners who present with behavioural difficulties (Fisher, 2016). In addition, Positive Psychology classifies coping strategies into three categories used by people to deal with life stressors linked to the coping stress theory as follows: 1) emotion-focused coping is when a person tries to deal with negative emotions (Baumgardner & Crothers, 2014; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984); 2) problem-focused coping is used by people who want to bring change towards the situation that causes the stress; and the third category involves adopting avoidance-focused coping by simply avoiding any form of confrontation (Baumgardner & Crothers, 2014; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

3.1.3 Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecosystemic theory (1979) states that a human being's development is moulded by several interacting processes. The theory explains that an individual's behaviour is influenced by the environment the person associates with (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The teacher exists within systems of social relationships. The interacting systems are referred to as the microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem and exosystem. The microsystem is described as exposure to settings the teacher is in on a daily basis, which includes family, school, friendships, parents of learners and colleagues (relationships and immediate environment) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The mesosystem is the interaction of two or more microsystems and does not exclude the connection between the teacher's family, friends and colleagues (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The exosystem is acknowledged as the relation between two or more settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The macrosystem serves as a society's overall cultural patterns, including values and social systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The mesosystem was used in this study as it demonstrates the set of linkage between the microsystem and the exosystem. The behavioural patterns and psychological problems portrayed by teachers due to challenges with adolescents with behavioural difficulties are explained through the systems (Pyne, 2017). Each system has an impact on the other system in an interdependent manner. It has been mentioned in the literature review that government agencies, education policies and the Department of Education (exosystem) have not provided teachers with sufficient training in managing adolescents with behavioural difficulties. In the school environment (microsystem), South African classrooms are often overcrowded, making it difficult for teachers to discipline learners and teachers spend more time on disciplining adolescents with behavioural difficulties and less on teaching (Pyne, 2017). Challenges faced by teachers in the work setting (exosystem) often become stressful for teachers.

Certain teachers use the displacement defence mechanism (Diehl *et al.*, 2014; Freud, 1992) as a form of coping with stress at the place of work. For instance, when the teacher is feeling frustrated and stressed, he or she would act out the frustration at home instead of addressing the problems at work. As a result, teachers begin to experience family conflicts and marital discords, thus receiving less family support (microsystem). In Chapter 2, it was indicated that adolescents with behavioural difficulties are often from neglectful or uninvolved parents and dysfunctional families. The learner's social background has an impact on the teacher. Teachers often complain of poor relationships between teachers and parents (microsystem) (Pyne, 2017). When teachers call in parents to address the adolescent's inappropriate behaviour, such parents do not respond to teachers' requests and often fail to discipline the adolescent at home. The poor parent-teacher relationship becomes stressful for teachers. Challenges faced by teachers in each system and how the systems interact with each other, contributes towards teachers' burnout and psychological problems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

3.3 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

3.3.1 Mainstream teachers

In this study, mainstream teachers form part of the educational system and their professional role is often identified in a regular school setting. The mainstream teachers at Potchefstroom Secondary school are mainstream teachers providing lessons to fully functioning learners. The function of such teachers is to provide the required knowledge to learners through lesson plans (Feiman-Nemser, 2018). The term 'mainstream teachers' is used in the study to refer to mainstream teachers who participated in the study.

3.3.2 Adolescents

Adolescence is identified as the most critical stage in the developmental stages of human beings. The fast biological and psychosocial changes that occur during this stage usually takes place between 12 and 13, while the transitional stage is from childhood to adolescence (Beyens, Frison, & Eggermont, 2016). In this study the adolescent includes individual ranging from age 12 to 19 and enrolled in a mainstream school.

3.3.3 Behavioural difficulties

Behavioural difficulties are behaviours that are not socially acceptable such as being aggressive, disruptive, disobedient and impulsive (Steyn *et al.*, 2014; Whybra *et al.*, 2018). Behavioural difficulties in the current study are perceived/described as inappropriate behaviours regardless of the DSM 5 diagnosis, and such behaviours include traits often found in ADHD, ODD and CD as mentioned in the literature (these behaviours do not have to meet the DSM-5 criteria or have a formal diagnosis). These behaviours should be disruptive of teaching and learning process within the school setting.

3.3.4 Coping strategies

Coping strategies used to describe strategies employed by teachers in dealing with daily stressful events and are implemented with the aim of reducing, tolerating and minimising life stressors (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015).

3.3.5 Adolescent with behavioural difficulties

In the study, adolescent with behavioural difficulties are described as adolescents portraying inappropriate and disruptive behaviours in the classroom setting.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

A qualitative research approach was used in this study to convey the experiences of teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties. This approach alludes to a wide group of observed methods arranged to provide a description and an elucidation of the knowledge of teachers, taking part in a framework-particular setting (Nestor & Schutt, 2012). In this qualitative study, the experiences of teachers of learners with behavioural difficulties were explored through observations and experiences (Wertz, 2011).

Wertz (2011) states that qualitative research methods provide researchers with rich and detailed data. Braun and Clarke (2013) argue that qualitative researchers practise extreme discipline to explore the subjective experiences and realities of teachers. The relationship between the researcher and participants is of supreme importance as such relationship would bring value to what is being investigated (Shekhar, Prince, Finelli, Demonbrun, & Waters, 2018). The value of qualitative research in this study was to have a better understanding of the experiences of teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties (Shekhar *et al.*, 2018).

4.2 Research design

A phenomenological research design was used to explore the experiences of teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties in a subjective manner (Denscombe, 2010). According to Braun and Clarke (2013), the aim of phenomenology is to have a broad and intensified understanding of the series of instantaneous experiences. Thus, this research design focuses on exploring the lived experiences of a phenomenon. Hermeneutical phenomenology research design was used in the study (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Hermeneutical phenomenology research design provides an interpretive meaning of a number of individuals

concerning their lived experiences (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Teachers in the study expressed stories about the experiences they endured while teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties and the researcher interpreted the meaning of such experiences.

4.3 Participants and research context

This research study was conducted in a secondary school in Potchefstroom, Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, North West Province, South Africa. Teachers who participated in the study had more than two years teaching experience, were teaching grades 6 to 12 and were from the Sotho-Tswana, Zulu, Indian, Afrikaans and English-speaking population of the area.

4.4 Sampling procedures

Sampling is an essential feature in research because of the noteworthy impact it has on the quality of the findings and the topic studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Stratified purposive sampling was used in this study. Stratified and purposive sampling incorporates a hybrid strategy to bridge homogeneity and heterogeneity (Creswell, 2018; Silverman, 2010; Aurini, Heath & Howells, 2016). The sample was achieved by dividing the sampling frame into strata, thereafter, a purposeful sample was selected from the identified strata (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Creswell, 2018).

Stratified and purposive sampling was suitable for this study since the sample was strategically selected from a large population. The population of the study was selected in Potchefstroom (Dr Kenneth Kaunda District), North West Province, South Africa. The researcher purposively selected two context settings in Potchefstroom, Dr Kenneth Kaunda District; urban and semi-urban areas. The urban and semi-urban areas were the first strata selected (sub-group). Thereafter, the researcher focused on the semi-urban area. It is stated in the literature that schools in semi-urban areas have an increasing rate of adolescents with behavioural difficulties. Mohadin, Promosa and Ikageng communities form part of the semi-

urban area around Potchefstroom city. The population in these semi-urban and urban areas include white, black, coloured and Indians. The four racial groups were included in the study in order to represent the semi-urban area of Potchefstroom and to provide credibility to the study. Figure 4.1 illustrates the selection process of the sample for the study.

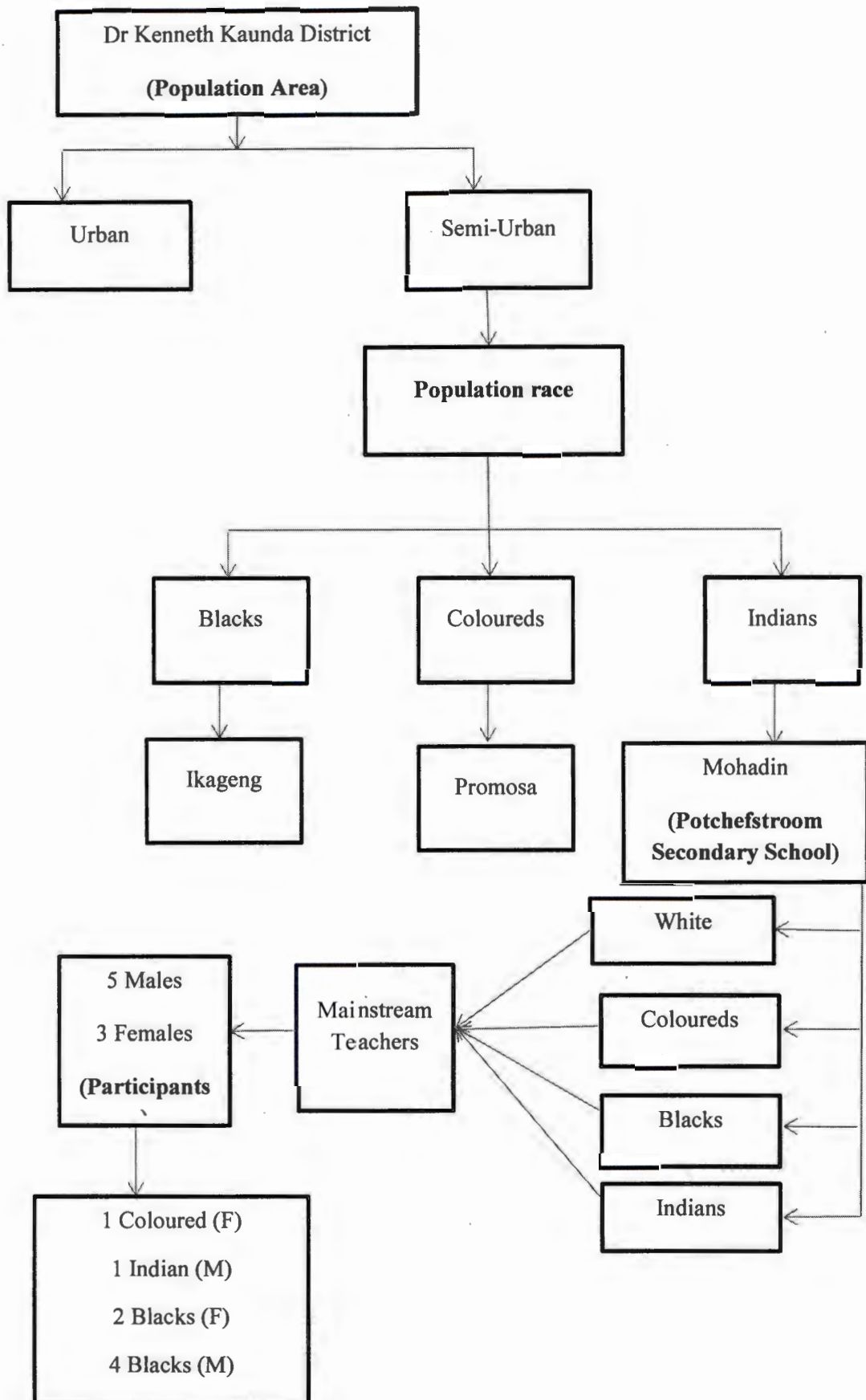


Figure 4.1: Illustrates the study population and sampling procedure.

4.5 Selection of participants

In a phenomenological research design, participants range between five and 25 members. Thus, the researcher purposively selected 10 participants for the study. The research study had four different racial groups and each race was represented by 2.5 participants. However, the final participants in the study were five males and three females as the two females withdrew due to personal reasons from the study on the day of the interview. The gatekeeper in the research study was the Deputy Principal of Potchefstroom Secondary School. The following procedure was used during the selection of participants:

Step 1: The Deputy Principal provided the researcher with the following information:

- Number of classes with adolescents(grades 6 to 12);
- Number of mainstream teachers in grades 6 to 12;and
- Number of teachers in grades 6 to 12 who had more than 2 years teaching experience.

Step 2: In the sample frame, the researcher identified strata (subgroups). The strata in the research study were mainstream teachers, age, race and teaching experience. Potchefstroom Secondary School was a suitable school because it had all the strata (subgroups).

Step 3: The researcher approached purposively selected mainstream teachers according to the identified strata, information provided by the Deputy Principal and inclusion criteria.

Step 4: Participants were finally approached and a focus group of participants consisting of eight members (five males and three females) from three different racial groups (Black, Coloureds and Indians) participated.

4.6 Inclusion and exclusion

The specific inclusion criteria set for the study were as follows:

- ☐ Prospective participants were qualified teachers;

- ☐ Participants had at least two years teaching experience;
- ☐ Participants were from 4 racial groups, between ages 25 to 65 (black, Indian, white and coloured);
- ☐ Participants who gave written consent to participate in the study; and
- ☐ Participants who allowed the researcher to record the session during the interview.

The exclusion criteria set for the study were as follows:

- ☐ Participants who did not meet the required criteria; and
- ☐ Participants who were unable to give consent.

4.7 Procedure and data collection

4.7.1 Data collection

An ethical clearance letter (Ref: NWU-00337-17-A9) was obtained from the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus as permission to conduct the study. A letter of permission to conduct the study was also granted by the Department of Education, North West Province. Furthermore, the researcher obtained permission from the Deputy Principal to conduct the study at Potchefstroom Secondary School. The researcher explained the purpose and aim of study to participants during the initial contact, as well as issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were provided with both a biographical information sheet and consent forms to fill in before the interviews. Three females and five males participated in the study and were fluent in the English language, thus, an interpreter was not necessary. An appointment was later set for a group interview with participants. A focus group interview was conducted with 8 participants at Potchefstroom Secondary School after school hours.

4.7.2 Focus group interview

A focus group is a group of individuals participating in data collection whereby, the researcher explores participants' perspective regarding a given topic (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In the current study, data was collected from one focus group. A Phenomenological (Clarke & Braun, 2013) focus group interview (Flick, 2014; van Dipten *et al.*, 2018) was used to obtain insights through exploring the depth, richness of experiences of teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties. An open-ended question was used to kick-start the interview. The question was as follows: *"As a mainstream teacher of adolescents with behavioural difficulties in your school, what experiences can you share regarding daily interaction with these specific learners?"* Follow-up questions were asked to ensure rigor, vigour and intensity of the data and member checking technique used for verification, conformity, making sure and being certain of the reality of the information provided by participants.

The focus group interview took two hours to complete since anything less would not have provided enough data and anything longer could have become an inconvenience to participants. An audio recorder was used with the consent of participants. During the interaction, the researcher was provided an opportunity to understand the explanations of participants. Members were given an opportunity to correct errors and challenge what they perceived as incorrect interpretations. The researcher provided members with an opportunity to provide additional information based on the information expressed by other member. The technique provided all participants with a chance to offer a broader variety of responses and explanations of their experiences teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties. Verbatim transcriptions were done after data collection.

4.7.3 Audio recording

A digital audio recorder was used to collect data with the consent of participants. The audio recorder was used throughout the interview session to gather all information provided by participants. The researcher and an expert in qualitative research, transcribed the recorded data which was later analysed.

4.7.4 Field notes

According to Aurin, Heath and Howells (2016), field notes are an essential tool in collecting data, providing a successful field research study. During the sessions, the researcher jotted down key words and phrases that were recalled fully after the interview. The researcher was able to make complete field notes immediately after exiting the interview session. The researcher objectively recorded the proceedings of the interview on the field notes. The field notes assisted the researcher in recalling and exploring the process of the interview. In the field notes, the researcher described what was observed rather than simply summarising and making generalisations. Thus, empirical observations were used to record nonverbal communication such as body language, behaviour and observable feelings of teachers. The researcher used observational field notes to gather information that was later referred back to in order to add additional details that could not be recorded. The observational field notes were intended to be read as evidence that provided the study with meaning and helped in understanding the experiences of teachers.

4.8 Data analysis

4.8.1 Thematic analysis

Data collected was analysed, transcribed and organised in order to obtain sensible results (De Vos, Delport, Fouché, & Strydom, 2011). Thematic analysis was used in the study. Mabuza, Govender, Ogunbanjo, and Mash (2014) argue that thematic analysis is a technique used to

recognise, examine, search and communicate themes found in the data. The researcher was interested in determining the experiences of teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties on a daily bases, using in-depth interviews. The themes were generated from the transcripts in order to understand the experiences of teachers with regard to teaching adolescent with behavioural difficulties. The following steps were used in the thematic analysis (Howitt & Cramer, 2017; Kadish, 2015):

Step 1: Familiarisation with the data

At this stage, the researcher engaged in the analysis by familiarising herself with the data (through reading and re-reading the transcribed data to search for ideas and significance). The raw data was transcribed from the audio recordings to provide intense processing of the data and the researcher also wrote down notes during the reading and re-reading. The researcher created ideas of what was said in the interview session. This was important in familiarising oneself with the data (Howitt & Cramer, 2017).

Step 2: Initial generation of codes

The second stage involved familiarising oneself with the data in stage one. At this stage, the researcher produced initial codes from the data. The data was worked on thoroughly to provide ideas of what was happening in the data. The purpose of coding was to capture core sections of the data. The researcher coded the data by making notes in the texts that were analysed to indicate potential patterns and identify segments of the data.

Step 3: Searching for themes based on the initial coding

Once all the codes were identified and collected, the researcher searched for themes in the codes. The codes were sorted out into potential themes by grouping the codes in a meaningful

manner. The researcher used a mind-map to organise the initial codes according to relations and developing themes from the grouped codes.

Step 4: Review of themes

At this stage, the researcher refined and reviewed the set of potential themes. The purpose of this stage was to have a good idea of the different themes generated, group the themes and provide a holistic interpretation of the themes with regard to the data.

Step 5: Definition and labelling of themes

Stage five was conducted in order ensure objective definition and labelling of themes. The researcher was able to define and label themes with the assistance of subsidiary themes identified. The encoded data was further coded by refined themes to have a better understanding of the material.

Step 6: Report writing

The aim of report writing is to illustrate the analysis using extracts from the data. Intense reflection of the analysis was achieved during this stage. The final report was a combination of the analysis and the literature review.

4.9 Trustworthiness

Crystallisation is a technique used to provide enriching understanding of the studied phenomena. Crystallisation assisted the researcher to reflect reality from dissimilar positions (Stewart, Gapp, & Harwood, 2017). Crystallisation provided the researcher with an understanding of the research topic (Stewart *et al.*, 2017). For crystallisation to add richness to the study, multiple methods of data collections were employed as follows: audio data; member checking; observational field notes data; peer analysis; and confirmation of findings with participants. Through crystallisation, the researcher ensured trustworthiness of the study.

Trustworthiness is known as an element which provides soundness, elevated quality and great measure of ethical research (Connelly, 2016).

Table 4.1: Strategies for enhancing consistency of data through crystallisation

Principles	Strategies	Applications
Complex interpretations	Data collection	Several qualitative research methods were used: focus group interviews and observational field notes
Data collection	Focus group interviews, audio data, member checking and field observations	The researcher utilised member checking with participants in order to discuss details for confirmation from other members during the focus group interviews.
Analysis	Variety of methods	Thematic analysis of textual data, peer evaluation (once data was analysed, the researcher gave another researcher to evaluate the data and compare the analysis) and analysis of field notes were analysed. The aim of

	Paradigms	applying various methods was to gain access to rich data to create a holistic picture of the findings in multiple ways. The findings were constructed as themes and patterns to enable the researcher to interpret participants' account on multiple levels and thus, reveal multiple ways of understanding the research problem.
Variety presentation	Of multiple text	Data was collected through audio data, member checking and field notes. Thereafter, the data was elaborated in the form of a story in an interlinking manner.

4.10 Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus (see attached Appendix A, Ref: NWU-00337-17-A9) under the central project entitled: "Experiences and coping strategies of teachers of adolescent

learners with behavioural difficulties in Potchefstroom, North West Province. The Department of Education, North West Province granted written permission to conduct the study at Potchefstroom Secondary School. Further permission was obtained from the principal and participating teachers. The researcher applied participant's rights to privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, fair treatment, and protection from discomfort and harm in the study (Nestor & Schutt, 2012). The researcher had the responsibility to respect the above-mentioned participants' rights throughout the study. Teachers were informed about the purpose, aim and procedures of the study. The researcher explained to participants that participation was voluntary and no monetary incentives were offered to them. Participants were also informed about the study to enable teachers to make informed decisions about participation in the study or not.

As suggested by Stydom (2011) and Denscrombe (2010), a consent form was designed and issued to the teachers for their consent. The researcher informed participants that participation in the study could be terminated at any time (Babber, 2010). In a research study, participants can experience psychological harm, thus the researcher needed to be alert during the interview of any danger and guard against them. The interview setting was in the boardroom at Potchefstroom Secondary School (after school hours) as it was considered a safe and distractions free environment for participants. The importance of privacy and confidentiality was addressed through the focus group interview session. The identities of teachers were protected. Before, during and after the interviews, participants were treated equally, fairly and with respect and dignity. The findings were treated confidentially and anonymity was applied in the study. The recorded and transcribed data, including observational field notes, will be destroyed after 7 years.

Chapter 5

RESULTS

5.1 Overview of the study

Although ten participants were sampled (five males and five female) for the group interviews, only eight (five males and three females) actually participated in the study from three different races (Coloureds, Indians and Blacks). The teaching experiences of participants ranged from three to 33 years with age ranging from 25 to 61 years.

5.2 Brief background information of participants

Participant 1: A 61 year old single black female with 17 years teaching experience and more than 10 years in the same school.

Participant 2: A 61 year old married Indian male with 33 years teaching experience and 15 years in the sampled school.

Participant 3: A 44 year old married black male with 20 years teaching experience and 3 years in the same school.

Participant 4: A 25 year old single black male with three years teaching experience in the same school.

Participant 5: A 26 year old single black male with three years teaching experience in the same school.

Participant 6: A 50 year old married coloured female with 29 years teaching experience and 20 years in the same school.

Participant 7: A 47 year old married black female with 24 years teaching experience and 20 years in the same school and Head of Department.

Participant 8: A 49 year old married black male with 27 years teaching experience and 25 years in the same school.

5.3 Emerging themes

Five themes emerged from the data as follows: Experiences of teachers around the school; Experiences with the Education Policy system; Factors motivating the behavioural difficulties of children; well-being; and Coping experiences.

Table 4.2: Emerging themes

THEME	SUB-THEMES
1. Experiences of teachers around the school	Experiences with adolescents displaying behavioural difficulties <i>Dishonesty,</i> <i>Disrespectful,</i> <i>Disobedience,</i> <i>Rudeness</i> Experiences with the adolescents displaying behavioural difficulties with classmates <i>Loss of respect, intimidation</i> Experiences with parents of adolescents with behavioural difficulties

- *Dishonesty, Rudeness, Negligence*

Experiences of teachers with regard to leadership

- *Feeling of embarrassment,*
- *Intimidation*

2. Experiences with the Education Policy system Feelings of abandonment, neglect and

lack of support

3. Motivators of behavioural traits among adolescents Family lifestyle

- *Parenting styles and discipline*

- *Negligence, Permissive*

- *Violence*

- *Poverty*

- *Abuse*

Age of the teacher

- *Young teachers*

- *Older teachers*

Teacher's level of experience

- *Non-experienced teachers*
- *Experienced teachers*

4. Well-being of teachers

Misconduct

- *Fighting students on the streets,
alcohol abuse*

Poor Family relations

- *Poor interpersonal relationships*
- *Family disruptions*

Emotional abusive

Lack of interest in school work

Emotional distress and depression

- *Acting as parents to neglected
learners*
- *Burnout*
- *Emotional exhaustion*
- *Motivation to leave teaching
profession(attrition)*
- *Teaching experience is:*

*-Death sentence, monster, pain, torture,
suicide, frustration*

5. Coping experiences

Age of the teacher

Years of experience

Negative mood regulations

Maladjusted coping

Self-motivation

Peer support

- *We laugh out the bad experiences (sharing the experiences and laughing about it...(laughing it out)*

5.4 Emerging themes from data analysis

Experiences of teachers around the school

All participants related common experiences of lack of respect around the school due to the conduct of adolescents with behavioural difficulties. Experiences of the whole school are described in the sub-themes below. The sub-themes precede how the behaviour of adolescents affect the school community as a whole.

Experiences with adolescent displaying behavioural difficulties

Teachers recounted some unacceptable behaviours displayed by the adolescents with behavioural difficulties as captured in the excerpts below.

Dishonesty: One participant stated as follows: *“These children do not have any truth, they are very dishonest and if you do not realise it, you can end up being swept away by their lies and go along with them.”*[P2] Another added, *“They do not do their homework, they are never on time in everything.”*[P6] *...they think dishonesty is their key to survival and they think they can play with one’s mind...*[P7]

Disrespectful. One aspect that was very common among adolescents was lack of respect as captured in the following excerpt. *“If there is one thing we really have a problem with these adolescents, is that they lack respect...”*[P2]. Participant 8 continued by saying, *“they can really embarrass you in front of the whole class and, at times, the whole school. They disrespect the teacher’s commands and classroom rules like one will refuse to leave when asked to leave the class; refuse to sit or stand when asked to.”*

Adolescent with behavioural difficulties are very disrespectful, they cause destructions in class, they move about unnecessarily while teaching or learning is on, talking to other learners, pass jokes and make other learners laugh, visit other learners[P 2].

Another participant added as follows: *Adolescents with behavioural difficulties are fond of off-task behaviours while in class like fidgeting, daydreaming, inattentiveness while teaching is on* [P4].

Rudeness. Participant 2 pointed out that *“some of these learners will throw papers around and at times, bully other learners... At one point, one boy used rude words towards another learner and as I tried to show him that that was rude, he stormed out of the class murmuring impolite words... these learners can be very discourteous and uncouth.*

Experience with adolescents displaying behavioural difficulties towards classmates

Teachers reported that adolescents are, in most cases, very influential towards others who are still struggling with their self-esteem as they would not want to feel intimidated.

Loss of respect and intimidation

One participant declared as follows: *In most cases, we come across some learners who join in all these bad behaviours due to peer pressure and fear of intimidation... they would also be disrespectful, harassing other students, in most cases, boys will be harassing and intimidating girls...*[P 1] *...you will find that these learners are mostly involved in this disrespectful behaviour because of fear of rejection and some because they are being bullied around by adolescents with behavioural difficulties and want to belong to this so-called mighty group*[P7].

Experiences with parents of adolescents with behavioural difficulties

Dishonesty and rudeness: Participant 6 emphasised that *“Like their children, these parents are not hones and are very deceitful... it is hurting to find that some of these learners’ parents are fraudulent, they will promise to come for meetings when called but never show up* (stressing the point).

Most of these children are from families of drug addicts, alcohol abusers and violent people and will always be as dishonest as their kids and, at times, very rude [P 5].

Participant 6 continued by stressing as follows: *“These parents will never come when called to school but if their child can be disciplined anyhow, they will come to school and make noise for everyone to hear them, they will be the first to enter the school first thing in the morning just to come and insult you and place you where they think you belong.”*

Negligence: Participant 6 maintained as follows: *“...although these parents will be the first to come to the school in the morning if you do something to their children, they will never even once attend any school meeting... even if these issues of adolescents with behavioural difficulties are addressed in the Teacher Parent meetings, the relevant parents of those children are always not there.”*

“It is so funny, or rather, so annoying to realise that when meetings are called for these learners’ behaviours, their parents specifically are the ones who will not come... those whose children are disciplined, are the ones who will be the first to come for the Parents’ meetings”
Participants 1 commented angrily.

Experiences of teachers on leadership: Teachers have also shown that learners do not only challenge teachers, they also challenge the school leadership and its protocol. Participants stated that teachers in leadership are embarrassed, intimidated and manipulated whenever they try to intervene in matters involving children’s behaviour around the school.

Feeling of embarrassment. One participant indicated as follows: *“In one class, a teacher asked a learner who was misbehaving to leave her class but the learner just sat there quietly and refused. Later, I was called as the deputy principal to intervene. I came into the classroom and found the boy sitting there. I then used my authority and said, boy, the teacher has ordered you to leave her class so can you do as you are told? The boy just sat there, I started asking myself what am I going to do, what will other learners think of me, what about the teacher? She called me out of confidence. I was standing there thinking of all the ways of rescuing my authority and title as I could see the boy was taking them away from me... It was the greatest embarrassment I ever had in my entire teaching experience... I could not even face other learners around the school... for the whole week, I was so embarrassed.*
Participant 8 continued with an embarrassed tone; *“...at that moment, you think of quitting....*

yah, that is really painful, it took me almost three months to bring back my dignity... every time as I walked around the school, I will just ask myself what learners are saying and what teachers are saying, that I am a teacher who cannot control the school.

Intimidation and manipulation: *Leaners will intimidate you and manipulate you into an unacceptable behaviour deliberately to challenge your leadership skills [P 7].*

Experiences with the Education Policy system

Feelings of abandonment: Participant 8 sadly stated that *“The system is not fair, it only focuses on the interest of learners and leaves us out as teachers... we are not protected, just thrown out there into the schools and abandoned, nobody cares as to whether we exist.”*

Lack of support: *When a teacher does something wrong to a learner, serious actions will be taken against the teacher but when the learner beats up a teacher, the system will find out all the means to protect the child’s behaviour and justify his uncalled for behaviour.”*

Neglect: *We are expected to work miracles with all learners despite their character, some of them, their parents just through them into the school and you will see them as they drop the child into grade one and never see them again until the child becomes a man and leaves the school... all alone with these children[P 2].*

We deal with children of different characters every day, children from different kinds of families, some well-mannered and some, ill-mannered but the system does not even care to give us any empowering training or stress releasing lessons and workshops, on how to deal with different types of learners... we may have done a bit of psychology as part of our training but we still need to be updated with new information that matches the children of this era... all these are the responsibilities of the Department of Education but they are not there for us.

Motivators of behavioural traits among adolescents

Family life style: It was revealed by participants that some family life styles, which may be caused by parenting styles, are part of factors that motivate the behaviour of adolescents.

Parenting styles and discipline: According to participants, they have tried to talk to the concerned learners and contact their families and realised that most of the parents of these learners do not care about their children.

Negligence: Participant 1 maintained as follows: *"I am just coming from the hospital... I took one of my learners there who had overdosed some tablets in an attempt for suicide... I have tried all the time to contact this child's parents because of her behaviour and after I realised she has persistent suicide ideation... even right now, the parents do not even care to know what is happening to their children..."*

If it happens that these problematic learners open up to you, and tell you about their family life, you will find that most of them behave the way they behave because no one cares about them at home... some of the their parents are drug addicts, some are never at home, some do not take care of them or even care about their whereabouts or what they've eaten... [P 6].

Permissive behaviour: *Some children are allowed to do whatever they want to do at home... they go anywhere and do as they please and even talk anyhow to their parents all kinds of behaviour is permissive and acceptable [P 7].*

Some parents think that allowing their children to do as they please and talk anyhow is a sign of love towards their children [P 2].

The child will be surprised when they are not allowed to do some things in school... they are not used to rules at home, so why follow any rule in school... they know they are their own bosses [P5].

Violence: *In some homes, people are violent, you will find that the mother is very violent and abusive and this leads to a violent child in school[P 2].*

Poverty: *There is one child who has been stealing other learners' things and I later realised through some investigations and observations that she is from a very poor family [P5].*

Age of the teacher

Young teachers: *I think we experience the worst challenges because of our age... the problem is that we meet these students in places out there during weekends... they think they are the same age with us... [P 5].* Participant 4 added as follows: *"...yes, we cannot say a thing to them out there, isn't it that they are our age mates and back here in school, they now see buddies when they look at us"...some even threaten to beat us.*

Older teachers: *Older teachers experience fewer challenges. Participant 6 highlighted as follows: "Although we go through a lot of challenges, I do not think they are the same as the young teachers' experiences. With these ones, they see buddies like they said but with us, they at times, see someone they can listen to just due to age..."*

Level of experience of teachers

Non-experienced teachers:*...like I said earlier on, I am less experienced, the system is doing nothing to help me cope or let alone, give me training on how to deal with these problematic challenges, we are neglected and just risk our lives every day with these children... they threaten us at times...[P5].*

Experienced teachers: *"I do not feel much challenged like those years when I was still new in the field, the learners are well-behaved compared to those years, I am now experienced... I know how to handle some characters, except for the severe ones."*

Psychological wellbeing of teachers

Misconduct: Teachers reported some experiences of misconduct due to the problem they face.

Fighting students on the streets: One participant stated as follows: *"...this boy used to misbehave in my class to an extent, I was just tired of it... one day, I was walking with my husband in town and just saw him, I just lost it...I grabbed him and said yaah , today it is just us, no more school rules and protection... I just beat that boy up until I was satisfied and after that incident, he never ever disrespected my class again... [P 7].*

Alcohol abuse: *Although I do not do that, to some of the teachers, teaching is so frustrating, they have turned into alcohol abusers to an extent, they come to work drunk... [P2].*

Poor family relations: According to participants, poor interpersonal relations and family disruptions are some of the experiences encountered with regard to dealing with adolescents displaying behavioural difficulties.

Poor interpersonal relationships: Some teachers stated that they, at times, get so emotionally exhausted that they become moody and do not communicate well at home. Participant 5 said as follows: *"...I was not fine when I got home that day, I just found myself being so rude and mean to my girlfriend...*

Family disruptions: Participant 2 stated as follows:*"...at times, when I get home, I am so emotionally exhausted that I cannot even be there for my family, although I try to and share with my wife my experiences, I feel I am not always there for my family as much as I was supposed to because of these experiences... one would not say that most teachers divorce because of work-related family disruptions but it may be one of the contributions to that with most teachers [P7].* Another participant maintained *"That may be true because if one ends up*

in alcohol or substance abuse in the sense of trying to ease work-related emotional challenges, it can mean not being able to support your family leading to family disruptions...[P 6].

Emotional distress and depression: Most teachers are depressed because they relate with these learners as their own children.

Acting as parents to neglected learners: Participant 1 maintained as follows: *"...last time, I became so sick, I continuously thought of this girl who wanted to commit suicide...it was as if it was my child, we end up being the parents to these children mostly the ones from neglected parents... As they go through these things, we get emotionally distressed."*

Burnout: *"Sometimes, when I get home, I even do not want to talk to anybody, I just feel like dropping down and sleep for hours and hours..."[P 2].*

Participant 7 added as follows: *"...yes, we live on boosters Monster drinks, it is like one will just drop dead one day."*

Emotional exhaustion: Participant 1 sadly maintained as follows: *"Sometimes, you are even pained by this child who will be intelligent but failing because of their behaviour, it really drains out ones emotions... you end up drained and emotionally exhausted"* [P1].

Motivation to leave the teaching profession (attrition):*"I just do not feel like going on anymore with this teaching profession more so that I am still young, I feel if I do, I will be destroyed emotionally, I just want to leave..."* [P5]. Participant 4 added as follows: *"Slowly but surely, these experiences are slowly chasing me away from the teaching profession... I do not see myself in this profession in the next coming two years..."*. Participant 3 who had been quiet throughout, added in a sad tone as follows: *"... I do not even feel like talking about this experience, it is just very painful, depressing and makes one less interested in teaching."*

To these teachers, lack of interest in the teaching profession due to such adolescents was revealed with strong feelings and painful statements. With regard to the question "*Which one word or phrase can you say when someone asks you what teaching is? Participants responded as follows:*

Teaching experience is:

Frustrating; Monster; Pain; Torture, Suicide; Death sentence; and End of joy, peace and happiness.

Coping experiences

Age of the teacher and years of experience: Teachers indicated that younger colleagues, who are less experienced, do not cope with challenges of an adolescent with behavioural difficulties compared to older and more experienced teachers. It was also revealed that the more one spent time with these learners (year after year), the more one becomes used to the learners' behaviour and know how to deal with them as captured in the excerpt below.

At times, I look at teachers who are older and have more years in the field, they are more relaxed and do not get so stressed as we always are... [P4].

Another experienced participant indicated as follows: "*I do not go through a lot of stress like I used to during my early years of teaching. Despite the fact that nowadays these children are worse than before, I have realised that the more I grow in this teaching field, the more I start to see these learners as my own children. I just tell myself if I was able to raise up my own kids, despite the challenges, I will be able to deal with these ones and now I just enjoy them and they like me. I do not go through much challenges like what others go through.*"

Negative mood regulations: Some teachers display negative mood regulatory skills. In most cases, the more experienced ones. Negative mood regulation is the ability to cope or reduce

negative moods such as anxiety, dysphonia and frustration, whether the individual uses adaptive or maladaptive coping strategies. In this case, some teachers have used maladaptive coping as a method to direct other colleagues on how to cope with challenges faced at school.

Maladaptive coping: Some participants would avoid situations through unrealistic fears, which in most cases, initially reduce anxiety.

Self-motivation: One participant indicated as follows: *“I always tell myself that there is no job that does not have challenges. One other thing that really motivates me is when I see some of my former learners successful and holding high positions...[P 7]...yes, that also makes me realise that despite all that I go through in this depressing job, there is still something good that comes out of it, even if it is five successful learners out of ten, it makes me want to go back to work”[P 1].*

I just decided I want to be happy at work as much as I have to be happy at home because work is where I spend almost 90 percent of my life [P6].

Peer support, “We laugh out the bad experiences”: “We laugh out the bad experiences”. Teachers indicated that at times, experiences are shared and laughed at captured in the excerpts below.

“We laugh out the bad experiences... [P 7] ... “at times, we just find ourselves talking, sharing and laughing out the painful experiences... although this is done passively and not formally, it leaves us relieved a bit... we even learn from others’ experiences on how they handle different behavioural problems” [P 6].

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

The main aim of this study was to explore the experiences and coping strategies of mainstream teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties. The researcher compiled research questions that guided and provided focus for this particular study. The first question was *“What are the experiences of teachers regarding learners with behavioural difficulties?”* The analysis revealed the following themes in response to the question: “Teachers’ experiences around the school”; “Experiences with the Department of Education’s Policy system”; “Motivators of behavioural traits among adolescents”; “Psychological wellbeing of teachers”. The second research question was *“Which coping strategies do teachers use when dealing with adolescents with behavioural difficulties?”* which provided the final theme “Coping strategies”.

Five themes that described the lived experiences of mainstream teachers of learners with behavioural difficulties were identified and under each theme, related subthemes emerged and are discussed in this chapter.

Theme 1: Experiences around the school

In this contemporary study, mainstream teachers described the behavioural difficulties experienced by teachers in schools as follows: ‘dishonesty’, ‘disrespectful’, ‘disobedience’ and ‘rudeness’. Teachers indicated that many of these learners often manipulate teachers by being dishonest and rely on their dishonest behaviours to escape from receiving punishment from teachers. The findings revealed that these learners struggle to follow classroom rules and insulting teachers is a very common behaviour among adolescents with behavioural

difficulties. The description of teachers in the findings regarding behavioural difficulties in schools is consistent with Lekganyanye (2011); Malak (2017); Steyn *et al.* (2014) who found that adolescents with behavioural difficulties often display inappropriate behaviours such as breaking the code of conduct of the school, disobedience, dishonesty, being disrespectful and aggressive. Interestingly, Lekganyanye (2011); Malak (2017) and Steyn *et al.* (2014) and the current researcher concurred that often, such behavioural difficulties displayed by adolescents with behavioural difficulties lead to classroom disruptions and interfere with classroom lessons.

Coetzer (2011) posits that some expectations from learners are to be disciplined, respectful and obedient towards authority figures in the school context. However, the results in the current study demonstrate that adolescents with behavioural difficulties fail to meet standard expectations. For example, it was revealed that when teachers ask for assistance from other authority figures, such as the Deputy Principal, adolescents with behavioural difficulties often become more rebellious. Thus, authority figures indicated that they usually feel embarrassed, manipulated and intimidated when adolescents with behavioural difficulties challenge their leadership skills. Intriguingly, Hemphill *et al.* (2014) argue that one of the contributing factors that maintain behavioural difficulties in classrooms is the poor relationship between learners, authority figures and the negative attitudes of teachers towards such learners. Pas *et al.* (2015) found that other well-behaved learners occasionally adapt to the same inappropriate behaviours when behavioural difficulties are not dealt with effectively in the classroom. This was also mentioned in the current study by teachers. Thus, adolescents with behavioural difficulties seem to have a tremendous influence and effect on other classmates who are disciplined. In many instances, teachers witness adolescents with behavioural difficulties influencing these problematic behaviours on other learners through peer pressure. According to Louw and Louw (2014), the adolescence phase is characterised by a sense of belonging

and the findings of the current study reveal that other learners become pressurised by an adolescent with behavioural difficulties to engage in such behaviours in order to have a sense of belonging. The findings further reveal that fear of social rejection could be the reason disciplined learners' choose to join learners with behavioural difficulties.

Teachers reported feelings of disrespect by parents as parents blame teachers for unacceptable behaviours of learners. Teachers also indicated that most parents of adolescent with behavioural difficulties were dishonest and rude towards them. It was also revealed that parents of learners with behavioural difficulties were less involved in the education and discipline of learners. Often, such parents do not attend parents' meetings and do not collaborate with teachers to discipline learners with behavioural difficulties. Lind (2014) and Stower (2017) maintain negative teacher-learner relationships can lead to behavioural difficulties. However, very few studies have been conducted on teacher-parent relationships with regard to adolescents with behavioural difficulties, especially conflicts between a parent and teacher of such learners.

Theme 2: Experiences with the Education system

The findings revealed that teachers feel that the Department of Education has extremely failed employees. This is consistent with Masekoameng (2010) explanation that Government (represented by the Education Department), is failing to address the concerns of teachers with regard to adolescents with behavioural difficulties. The findings showed that the system is not providing teachers with sufficient support and training to effectively manage adolescents with behavioural difficulties. The system focuses on learners and neglects the needs of teachers in the process. The experiences of teachers in the current study with regard to the Education System concur with Boujut *et al.* (2016); Brown *et al.* (2005) and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017), who found that teachers are not trained enough to effectively deal with

adolescents with behavioural difficulties. However, not enough research has focused on teachers' dissatisfaction with regard to the level of support received from the education system.

Theme 3: Motivators of behavioural traits among adolescents

Teachers revealed significant determinants of behavioural difficulties among adolescent learners during their teaching experiences. Firstly, teachers indicated that many parents of adolescents with behavioural difficulties are not involved in the lives and academic activities of learners. Teachers also highlighted that parents seem to be neglectful and often, learners are not provided with the necessary support from primary caregivers. This correlates with Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Pyne (2017) that poor relationships between teachers and parents are responsible for the high rate of adolescents with behavioural difficulties in schools. Teachers concurred with studies (Clair, Schroeder, & Gururangan, 2015; Narayan et al., 2017) which reported that many adolescent with behavioural difficulties are neglected and raised by uninvolved parents. It was further revealed that many adolescents with behavioural difficulties are from violent, abusive and disadvantaged families. One teacher revealed that parents of adolescents with behavioural difficulties seem to be struggling to financially support such learners and often, take out the financial stressors or frustration on the adolescents by abusing them either physically or emotionally. Adolescents with behavioural difficulties also get involved in stealing from other learners when parents cannot afford to financially support them. According to the findings of the study and the ecosystemic theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), dysfunctional families often contribute to learners' vulnerabilities, thus contributing to further development of behavioural and emotional problems experienced by teachers in classrooms.

Moreover, age and years of experience were stated to determine the level of maintaining factors or effective management of adolescents with behavioural difficulties. The younger, less experienced teachers reported greater challenges and intimidation by adolescent with behavioural difficulties. This could be attributed to the fact that learners see younger teachers as their peers. However, according to teachers, projection could make it difficult to reprimand or discipline adolescents with behavioural difficulties. The difficulty of younger teachers in disciplining adolescent learner's more than older teachers could be attributed to lack of experience as confirmed by older and more experienced teachers. Older and more experienced teachers indicated that in the early stages of the teaching profession, same challenges were experienced. However, more experienced teachers explained that with time and with more experience, disciplining adolescents with behavioural difficulties became manageable.

Theme 4: Wellbeing of teachers

Teachers indicated that teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties has evoked unpleasant reactions and impacted negatively on their psychological well-being and their support systems, for example, families. The teacher are experiencing strained relationships with their support system due to high work stress levels. Work place frustrations by teachers were reported to be taken to their homes especially members of their families. This transfer of frustrations and irritations of teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties to members of the families, could be otherwise referred to as Displacement Defence Mechanism (Diehl *et al.*, 2014). Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Pyne (2017) argument correlates with the findings of this study that mainstream teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties develop poor interpersonal relationships with their support systems (members of their families) due to the displacement defence mechanism acted out in the home setting. The defence mechanism results in numerous family disruptions such as constant conflicts, which sometimes, could

lead to an increase in the number of dysfunctional families and cases of divorce. The literature revealed that teachers fulfil several roles such as mentors, social workers and parenting roles (Benraghda et al., 2015; Huang & Hu, 2016; Ovando & Combs, 2018). This was also reported in the current study, teachers mentioned that they become parents to neglected learners. It was also revealed that teachers become emotionally attached to adolescents with behavioural difficulties and provide care to some learners with behavioural difficulties. Teachers often become worried and concerned about adolescents with behavioural difficulties, and this affects teacher's psychological well-being. The findings revealed that teachers experience negative emotions (such as sadness and disappointment) when above average learners perform poorly in studies due to behavioural difficulties expressed in the classroom.

Depressive symptoms such as anhedonia, negative emotions and burnout were also reported to develop in teachers as caused by teaching learners with behavioural difficulties. Teachers expressed experiences such as "end of joy, peace and happiness", "suicide", and "death sentence", which could be a reflection of depression and burnout. Teachers further maintained that most of the time, extreme exhaustion and feeling emotionally drained often occurs. One teacher qualified her experience of teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties as "Monster", which is an energy drink, as she reported to often feel physically, mentally and emotionally drained. The teacher indicated that it is difficult to manage adolescents with behavioural difficulties and complete the lesson plan since such learners are disruptive in class. This finding correlates with Friedman-Krauss *et al.* (2014) and Sun and Shek (2012), who found that behavioural difficulties are disruptive behaviours that affect lessons and become stress-provoking for teachers.

It was further revealed that teachers who display depressive and burnout symptoms become demotivated. Change of careers and leaving the teaching profession was reportedly

considered in this study. This correlates with the Model of the Job stress and health theory (Hurrell & McLaney, 1988) that challenges faced by teachers in the work environment when teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties, contribute to severe emotional problems and impact on the proper functioning of teachers. This results in teachers becoming less responsive towards learners, reduces job performance and satisfaction and low levels of motivations (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2014; Sun & Shek, 2012).

Theme 5: Coping strategies

The findings revealed similar and dissimilar coping strategies used by teachers to cope with stressors related to teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties. The applicable subthemes were as follows: self-motivation; peer support; negative mood regulations; years of teaching experience; age of the teacher; and maladjusted coping. Teachers indicated becoming intolerable towards learners with behavioural difficulties, resulting in feelings of frustration and irritation. One teacher maintained she experienced an unpleasant incident with a misbehaving learner who disobeyed the teacher's instructions in class. The teacher felt hopeless as the learner continued with the inappropriate behaviour in the classroom. It was then decided by the teacher to aggressively discipline the learner after school in a different context and setting and the learner ended up respecting the teacher during and after school. The teacher indicated that since the Department of Education scrapped corporal punishment in schools, teachers are unable to manage discipline in classrooms, thus leading to aggressive encounters between teachers and learners.

Teachers in the study applied the problem-focused coping strategy (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lethale & Pillay, 2013) to deal with the difficult class situations. Teachers' judgement and reasoning relating to beating learners after school hours is consistent with Bechuke (2015) study that since the government scrapped corporal punishment in schools, teachers are

failing to effectively manage adolescents with behavioural difficulties and the level of behavioural difficulties has increased significantly. The findings also revealed that some teachers have resorted to alcohol abuse to manage frustrations and irritations relating to the distress of teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties.

A difference on how older and younger teachers cope with teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties was expressed. Younger teachers seemed to struggle in coping with challenges of teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties. Older teachers empathised and agreed with younger teachers that they also struggled to cope when they were still less experienced. However, older teachers maintained with experience, younger teachers will be able to better cope with stressors associated with teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017), stated that teachers often have different ways of reacting to adolescents with behavioural difficulties. According to experienced teachers, younger teachers would eventually be able to better handle adolescents with behavioural difficulties with experience. It was revealed also that teachers implement negative mood regulations when coping with adolescents with behavioural difficulties. Some teachers use maladaptive coping methods such as displacement defence mechanisms, substance abuse and aggressive behaviours. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) moot that individuals use different methods of coping while if teachers apply the displacement defence mechanism, it could lead to avoidance-focused coping. Teachers indicated failure to cope with stressors associated with adolescents with behavioural difficulties. However, some teachers maintained self-motivation such as being optimistic about the situation and peer support from colleagues have assisted them manage with regard to teaching adolescent learners with behavioural difficulties.

6.2 Conclusion

The current study was able to reveal that teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties experience severe stress and negative emotions towards their job. Feelings of facing a prolonged “losing battle” referred as “death sentence” were highlighted. The current findings were in line with those found in literature (Lekganyanye (2011); Malak (2017); Steyn et al. (2014) stating that the common behavioural difficulties are dishonesty, disrespect, disobedience and rudeness. Generally, teachers felt that the education system has failed to protect them as employees. The system was reported not to prioritise the well-being of teachers as explained by Boujut *et al.* (2016) and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2016). The study revealed various factors that could be attributed to behavioural difficulties of adolescents in schools. Thus, the most common factors include the following: dysfunctional family backgrounds; and the poor relationship between teachers and parents. These factors are in line with Bronfenbrenner’s model indicating that these systems could be interlinked and behaviours occurring in one system could affect the other system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). There is a decline in the well-being of teachers in schools due to challenges with adolescents displaying behavioural difficulties. Furthermore, teachers present deficiencies in areas such as occupational and social functioning. The current study also revealed that teachers utilise unhealthy methods of coping such as alcohol abuse and displacement defence mechanisms. However, some teachers indicated positive coping strategies such as self-motivation (Rossouw, 2018) and peer support (Symes *et al.*, 2018) from fellow colleagues.

6.3 Recommendations

In Potchefstroom, adverse psychological interventions and psycho-education around teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties should be implemented by clinical and educational psychologists to assist teachers with support groups to voice out possible frustrations, especially around the prevalence of behavioural difficulties in the area. Such

intervention will assist teachers to seek professional help and to increase awareness. It is also necessary to design prevention strategies to avoid behavioural difficulties experienced by teachers, which could lead to a reduction and management of mental illnesses such as depression and substance use disorders. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are advanced: There is a need for the Department of Education to create more structures, design guidelines and provide greater support to schools for learners and teachers. Such support should involve interventions that will educate teachers on how to effectively manage behavioural difficulties in schools. The education system should also consider maintaining the positive well-being of teachers in schools. The Department of Education should work in collaboration with the Department of Health to implement effective awareness campaigns and interventions for teachers to cope with stressors related to behavioural difficulties in schools. The Department of Education should also request professional health care assistance from the Department of Health. For example, clinical psychologists could provide debriefing and group therapy sessions for teachers with regard to managing and psycho-education on stressors relating to teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties and provide sensitisation and awareness sessions for the prevention of burnout.

Schools should also ensure that there is a healthy relationship between parents and teachers. Parents need to be more supportive and involved in the learners' education, whilst teachers should provide parents with positive reports and not only when there is trouble relating to learner behaviours.

6.4 Limitations of the study

The study was limited to three female and five male teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties in Potchefstroom. Thus, the findings cannot be generalised to the entire North West Province. There was no balance between the number of males and females who

participated in the study and as such, the findings cannot be generalised to different gender groups. Participants were selected from three racial groups as follows: black, coloureds and Indians. The sample size might have also affected the results as only eight participants were selected for the study. The sample was limited to one area, thus the results cannot be generalised to the whole Province. The experiences of teachers were subjective, and as such, cannot be generalised to the whole Province and South Africa. The study was limited to the psychological processes experienced by teachers.

6.5 Recommendations for future research

Due to the limited studies on the experiences of teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties, many aspects still require further and more detailed research. It is recommended that further studies be conducted on the current theoretical understanding of behavioural difficulties of teachers within South Africa in general. The following areas are suggested for further research: Studies should be conducted on the experiences of spouses and extended members of the families of teachers experiencing the negative effects of teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties (such as burnout and depression) within South Africa. There is a need to conduct studies to re-evaluate previous strategies and training programmes on the effective management of behavioural difficulties of teachers and improvement of existing interventions. Further studies should be conducted on bio-psychosocial experiences of teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties and the involvement of clinical psychologists in treatment interventions.

It is crucial for qualitative and quantitative studies to be undertaken to investigate whether teachers experience challenges due to their own personal stressors such as financial or marital problems or solely from teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties.

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Appendix A

North-West University's Ethical Clearance Certificate



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
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Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee

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ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF PROJECT

Based on approval by the Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSREC) on 13/02/2017, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IRERC) hereby approves your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IRERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Project title: Exploring the experiences and coping strategies of mainstream teachers teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties.

Project Leader/Supervisor: Dr P Erasmus & Mrs G Pila-Nemutandani

Student: PA Masedi

**Ethics
number:**

N W U - 0 0 3 3 7 - 1 7 - A 9

Application Type: Master's

Commencement date: 2017-02-13

Expiry date: 2020-02-13

Risk:

N/A

Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the HSREC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the HSREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IRERC via HSREC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project
 - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the HSREC. Would there be deviation from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-IRERC via HSREC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IRERC and HSREC retains the right to:
 - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project;
 - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
 - withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the HSREC or that information has been false or misrepresented, the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
 - new Institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- HSREC can be contacted for further information via Estie.Fmloch@nwu.ac.za or 018 289 2873.

The IRERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC or HSREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof LA
Du Plessis
Date: 2017.02.21
15:48:49 +02'00'

Prof Linda du Plessis

Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC)

Appendix B

Informed consent



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
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stockiekolobe@hotmail.com

Dear Reader,

I am a Master's student in Psychology from the North-West University working on exploring the experiences and coping strategies of mainstream teachers teaching adolescents with behavioural difficulties. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. Participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part. Here is some more information about the study concerning what you will need to know before giving consent.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore the subjective experiences of teachers on teaching adolescent learners with behavioural difficulties and the coping strategies the teachers apply on dealing with such learners. Therefore this study will focus on teachers and their subjective experiences. The study aims to offer a different perspective on how teachers experience and cope with adolescent learners who display behavioural difficulties.

2. PROCEDURE

If you agree to participate in this study you will be expected to do the following:

- To partake in a focus group interview session

3. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

The study has no risks involved, but should you experience any discomfort during the data gathering, you will be given the contact details of a psychologist. Data will be handled as confidential as far as possible. Nobody will know that it is you in any publications resulting from this study and only the team of researchers will work with and have access to the information that you shared. All data will be protected by locking it up and storing it on a virus-free and password protected computer at the North-West University for seven years after which it will then be destroyed.

4. BENEFITS

You will get the opportunity to share your views with regard to teaching adolescent learners with behavioural difficulties. By being involved in this research project this will help the researcher to better understand the impact adolescent learners with behavioural difficulties have on mainstream teachers.

5. COSTS

There will be no cost to you as a result of your participation in this study.

6. PAYMENT

You will receive no payment for participation.

7. QUESTIONS

You are welcome to ask any questions towards the researcher if any before you decide to give consent. You are also welcome to contact Ms PulengMasedi if you have any further questions concerning your consent:

E-mail: lefenyamasedi@gmail.com

CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY.

You are free to decline to partake in this study, or to withdraw at any point even after you have signed the form to give consent without any consequences.

You do not give up any rights when signing this form.

Should you be willing to participate in the study you are requested to complete the following:

I _____ (insert full name) hereby state that I have read and understand the information provided in this document and hereby give voluntarily consent to participate in the above mentioned study. I have not been coerced in any way to participate and I understand that I can withdraw at any time if I feel uncomfortable during the study. I also understand that my name will not be disclosed to anybody who is not part of the study and that the information will be kept confidential and not linked to his or her name at any stage. I also understand that I might benefit from partaking as well as that there might be the possible risks and that if I need debriefing, the contact details of a psychologist will be made available to me on request.

Date

Signature of the participant

Date

Signature of the person obtaining consent

Appendix C

Approval from Department of Education



Education and Sport Development

Department of Education and Sport Development
Departement van Onderwys en Sportontwikkeling
Lefapha la Thuto le Tihabololo ya Metshameko
NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Garona Building, Mmabatho
1st Floor, East Wing,
Private Bag X2044,
Mmabatho 2735
Tel : (018) 388-3433
Fax : 088-514-0126
e-mail: mothabanej@nwpg.gov.za

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL

Enq. : Dr TA Phorabatho
Tel. : 018 388 3407
Email : tphorabatho@nwpg.gov.za

To: Ms R G Pila Nemutandani
Research Manager
North West University Mafikeng Campus
Faculty of Human and Social Sciences

From : Ms SM Semaswe
Acting Superintendent-General

Date : 09 November 2017

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MS P A MASEDI

Your letter dated 09 November 2017 bears reference.

Permission is hereby granted to your student Ms P A Masedi (Student No. 22797823) to conduct research in the department as requested, subject to the following conditions:

- She contacts the relevant principals for her target schools about her request with this letter of permission.
- The research process does not hinder the general functionality of the identified schools.
- The participation in your project will be voluntary.
- The principles of informed consent and confidentiality will be observed in strictest terms, and
- The findings of your research should be made available to the North West Department of Education and Sport Development upon request.

Best wishes


Ms S M Semaswe
Acting Superintendent-General

09/11/2017
Date



"Towards Excellence in Education and Sport Development"

Appendix D

Biographical questionnaire

1. IDENTIFYING PARTICULARS

1.1 GENDER: MALE ☐

FEMALE ☐

1.2 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AS A QUALIFIED TEACHER:

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Appendix E

Certificate of language editing



Faculty of Humanities

Department of English

22 August 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

I, Paul Nepapleh Nkamta, confirm and certify that I have read through and edited the mini-dissertation entitled **“Exploring the experiences and coping strategies of mainstream teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties in Potchefstroom”** by **Puleng Agatha Masedi**, student number: **22797823**.

Puleng Agatha Masedi was supervised by **R. G. Pila-Nemutandani** and **P. S. Kolobe** of the North-West University.

I hold a PhD in English Language and I am qualified to edit academic work of such nature for cohesion and coherence.

The views and research procedures detailed and expressed in the mini-dissertation remain those of the researcher/s.

Yours sincerely

Paul Nepapleh Nkamta (PhD; MA; PGCE; BA Hons)
Tel: 018 389 2895
Cell: 073 970 7514