



PROJECT TITLE

A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi.

**LovemoreVushe
(VSHLOV001)**

A Minor Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Social Science in Social Development

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This study, "A qualitative exploration of the personal, schooling and structural factors contributing to high school learner dropout in Philippi" was carried out on a sample of fifteen young people who dropped out of school in Philippi, a township in Cape Town in the Western Cape. Guided by the research questions that sought to explore participants' own views on the issue, an exploratory qualitative approach was used. A research sample of thirteen females and two males who dropped out of secondary school before completing grade 12 in Philippi was chosen using a snow balling sampling method. The study used a semi-structured interview schedule for face to face interviews with the school dropouts.

The findings revealed that learners in Philippi drop out due to a combination of factors personal, schooling and structural. Personal factors like struggling academically, personal negative views on the importance of education, grade repetition shame, teen pregnancy, delinquent behaviour and alcohol and substance abuse contributed to learners' decisions to quit school before matriculating. School factors included overcrowded classrooms, poorly trained teachers, lack of learning materials and associated poor educational quality, long distances to school and the unsafe learning environments in which some schools were viewed as gang battle grounds also contributed to participants' decisions to quit school.

Structural factors, barriers beyond learners' control, also contributed to the high learner dropout. These included social, cultural, and economic circumstances. Social factors included lack of social and educational support at home. Participants stated that they dropped out of school because their parents did not encourage and motivate them to complete Matric, did not actively support their academic life and failed to provide the necessary resources and support to ensure they remained focused. Some participants left school in order to respond to cultural issues that needed their attention. Cultural practices like forced marriages, responding to calls to be a traditional healer and behavioral changes emanating from traditional male circumcision created subjective norms and expectations that were not in line with academic progression. Economically, the learners 'poor financial backgrounds presented an unfair disadvantage in which both absolute and relative poverty strongly influenced their decisions to drop out. Without school uniforms, food and

transport fares, some participants opted to drop off in order to look for employment or self-sustenance.

Recommendations targeted at different stakeholders at different levels to address this early school dropout problem are also discussed. Some recommendations targeted the youths' attitudes themselves in order to address some personal or individual characteristics, whilst others focused on schools improvement and policies that address existing structural causes. More parental involvement in learners' educational matters, greater social workers contribution, infrastructure development in poor schools in Philippi, strategic partnerships among civil sector, government departments, parents and schools as well as enhanced teacher support constitute part of the recommendations.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The education system in South Africa ensures that learners go through two levels of schooling: primary and secondary schooling. In primary school, learners go through grades 1 to 7 before moving to secondary school where they enroll in grades 8 to 12. At the end of grade 12, learners take an examination which they must pass in order to earn a Matric certificate (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2011). Learners need the Matric certificate to further their studies at institutions of higher education. Although this certificate is a pre-requisite for entry into higher education, and provides a vast array of other employment opportunities, learner dropout rates in the country have been very high thus trapping these youths into a life of poverty and deprivation. This study sought to explore the dynamics of learner dropout in Philippi, a township in Cape Town. Philippi is a good representative of the Cape Flats, as such a good representative of the township schools in Cape Town. In particular, the researcher sought to understand the personal, schooling and structural factors that contribute to high learner dropout rates in Philippi with the aim of contributing knowledge that could help different stakeholders to address this worrying trend.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

South Africa is battling a persistent problem of high learner dropout rates and this problem is more pronounced after Grade 9. In 2011, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) released a report on Dropout and Learner Retention Strategy in which the annual dropout rate of learners in grades 1 to 8 was between 1% and 4% (DBE, 2011). However, this figure increased to 12% between grades 9 and 11 (DBE, 2011). Furthermore, the 2014 Matric results revealed that out of over a million learners that entered the education system in 2003, less than half of those made it to grade 12 (South African Democratic Teachers Union, 2015). Stats SA (2011) reported that just under half of Philippi adults over 20 years had some secondary education with only 28% having completed Matric. This is especially worrying considering that secondary education includes completing basic education and “consolidation of the foundations for life-long learning and human development, preparing learners for vocational

and higher educational opportunities” (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), 1999:4).

Branson, Hofmeyr and Lam (2013) contend that learners who drop out of school are economically disadvantaged because they have a significantly higher unemployment rate compared to their counterparts who complete Matric. Dropping out creates a pool of illiterate and unskilled young people who are not employable (Cloete, Wissink and De Conning, 2006). Dropouts also earn considerably less income across their lifespan than those that graduate from high school (McWhirter et al., 2007). In 2011, 66% of adults with little or no education were living in poverty compared to only 5.5% with an education level higher than Matric (Stats SA, 2014), thus showing a strong link between high levels of education and reduced levels of poverty.

Mkandawire (2011) relates high NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) rates to difficulties in the transition from school to work and further posits that dropping out of school and a low level of education are two common risk factors for falling into the NEET category. According to Stats SA’s (2013) 1st Quarter labour force survey, only an approximate of 3.5 million (33.5%) of the 10.4 million youths aged 15-24 years were not in the NEET category. A bulging NEET cohort is a huge concern because these unemployable youths may turn to crime, substance abuse, high unplanned pregnancies and early parenthood thus putting pressure on free social services such as grants and health (McWhirter et al., 2007). For those learners who reside in poor households and relatively uneducated households like those in Philippi, not completing high school puts them at a risk for a future of unemployment, which in many cases perpetuates their economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Rumberger and Lamb, 2003). Obtaining a higher educational qualification opens the doors to better economic prospects which extend to better lives not only for the youths but for the entire economy.

According to Battin-Pearson et al. (2000:14), it is imperative to understand causes and the processes of dropping out in order to assist in developing strategies that can curb the high school learner drop out problem (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000:14). This is in line with the objectives set in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, chief among them that 80% to

90% of learners should finish Matric and/or vocational training (National Planning Commission (NPC), 2011:59). The stories and reflections revealed in this study may thus give insight to policy makers, educational authorities, social services, parents and guardians, program managers and all stakeholders on high learner dropout rates and in turn help find feasible solutions to the problem. This study therefore sought to give insight into personal, schooling and structural factors that contribute to learners exiting the school system without the school leaving certificate in order to help curtail this problem.

1.3 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Philippi is a largely black township in Cape Town with a population of about 200 603, 90% of which are black Africans (Stats SA, 2011). The 47.96 square kilometres area situated in the Cape Flats and bordered by Nyanga, Gugulethu and Crossroads, is one of the oldest townships in Cape Town (Adlard, 2009). It faces challenges like high rates of violent crime, youth unemployment, HIV/AIDS infection, gangsterism, substance abuse, lack of education and high youth unemployment, among many other challenges (Anderson, Azari, and van Wyk, 2009).

Despite Philippi having seven secondary schools, many youths have not acquired the necessary educational qualifications in order to advance their socio-economic needs (Anderson, Azari, and van Wyk, 2009). Unemployment has wider social, economic and psychological impacts to the youths. According to Mathers and Schofield (1998), unemployment of youths can cause adverse health effects as well as damage their socio economic status and life styles. These high incidents of deprivation and other socio-economic marginalization result in long lasting scaring effects including loss of their senses of identity and self-esteem. According to Scarpetta, Sonnet and Manfredi (2010), uneducated and unemployed youth end up in overcrowded areas, resorting to crime and prostitution, contacting HIV, early pregnancies, which all have ripple negative social and economic costs to the government. The high dropout rate in the area is thus a cause for concern as it is a catalyst for cumulative disadvantages for youths. Exploring processes and causes of learner drop out in the area adds knowledge that may aid relevant stakeholders in seeking ways that thwart student dropout and thus eventually reducing intergenerational cycle of poverty.

1.4 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is hoped that the outcomes from this study will inform all relevant stakeholders, especially those in the education and social work sectors, to take necessary steps to remedy the situation by adopting policies and strategies of learner retention. Interventions to curb the high dropout would therefore centre on the post-compulsory school phase given the irrefutable proof suggesting dropout rates spike in grades nine to twelve. Therefore, it is important to understand the structural and personal factors that lead to high dropout rates during this period. This research was conducted in collaboration with Amandla Development, a Non-Governmental Organisation that seeks to ensure that Philippi students complete school. The research was partly a response to the NGO's need to better understand the rationale behind youths' thinking regarding their decisions to drop out of school in order to collaborate it with the quantitative researches conducted in the area. The researcher and the NGO's collaboration was also informed by the department of education's quantitative reports of high learner dropout rates as will be discussed in the findings in section 4.3 in Chapter 4. While this qualitative research is meant to improve existing knowledge on learner dropout causes in general, it more importantly focuses on these under researched Cape Flats contexts in order to understand the "why" rather than the "what" of this situation.

1.5 RESEARCH TOPIC

A qualitative exploration of personal, schooling and structural factors contributing towards high school learner dropout in Philippi.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study seeks to address the following research questions:

- What personal factors contribute to the high dropout rate among high school learners in Philippi?
- What schooling factors contribute to the high dropout rate among high school learners in Philippi?
- What structural factors contribute to high school learner dropout in Philippi?

1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To examine personal factors contributing to a high dropout rate among high school learners in Philippi.
- To explore schooling factors contributing to a high dropout rate among high school learners in Philippi.
- To determine structural factors contributing to a high dropout rate among high school learners in Philippi.

1.8 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

The following terms were operationally defined to clarify their meanings in the context in which they are used in this study.

1.8.1 SCHOOL DROPOUT

Brown (2004: 11) in Magwa and Ngara (2015: 51) defines a “dropout as a student who exits the education system before completing the programme for which he or she was registered”. Thus, in this case, if a student exits the secondary school education system at a particular level without matriculating, s/he can be classified as a dropout.

1.8.2 PERSONAL FACTORS

Personal factors refer to individual learner characteristics or factors; the particular background of an individual’s life including but not limited to traits, abilities, character, conduct and/or motives (Ou and Reynolds, 2008).

1.8.3 SCHOOLING FACTORS

These are school related factors that contribute to a learner’s decision to drop out of school and include teaching and learning methods, resources, environments and the way teachers and school authority figures relate to students (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 2008).

1.8.4 STRUCTURAL FACTORS

Structural factors refer to barriers to, or facilitators of, high school learner dropout and may relate to economic, social, policy, organizational or other aspects of the environment (Sumartojo, 2000).

1.8.5 LEARNER RETENTION

For the purpose of this research, learner retention is “the continued participation of a learner in the formal schooling system until the completion of secondary schooling” (RSA, 2008:3).

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This section of the research report outlines the structure of the report.

Chapter One: Introduction: This preliminary chapter introduced the research conducted. It started by giving a background to the problem and explaining why and how this research may be important to different stakeholders in an attempt to reduce high learner dropout rates in SA. The research topic was unpacked, the research questions and objectives explained before clarifying key operational terms used in this research report.

Chapter Two: Literature Review: This second chapter reviewed literature pertaining to the research. It examined personal, schooling and structural factors contributing to high learner drop out in Philippi, the policy and legal frameworks governing this research as well as the theoretical frameworks upon which the research was based.

Chapter Three: Research methods: This chapter described and justified the research methods used in this research. The rational for choosing the research design, the sampling method, data collection method, analysis and verification processes were explained. The chapter also discussed the research’s limitations and the ethical issues.

Chapter Four: Presentation and analysis of the findings: The chapter analysed and presented the research findings. After profiling the research participants, the three themes and their sub-themes

that emerged from the framework for discussion were then explored in greater detail. These were linked to the literature review discussed in chapter 2.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations: This final chapter presented conclusions to the research findings based on the analysis in chapter 4. The conclusions also sought to answer the research questions. The chapter ended with a presentation of the recommendations that may help lower learner dropout rates in the area.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a review of literature on factors contributing to school dropout, policy and legislation relating to education and retention of learners in schools as well as relevant theoretical frameworks.

2.2 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO HIGH LEARNER DROP OUT

Dropping out of school without attaining the Matric certificate is not a single event but often a consequence of a combination of factors. These factors include poor school performance and grade repetition, teenage pregnancies, misbehavior in school and substance abuse among others (Strassburg, Meny-Gilbert, and Russel, 2010; Fleisch, Shindler and Perry, 2012; Hunt, 2008:5). What follows is a discussion of the literature that focuses on some of these factors that contribute to high school learners leaving school before matriculating. It should be clear from the beginning that these factors cannot be separated from one another or discussed in isolation as they are interlinked and one factor feeds into the other.

2.2.1 POOR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND GRADE REPETITION

Class repetition according to The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2006:1) refers to “the practice of requiring a learner who has been in a given grade for a full year to remain in the same grade where the expectation is either promotion to the next grade or completion of schooling”. It is a strategy that affords an academically struggling learner a chance to grasp “the work required of that grade and to acquire developmentally appropriate social skills” (UNESCO, 2006:1). However, it is also acknowledged that a significant amount of learners who repeat a grade tend to eventually drop out (Crouch and Vinjevold, 2006; Hymel and Ford, 2003).

Social Surveys Africa and the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) undertook a national household survey on education which illustrated the trend in grade repetition (Strassburg, Meny-Gilbert, and Russel, 2010). Although the Department of Basic Education’s age-grade

norms state that a child should be seven years in grade 1, eight in grade 2 and grade 12 learners should be 18 years old (DBE, 2007), Strassburg, Meny-Gilbert, and Russel (2010:69) revealed that “10% of learners across all grades were three or more years outside the age-grade norm”. The survey stated that “almost half of the grade 12 learners were older than 18. 22% of grade 12 learners were older than twenty while 10% of learners across all grades were three or more years older than the age-grade norm” (Strassburg, Meny-Gilbert, and Russel, 2010:69)

In a different study, Branson, Hofmeyr and Lam (2013) also revealed that in SA although repetition occurs in primary school, it was more frequent in secondary school. According to DBE (2013), in 2013, 16.3%, 24.2%, and 21% of pupils in grades 9, 10, and 11 respectively were repeaters. Conversely, about 10.5% repeated grade 1 in that year (South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), 2016:471). According to Spaul (2013:5), repetition is much higher in secondary grades possibly because a lot of learners advance to the next grades without mastering good foundational literacy and numeracy skills in the lower grades. However, as the school leaving exams draw closer, schools and teachers impose stricter passing conditions resulting in many learners failing to pass their grades, mostly leading to grade repetition (Spaul, 2013:5).

Crouch and Vinjevoll (2006) posit that continued repetition coupled with poor academic performance mostly leads to frustration for learners which eventually cause them to drop out of school. According to DBE (2011), continuous grade repetition tends to send a message of failure to a student which might result in a learner dropping out of high school. Grade repetition also results in a student being overage for their grade thereby increasing the risk of disengagement from school conceivably from the embarrassment of being a much older learner in class. Upon examining the percentage of grade 11s in 2008 that had finished grade 12 two years later, Branson, Hofmeyr and Lam (2013) noticed very low levels of grade 12 completions. Only about 35% of males and 30% of females doing grade 11 in 2008 had completed Matric two years later showing that repeaters had a low graduation rate. Poor academic performance leading to poor grades, grade failure and school repetition are therefore associated with higher dropout rates in all of these studies.

2.2.2 TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Females dropping out of school because of pregnancy or marriage seem to be a major influence in the dropout rate. In 2013, a General Household Survey (GHS) explored reasons why individuals aged seven to 18 were not attending an educational institution in 2009 and 2013 (DBE, 2013). Of those not attending school in 2009, 6.1% cited pregnancy as the reason why they were not in school while 4.2% cited the same reason in 2013 (DBE, 2013). This is especially worrying considering that the number of learners getting pregnant seems to be increasing year after year. For instance, DBE (2013) reported that a total of 99 041 pupils had fallen pregnant in 2013, up from 81 678 pupils who had fallen pregnant in the previous schooling year.

Bezuidenhout (2006:43) in Manona (2015:170) postulates that teenage pregnancy is considered as a “social problem” in many other countries as it marks the end of education for pregnant learners and the male students who would have impregnated them as they both get expelled from school. Abbas (2009:14) and Kaufman, De Wet and Stadler (2001) echo the same sentiments and adds that in many other developing countries, mothers are prohibited from returning to school after giving birth. However, in SA, learners’ right to go back to school after giving birth, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, section 29 (RSA, 1996), is respected.

Although pregnant learners are legally allowed to attend school in SA, pregnancy still contributes to both female and male learners dropping out of school as they often have difficulties combining parenthood with formal education. Chigona (2007) posits that the lack of support for pregnant learners and teenage mothers at home and at school mostly lead to low grades and school dropout. Consequently, these young people lose out the opportunity to gain educational skills needed to secure employment that would enable them to become self-supporting, productive citizens. It is therefore clear that programmes piloted by schools in partnership with several departments including social work and health, aimed at the prevention of teenage pregnancy as well as assisting young mothers and fathers back into schools, are an absolute necessity.

2.2.3 MISBEHAVIOR IN SCHOOL AND SUBSTANCE USE

Classroom misbehavior, identified as learners who bunk class or are regularly late, speak out of turn, do not follow instructions, flaunt regulations, are disruptive or do not complete assignments,

is associated with low grades and dropping out (Finn, Fish, and Scott, 2008). These behaviors, sometimes termed indiscipline, interfere with the orderly operation of the class and with the teaching-learning process. Misbehavior outside the classroom (school misbehavior), such as truancy, sale or use of illicit substances, bullying and fighting, gang activity, and vandalism, although more salient to school administrators, are related to reduced academic achievement and dropping out (Finn, Fish, and Scott, 2008).

Finn, Fish, and Scott (2008) further argues that there is also evidence of co-occurrence of misbehaviors as many learners who exhibit one form of misbehavior exhibit other forms too. Absenteeism and truancy have clear connections with school outcomes because of the missed opportunities for learning. Researchers such as Blum, Beuhring and Rinehart (2000) have shown the inverse relationship between absenteeism and achievement. Absenteeism may also be a step in a gradual process of student disengagement that leads to dropping out of school. Research has shown that learners who have greater absences are more likely to leave high school without graduating (Finn, Fish, and Scott, 2008). Delinquent behavior both inside and outside school are therefore associated with higher dropout and lower graduation rates among high school learners (Kokko, et al., 2006).

Additionally, drug use and abuse by learners at schools has negative consequences on school performance and learning, as well as the general well-being of those who abused them (Bowen, Bowen and Ware, 2002). Several studies have explored the relationship between high school dropout and the use of substances, such as alcohol, tobacco and other illicit drugs. They came to the same conclusion that there is a positive correlation between the two (Aloise-Young and Chavez, 2002; Fagan and Pabon, 1990; Wichstrom, 1998; Green and Ensminger, 2006; Maton and Zimmerman, 1992, as cited in Townsend, Flisher and King., 2007). Townsend, Flisher and King (2007), who conducted a systematic review of 46 peer-reviewed literature articles to establish whether existing research could provide a better understanding of the relationship between these two factors, reached a similar conclusion that substance use consistently resulted in high school dropout.

Furthermore, many of the social problems such as drug addiction are also linked to gangsterism in the community (Reckson and Becker, 2005: 114). The Department of Community Safety (2005:12) uncovered that gang members are becoming younger and start from around ages twelve and thirteen. This correlates with the findings from the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC, 2006:3), which indicated that gang activity has filtered into schools causing an increase in gang membership among learners and gang-related incidents on school grounds. Bloch (2009:79) adds that gangsterism in township schools leads to dropping out as there is social pressure and a level of attraction that comes with joining a gang. This can cause learners to drop out of school, which can further lead them to a life of crime. Bowen, Bowen and Ware (2002) adds that if learners experience violence, school disruptions and life threatening circumstances, leaving such a negative and dangerous environment becomes natural and unsurprising. Therefore, schools that are neither child friendly nor child seeking most likely have high learner dropout rates (Reddy and Sinha, 2010).

Continued misbehavior in school would also most likely lead to suspension, for a period not longer than a week, and/or expulsion after a fair hearing by the Governing Body of a public school, as a “correctional measure” (Manona, 2015: 176). This is as outlined by Section (2) of the South African Schools Act (SASA) No 84 of 1996 which states that “subject to any applicable provincial law, a learner at a public school may be expelled if found guilty of serious misconduct” (Manona, 2015: 176). Terhoeven (2009: 17) adds that punishment for bad behavior for learners is usually expulsion from school.

2.2.4 SCHOOL SYSTEM

It is also imperative for research on learner drop out not only to focus on the characteristics of the learner, but also on understanding those institutional characteristics of schools that negatively affect the student. While institutional character has broad meaning, the researcher’s focus was narrowed to those policies and practices that had an impact on the schools’ holding power. In a democratic society, schools should serve all of its citizens, not just the academically gifted learners (Masitsa, 2004). Directing attention to school policy and practice provides a broader understanding of the causes of dropout.

A number of school factors have been associated with high school dropout rates, such as poor education quality in the form of overcrowded classrooms, poorly trained teachers, high teacher-learner ratio, and lack of learning materials (UNESCO, 2007; Masitsa, 2004). Underachievement is often viewed as a reason for learners to drop out of school. Masitsa (2004) identified the media of instruction, overcrowding and a shortage of books and other resources as major determinants of underachievement at schools in the South African context. He expressed concern that at the time of his study, such inadequacies had not been addressed by the government of the time. Masitsa (2004) pointed out that despite the fact that more secondary schools were built after the shift in government policy in SA, they could not keep up with the growing numbers of learners and the backlog increased. This led to overcrowded classrooms and a high learner/teacher ratio in many areas in the country. The lack of individual attention to learners therefore makes it easy for them to fall through the cracks and drop out as their personal circumstances are not given adequate attention. It is, however, important to acknowledge the good work some of these schools are doing considering that their starting point was so low compared to better schools due to historical demographic disadvantages.

2.2.5 POVERTY

Dropping out of school is linked to socio-economic factors, such as poverty, high crime rates, and alcohol and drug abuse. Studies focusing on socio-economic circumstances show that poverty and economic challenges contribute to lack of motivation, negative self-concept in terms of academic abilities, failure at school, domestic violence, delinquency, and higher dropout rates (Prinsloo, 2004). Mgwangqa and Lawrence (2008:2) also established that poverty was the main reason for learners dropping out of school as education in poor communities is costly and being at school limits the contributions that learners can make towards the immediate survival of families. Furthermore, Gustafsson (2012) and Strassburg, Meny-Gilbert, and Russel (2010) reported that financial constraints and costs involved in attending school were given as reasons for absence from schools in three different sets of data. A household's standard of living is thus a significant predictor of dropout. A child's chances of dropping out of school are much lower if the child lives in a wealthier household.

Besides having favourable financial resources, sociologists often argue that children from well-to-do households are more often socialized into intellectual activities at home. This cultural capital is usually translated into better educational outcomes. Conversely, a lack of cultural capital discourages learners from staying in school (Sibanda, 2004). The poor therefore seem to be at a disadvantage in accessing and staying in school (Akyeampong, 2010) hence poverty in particular serves as a significant obstacle to children's education (UNESCO, 2007a). One way in which household poverty has an indirect effect on educational attainment is through its association with ill-health. Malnutrition, for example, may affect children's motivation and capacity to concentrate. In some cases, this leads to limited cognitive development and learning disabilities which might further lead to grade repetition, and lower test achievement scores, factors associated with high learner dropout rates.

On the other hand, analysing qualitative data from the Barriers to Education Project, Dieltiens and Meny-Gibert argue that absolute poverty is unlikely to be a major cause of dropout in SA given the concurrent high levels of poverty and school enrolment (Pendlebury, Lake and Smith, 2009). Even though 70% of children lived in households with per capita monthly incomes below R350, the gross enrolment rate was about 95% for grades R to 9 and 85% for grades 10-12 (Pendlebury, Lake and Smith 2009). This argument is supported by Fleisch, Shindler and Perry (2012) who found no meaningful relationship between measures of poverty such as piped water, household income or the presence of an employed person in the household, and learners not attending compulsory schooling. This shows that the relationship between poverty and non-attendance of compulsory education is not clearly correlated.

2.2.6 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND INFLUENCE OF SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Motivation of learners can be characterised by their willingness to initiate learning activities, their continued involvement in a learning task, and their long-term commitment to learning. Learners need to be motivated both in the home and school environment. Teachers and parents should be aware that “motivation in the home environment and school is an important factor in encouraging learners to continue with their studies” (Magwa and Ngara, 2015: 53). When learners are motivated, they manage stress better and are also eager to initiate learning activities. Motivated learners tend to be more willing to take risks, to remain involved in a

learning task and are more committed (Hawksley et al., 2002:138). This means that motivation energizes learners to achieve their goals, which can be intrinsically and extrinsically stimulated. When learners are motivated at home, they wholly take part in the learning and teaching environment for a better quality of education.

Well intentioned educators are thus recommending an infusion of energy towards parental participation in schools. Major reform efforts and educational interventions list parental involvement and press for achievement as an important ingredient. According to Finn (1998) parents of academically successful learners make sure they are informed about their children's activities in school, their school performance and whether or not they have been assigned homework thus making sure that a place and time has been allocated for homework. This level of interest is associated with higher student engagement as well as academic achievement. Such parents also play a major role in creating emotionally supportive home environments and providing reassurances when learners encounter failure, actively organising and monitoring their children's time, helping with homework and discussing school matters with them. Studies of student resilience indicated that many of these behaviors explain why some learners succeed academically despite some adversities such as poverty (Hawksley et al., 2002). Likewise, teachers who exhibit a strong sense of professional commitment usually influence their learners towards higher levels of engagement in their learning process and, more significantly, tend to have much higher classroom attendance rates than teachers who do not display such commitment (Whitbourne, 2002:125).

2.2.7 LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF PARENTS AND SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

It is important to add that parental involvement is tied to parents' levels of education. Family level variables such as lower parental educational attainment and lower parental value of education also characterise repeating learners who dropout relative to those who persisted. These learners are also more likely to come from lower income and single-parent homes. Their parents tend to be less involved and demanding with their children, provide less educational support and are less likely to model educational attainment (Hymel and Ford, 2003). This confirmed Masitsa's (2004) findings that the following factors can have a detrimental impact on a child's ability to perform academically: inadequate parental support,

learners not living with their parents, divorced or separated parents, loss of parents or single parent families and family conflicts.

Hunter and May (2003) add that children who reside in poor households and relatively uneducated households like those in Philippi, the study area, face a greater likelihood of dropout. Archambault et al. (2009) posits that in SA, parents of the current generation of youths in low income areas like Philippi also suffered from disparities in educational access, and their capacity to assist their children is a function of the education they themselves obtained under Apartheid. In addition to resource disparities, apartheid policies constrained black people, who comprise the ethnic majority in SA and the Philippi area under study, to low levels of poor quality education and occupations (Beutel and Anderson, 2007). Thus, in addition to the large amount of unemployment in black households causing a financial constraint on access to better quality education, poor parents are also unable to provide educational assistance and compensation for the shortfalls in the public schooling system. Parents' educational deficiencies combined with the enduring legacy of schools being under-resourced both in terms of both physical assets and skilled personnel pose a daunting prospect of the Apartheid system perpetuating itself.

That said, while parents differ in their capacity to provide direct educational assistance, simply taking an interest in their children's education, and demonstrating that they value education through homework supervision, for example, could improve their offspring's educational outcomes (Archambault et al., 2009). Such parenting practices, sometimes referred to as social resources or social capital, have been shown to reduce the odds of dropping out, including: having high educational aspirations for their children; monitoring their children's school progress; communicating with the school; and, knowing the parents of their children's friends (Taylor et al., 2010).

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents and discusses the three theories used as a framework of analysis for the study. Whilst many theories could apply to this study, the researcher, after observing the patterns in data, chose three different theories that complement each other. The engagement theory was chosen

because of its focus on personal or individual factors whilst the Social Exclusion Theory's emphasis on social structural factors ensured a balance between individual and structural considerations. The Theory of Planned Behaviour, on the other hand, helped in understanding the psychological factors of these youths' decisions to drop out of school. The interplay among the theories, which explains why the researcher chose these three theories, is explained in section 2.4 below. The engagement theory, theory on planned behaviour and social exclusion theory will be discussed, highlighting their main tenets, demonstrating each theory's relevance to the study as well as a brief interplay among them.

2.3.1 ENGAGEMENT THEORY

The theory posits that learners' involvement and commitment to their studies is determined by how interactive, ambitious, worthwhile and meaningful their school activities and learning tasks are (Kearsley and Shneiderman, 1998). The use of technology and collaborative teams on captivating projects with practical, real world relevance rather than mere theoretical, textbook learning detached from day to day reality, increases student engagement thus reducing dropout rates. The theory argues that learners who feel like their schools and learning environments keep teaching them new things that enhance their creativity, evaluation, problem solving, reasoning and decision making skills are more intrinsically motivated to complete school than those who do not (Kearsley and Shneiderman, 1998). Almost half of the participants in the Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006) study of high school dropouts communicated that they did not find school interesting and had dropped out because they were bored and disengaged from high school.

According to Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006), engagement also refers to the level of identification with the school and the development of positive relationships with peers and educators. Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006) posits that the extent to which learners, their parents and teachers engage with the educational process can be used to predict how likely the learners are to drop out of school. This lack of engagement was not limited to the learners as they felt that there was a lack of adult engagement. The report also revealed that a lot of the learners did not believe that their educators were interested in school or their learning (Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison, 2006). Along these lines, several dropouts in the Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006) study indicated that their parents were not engaged in their education. This is supported by

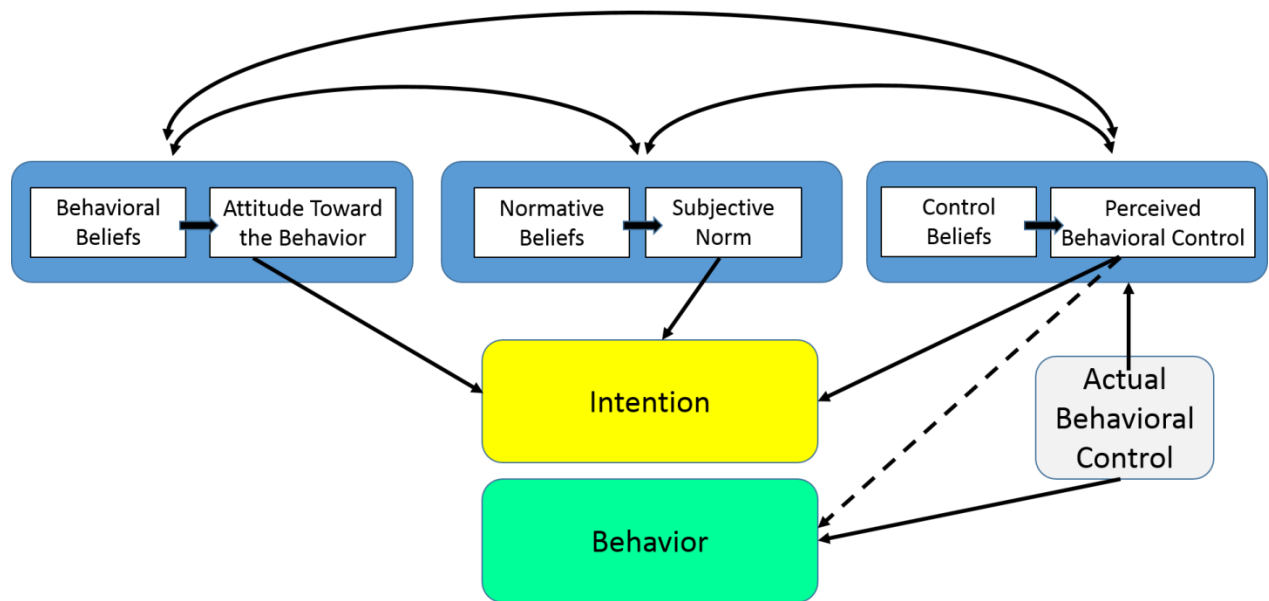
White and Kelly's (2010) claim that parental involvement in a student's education plays an important role towards a learner's success in school. It can therefore be argued that higher parent and teacher engagement with the learner's education partnered with higher student engagement with their school could increase the likelihood of learners finishing high school.

This theory resonates with the study as it focuses on need for education to be transformed from the traditional teacher centred education to a learner centred approach in which learners are at the centre of the education process, are more actively involved and intrinsically motivated to excel. The theory helps to understand the relationship between learners' perceptions of the educational process and systems to their decision to drop out of school. It emphasizes the need to make the learning process more enjoyable, modern, computer based, interactive, creative and captivating for learners, something lacking in many township schools in Philippi thus contributing to high learner boredom, eventual disengagement and dropping out.

2.3.2 THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR

The TPB theory, an extension of the theory of reason action (TRA) propounded by Ajzen and Fishbein in 1980 to predict an individual's intention to engage in a behavior at a specific time and place, predicts deliberate behavior over which people have the ability to exert self-control. In a nutshell, this psychological theory is founded on the premise that intention, the cognitive representation of a person's readiness to perform a given behavior, is the immediate antecedent and best predictor of behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). As shown by diagram 1 below, the TPB theory contends that intentions are determined by three constructs: attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control and any interventions to change a person's behavior should target these three determinants (Ajzen, 2002).

Diagram 1: The theory of planned behavior



According to Burrus and Roberts (2012:6), attitudes refer to a “person’s evaluation of his or her own behavior or of others’ behaviors” which can be favorable or unfavorable. The theory states that behavioral intentions are influenced by subjective consideration of the risks and benefits of the outcomes of performing the behavior (Ajzen 1991). As such, the stronger the motivational factors that influence the intention to perform the behavior and the likelihood that the behavior will have the expected outcome, the more likely the behavior will be performed (Jokonya, 2017).

Subjective norms are the perceived “social pressure one feels to perform or not perform the behavior” (Burrus and Roberts, 2012:6). It refers to the belief about whether most people, particularly peers and people of importance whom the person cares about, approve or disapprove of their intended behavior and think the behavior in question should be engaged. Such subjective norms are considered normative or standard as they are based on customary codes in a group of people or larger cultural context (Jokonya, 2017).

To address the weakness of its predecessor, the TRA, which only considered attitudes and subjective norms, the TPB incorporated a third determinant of human motivational intention. The perceived behavioral control (PBC) was added as a realisation that behavior is not 100% voluntary as individuals do not always have complete voluntary control over their intended behavior, especially in unstable and uncontrolled external contexts (Bagozzi, 2007). PBC refers to a

“person’s perception of his or her own capability to perform the behavior” (Burrus and Roberts, 2012:6). Bagozzi (2007) describes it as the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior of interest based on past experiences and anticipated impediments and obstacles.

Perceived behavioral control varies across situations and actions resulting in a person experiencing different perceptions of behavioral control. The perceived presences of factors that may facilitate or impede performance of a behavior include scarcity of resources and skills to perform the task (Oliveira and Martins, 2011). These three kinds of considerations lead to the formation of a behavioral intention. The more favorable the attitude and subjective norm as well as the greater the perceived control, the stronger the person’s intention to perform the behavior in question (Ajzen, 1991).

This theory is important in the study of the reasons that motivate learners to drop out of school because of its attention to attitudes and personal beliefs. The ability to be able to identify and understand motivational behavioral factors assists in understanding why individuals perform certain behaviors in order to change such behavioral practices in society (Nchise, 2012). When applied to drop out of high school learners, the TpB implies that the intention to finish one’s studies alongside recognized behavioral control, predicts the prospect that a learner would complete high school. The learners’ intention to finish his/her studies is “in turn determined by the learners’ attitude to stay in school, by recognized social pressure to graduate high school and by opinions of control over this behavior” (Davis, Ajzen, Saunders and Williams, 2002:811).

Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006) posit that dropouts felt inadequately challenged by their educators and insufficiently motivated by their parents as there was a very low expectation for them to complete their homework. Burrus and Roberts (2012:6) add that close to 70% of the learners stated that they “would have worked harder in school if more had been asked of them”. One could then postulate that higher teacher and parent expectations can increase the likelihood of learners completing high school.

While the TpB considers normative influences on learner’s behavior and intention to stay at school or drop out, it does not account for environmental or economic factors that influence their

intentions. The theory is based on the premise that the learners have acquired the resources and opportunities necessary to perform the desired behavior, irrespective of what their intentions are (LaMorte, 2018). Other variables such as fear and threat, all key considerations among the Philippine dropouts, are not accounted for by the theory. Whilst useful in understanding individual behavior, without a broader overview of other macro-economic factors, the theory cannot fully explain this research phenomenon. The social exclusion theory, as explained below, takes into cognizance these other external factors thus complementing this psychological theory.

2.3.3 SOCIAL EXCLUSION THEORY

Social exclusion refers to the array of complexities that act as barriers to life opportunities and inhibit people from participating fully in society (Sen, 2010). Unlike poverty that refers to lack of material resources to reach an acceptable standard of living, social exclusion is broader and multi-dimensional in nature. It considers structural issues that cut off groups or individuals from enjoying the same opportunities enjoyed by the generality of the population. As propounded by Sen (2010), social exclusion occurs when individuals are involuntarily excluded from participating and enjoying services that they desire and would want to be part of. Since such social exclusion is systematic and persistent rather than accidental, policies that redress such outcomes and processes that prevent other people from enjoying such services should be consciously and strategically put in place. Berger (2012) argues that prolonged experience of discriminatory behavior usually results in those excluded losing faith in redress and accepting things as they are. Such behavior should not be mistaken as voluntary choice.

As noted in the literature on school dropout, some of the factors that contribute to high school learner drop out are structural, that is to say barriers to, or facilitators of, high school learner dropout which relate to economic, social, policy, organizational or other aspects of the environment (Sumartojo, 2000). These factors therefore contribute to the exclusion of certain learners from the school system. Social exclusion theory which focuses on structural barriers, is relevant to the study because exclusion is evident in Philippines where many people experience high unemployment and incidents of crime rates; poor housing, health, education and skills levels; among many other challenges (Anderson, Azari, and van Wyk, 2009)

In turn, low levels of education have been proven to restrict people's ability to access decent jobs to develop themselves and participate fully in society. Being excluded from the opportunity to graduate from high school may lead to under or unemployment which may in turn lead to economic impoverishment that may, in turn, lead to other deprivations such as undernourishment or homelessness. According to Sen (2010) being excluded from one system can lead to other deprivations as well, thereby further limiting one's living opportunities. The essence of inclusive education is the human right to education, stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (UNESCO, 2006).

2.4 STUDY'S THEORETICAL MODEL INTERPLAY FRAMEWORK

This study examined the factors contributing to high learner drop out in Philippi schools. It was imperative that the researcher understood the wide array of personal, schooling and structural factors behind this phenomenon. It should be made clear that the three theories have a lot of overlaps. The engagement theory which focuses on personal agency factors highlights the importance of making the education process more learner self-directed, friendly, authentic, sensory appealing, interactive, perceived control, collaborative, cognitively challenging, motivating, value laden and deemed worthwhile by students themselves (O'Brien and Toms, 2008). The theory contends that dropout rates are reduced when learners initiate and sustain engagement in educational tasks. Any analysis and intervention of school dropout should thus focus on understanding these factors

The theory of planned behavior, another psychological theory, argues that favorable attitudes and subjective norms combined with greater perceived control results in a person's stronger intention to perform the behavior in question. On the other hand, social exclusion embraces on the one hand an absence of financial resources and social capital, and on the other, a presence of obstacles to building them up (Lessoj and Jowell, 2000). Unlike the social exclusion theory, the TpB narrows the factors to behavioral intention, arguing that the beliefs about how important a learner feels about completing school influences his or her decision to drop out. This shows that social exclusion theory focuses more on complex interplay of social, economic, cultural, organizational, demographic, behavioral factors and many other structural factors beyond learners' control than both the engagement theory and the TpB.

It should be noted that engagement and social exclusion theories complement, consolidate and drive each other. It can then be deduced that student disengagement itself, as shown by lack of class participation and identification with the school system, is common among learners experiencing social exclusion thus demonstrating that disengagement is a form of social exclusion. However, the exact relationship and causal direction between factors of social exclusion and learner disengagement is difficult to establish as they interact and overlap. This relationship can thus be described as cyclic as one feeds into each other making identifying the underlying driver difficult. The three theories complement each other with each having a different area of focus.

2.5 POLICY AND LEGISLATION

This section will explore relevant Acts and Policies that have a bearing on the promotion of learning and retention of learners in the South African education system. Educational policies and legislation attempt to assign and clarify the roles of key stakeholder groups within education, such as educators, parents and learners.

2.5.1 THE EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 6 OF 2001

The Education White Paper 6 of 2001 is concerned with Inclusive Education and Training, and focuses on the fact that all learners are different in some way and have different learning needs that are equally valued. Inclusive Education and Training acknowledges and respects differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV/AIDS status (Department of Education, 2001). It also seeks to maximise the participation of all learners in the culture and curricula of educational institutions and to uncover and minimise barriers to learning (DBE, 2011:16). The paper postulates that some learners may require more intensive and specialised forms of support in order to be able to develop to their full potential (DBE, 2011:16). An inclusive education and training system is organised in such a way that it can provide various types and levels of support to learners.

In general, the curriculum and the education system have failed to respond to the diverse needs of the learner population, resulting in massive numbers of dropouts, push-outs and failures. According to DoE (2001:5) the education and training system should promote

education for all learners and foster the development of inclusive and supportive centres of learning which would enable all learners to participate actively in the education process. Thus, learners would be enabled to develop and extend their potential and participate as equal members of society. The White Paper 6 outlines the commitment of the Ministry of Education to provide educational opportunities, particularly for those learners who experience or have experienced barriers to learning and development or have dropped out of learning because of the inability of the Education and Training System to accommodate their learning needs (DoE, 2001:6).

2.5.2 THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT 84 OF 1996

The South African Schools Act (SASA) posits that it is necessary to set uniform norms and standards for the education of learners at schools and for the organisation, governance and funding of schools throughout the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996:1). This Act is especially important in this study considering the evidence from past studies that suggests that classroom misbehavior is associated with low grades and dropping out (Finn, Fish, and Scott, 2008). These behaviors, sometimes termed indiscipline, interfere with the orderly operation of the class and with the teaching-learning process.

According to SASA Section 3(1), every parent must encourage every learner under his or her care to attend school from the first school day of the year on which such a learner reaches the age of seven years until the last school day of the year on which such a learner reaches the age of fifteen years or Grade 9 whichever occurs first (RSA, 1996). Section 3(3) of the Act stipulates that every member of the executive council must ensure that there are enough schools so that every child can attend school in his or her province as required by subsections (1) and (2) of the same Act (RSA, 1996). Section 8(1) also specifies that subject to any applicable provincial law, a governing body of a public school must adopt a code of conduct for learners after consultation with learners, parents and educators of the school (RSA, 1996). Section 8(2) requires this code of conduct to be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment that is dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process (RSA, 1996).

SASA Section 8 (3) states that the Minister of Education may, after consultation with the Council of Ministers of Education, determine guidelines for the consideration of governing bodies in adopting a code of conduct for learners (RSA, 1996). In addition, Section 8(4) asserts that nothing contained in the Act exempts a learner from the obligation to comply with the code of conduct of his or her school (RSA, 1996). Section 8(5) affirms that a code of conduct must contain provisions of due process for safeguarding the interests of the learner and any other party that is involved in disciplinary proceedings. The suspension and expulsion of learners from public schools are contributing factors in learner dropout.

2.5.3 THE POLICY ON LEARNER ATTENDANCE OF 2010

The Policy on Learner Attendance of 2010 aims to promote punctual and regular school attendance and provides standardised procedures for recording and monitoring learner attendance (RSA, 2010). This policy is especially important to this study considering that absenteeism and truancy have clear connections with school outcomes because of the missed opportunities for learning. Blum, Beuhring, and Rinehart (2000) have demonstrated that there is an inverse relationship between absenteeism and achievement. Absenteeism also may be a step in a gradual process of student disengagement that leads to dropping out of school as research has shown that learners who have greater absences are more likely to leave high school without graduating (Finn, Fish, and Scott, 2008).

The policy stipulates that it is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that the learner attends school daily (RSA, 2010:7). The South African Schools Act provides for action to be taken if a learner who is within the age of compulsory school attendance abstains from school without providing an explanation (RSA, 1996). Permissible reasons for learner absenteeism are also laid out in the policy. Section 34 adds that if a learner is absent due to an invalid reason, normal disciplinary processes will apply (RSA, 2010). The school is responsible for following up on cases of invalid absenteeism and should work together with the parent of the learner to find a solution and if the code of conduct is being breached, disciplinary action must follow. The school social worker has a cardinal role to play in identifying appropriate types of prevention and early intervention programs that can assist students at greater risk of dropping out. Providing

emotional support and improved educational environments can significantly help reduce the dropout rates.

The policy requires the school timetable to indicate the time during which the class register (registration period) will be marked (RSA, 2010:8). The school must do its utmost to promote and monitor punctual attendance at the start of the school day. Section 19 of the policy explains that the class register is used by the class teacher and principal to monitor learner attendance and to follow up on the non-attendance of learners. Furthermore, learners are expected to attend school on time and must be required to do so. Section 20 of the policy states that a learner is deemed to be present at school when the learner is present in class or is participating in a school activity (official educational, cultural, recreational or social activity of a school within or outside the school premises) when the class register is marked (RSA, 2010).

Schools also provide the School Governing Body (SGB) and District Offices with quarterly reports on learner absentee rates. The SGB and District Offices must identify problem areas and determine the appropriate action. Section 35 specifies that it is the duty of the school to have programmes that assist learners who are absent to catch up with school work. This should be reflected in the policy of the school on learner attendance. The school policy must indicate how the school will support a learner who has been absent in order to help the learner make up for lost time or assessments that a learner may have missed.

2.6 CONCLUSION

The chapter examined relevant material related to the research. The literature review showed that factors contributing to high learner drop out can be broadly categorised as personal, schooling and structural. The three relevant theories underlying the research were explored. Whilst the social exclusion emphasized on the structural factors, the TPB focused on the psychological factors that contributed to the participants' decision to drop out of school. The ability to identify and understand motivational behavioral factors was important in understanding why learners decided to drop out of school as well as how such psychological factors and bad behavioral practices can be changed among Philippi youths. On the other hand, the Engagement theory targeted on the

person agency factors, with an emphasis on the learners' engagement attributes processes and outcomes. It was cardinaly important to understand the person agency and psychological factors and insights into behavioral intentions and the effect of attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control on behavioural intentions. Equally important was the holistic understanding of individual learners' backgrounds, school factors and other structural causes that influenced learners' decisions to drop out of school as argued by the social exclusion theory. The chapter also included an examination of policies and legislation related to the topic. The following chapter focuses on outlining and justifying the research methods used.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discloses, explains and justifies the research methodology used. It describes and justifies why an explorative qualitative research was the best research approach to use. It also outlines how the participants were chosen, the data collection, analysis and verification processes as well the ethical issues encountered during the research. It also includes a reflective section and a narrative of the research's limitations and challenges.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research approach was deemed suitable to respond to the questions of this study. In qualitative research, numerous forms of data are collected and examined from various angles to construct a rich and meaningful picture of a complex, multi-faceted situation such as high learner dropout rates (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005:133). An exploratory qualitative approach was chosen as the most appropriate approach for this study as it stresses participants' perceptions based on lived experiences (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). This qualitative research sought to understand "why" youths drop out of school rather than, the dynamics and their thought process at the time of dropping out and whether they think anything could have been done differently to keep them in school. This contrasts sharply with quantitative research which focuses on the "what" and numerical aspects of the situation.

A case study approach was used as it was particularly useful for gaining rich, in-depth information concerning an issue or problem as well as generating solutions (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). This methodology helped to explore the subjective experiences of fifteen learners who dropped out of school, focusing on their reasons for leaving school before attaining Matric in order to have a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. The use of the qualitative approach also allowed for unstructured and open ended questions that evoke deeper discussion and a greater comprehension of the research questions to be utilised. The unstructured questions allowed the researcher to acquire information relevant to the topic being researched but not directly asked on the interview schedule. However, in pursuit of the lived experiences of responses, the qualitative research thus lacks the ability to generalize the findings.

3.3 SAMPLING

A sample is a small portion of the total set of objects, events, or persons which together comprise the focus of the study (De Vos et al., 2005). According to De Vos et al. (2005), sample design for qualitative research is usually non-probability sampling. The researcher initially intended to use the purposive sampling method in which he would have actively selected “the most productive sample to answer the research question” (Marshall 1996:523). The researcher relied on the NGO Amandla for the identification of recent school dropouts and access to these information-rich informants. However, Amandla was not able to provide a sufficient number of contacts for interviewing and as such the researcher ended up using the snow balling technique in which the few participants interviewed were asked to refer the researcher to other dropouts they were aware of for interviewing. The more the number of participants the researcher got, the more people he asked and the greater the number of potential participants he got.

However, the researcher could not get the desired sample size of twenty. More so, it was difficult to get an even number of participants of male and female dropouts in the Philippi area due to challenges in accessing male participants. The majority of the male dropouts the researcher was referred to were either not interested or were no longer available in the area, making interviewing them very difficult. As a result, the researcher interviewed fifteen participants, thirteen females and two males, showing a rather gender biased sample.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected through the use of in-depth individual interviews with recent school dropouts in Philippi. Attempts to interview officials from the Department of Education to uncover the extent of high school learner drop out in Philippi were unsuccessful. However, one official contacted forwarded this researcher an excel document with information on learner dropouts in and around Philippi. Amandla provided the initial link between the researcher and this education official.

An interview schedule with questions based on the research questions and objectives was used as a guide. The interview schedule is a set of predetermined questions that can be used as an appropriate instrument to engage the participant and designate the narrative terrain (De Vos et al., 2005). The questions opened up a discussion and the process of interviewing allowing for the

respondents to provide as much information as they were willing to. The process allowed for flexibility and enabled the researcher to modify and even change questions as deeper insights developed as a result of the information obtained. The interviews sought to ascertain the prevalence of high school learner drop out, the individual characteristics contributing to high learner dropout as well as the factors associated with learner dropout in the Philippi community.

The interview schedule had four sections (see Annexure A), the first of which constituted questions on demography. The information on the profile of participants in Table 4.1 largely reflects the findings from this section. The second section focused on learners' housing conditions in order to establish how their living conditions whilst going to school may have impacted on their decision to drop out as well as ascertain if their living conditions had improved since dropping out of school. The third section narrowed questions on the family to family dynamics during their schooling days. It sought to establish what type of support they got and the impact it had on their decision to drop out. The last section centred on school; the learners' experiences, their perceptions on the value of education, and any other school related matters that might have contributed towards their decision to drop out.

A tape recorder was used to record the interviews. The tape recorder allowed the researcher to conduct the interviews without the added pressure of note taking or having to remember all the content discussed during the interview. This allowed the researcher to concentrate on exploring the topic while noting the non-verbal cues which increased his attentiveness during the interview process. Participants agreed to the use of a tape recorder by signing a letter of consent to participate in the study.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis can be understood as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (De Vos et al., 2005). The data collected was analysed using an adaptation of Tesch (1990; as cited in De Vos et al., 2005). This approach focused on gaining an understanding of the transcripts derived from the interview findings. Similar ideas were coded in the transcripts and these developed into themes. The themes resulted in categorisation of the data.

After finishing the transcripts, the researcher read through all the transcriptions. This was followed by understanding what the respondents said in relation to the objectives of the research. These objectives guided the researcher's main themes. On the margins of the transcripts, the researcher wrote down some words (labels) that captured the meaning that the respondents gave. He also added any notes that raised questions. The researcher used colour highlighters to colour code those labels that seemed to be linked to each other. Different colours were used for different sets of categories that belonged to a theme.

Once all the labeling had been carefully considered, the researcher started to group labels under a main theme going back to the objectives to make sure that the main themes reflected the issues linked to the objectives of the study. The researcher then reworked the themes to ensure mutual exclusivity to avoid repetitions. This was followed by developing an initial schema that set out the main themes with categories of those themes. The framework was refined so that it flowed logically, was coherent and mutually exclusive. The researcher then read through all attempts to 'code' the data and check to see if he had not gone overboard with categories and sub-categories. By grouping together topics/labels that relate to each other, the number of categories was reduced to three in order to make the data analysis more manageable. These were the personal, schooling and the structural reasons causing learners to drop out.

Once the researcher was satisfied with his table, he used it as a framework for discussing his findings. He followed the logical sequencing of the framework when writing up the findings. In the discussion, the researcher introduced the issues linked to these themes with the actual quotes of the respondents. He made sure not to paraphrase the quotes while writing up the findings thus using only verbatim quotes. Each major section linked to a theme had several quotes attached to it. The objective was to link these direct quotes and findings to other areas of research conducted and referred to in the literature review.

3.6 DATA VERIFICATION

In accordance with Lincoln and Guba (1985), data verification involves questions that surround issues such as its applicability, consistency, and neutrality. The authors developed four constructs appropriate for the qualitative paradigm: credibility, transferability, dependability and

confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, (1985). The researcher was holistic, sensitive, responsive and adapted to changing circumstances, maintained an active analytic stance, sought clarify on participants' responses and summarised these responses to ensure he had understood them correctly, as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These strategies helped the researcher to correct both the direction of the analysis and the development of the study as necessary, thus ensuring reliability and validity of the completed project. In effect, a tape recorder was used to ensure that there is referential competence satisfactoriness as suggested by Babbie and Mouton (2001). The study also reviewed literature to make sure that there was a theoretical framework in which to work.

The final construct, confirmability, is the degree to which the findings are gained as a result of the inquiry rather than the researcher's biases (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The university supervisor stepped in to eliminate any biases that might have arisen. Since qualitative research is iterative rather than linear, this qualitative researcher moved backwards and forwards between design and implementation to ensure congruence among question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies, and analysis. Data was also systematically checked, focus maintained, the fit of data and the conceptual work of analysis and interpretation monitored and constantly confirmed. These verification strategies helped the researcher to identify when to continue, stop or alter the research process in order to pull off reliability and validity and ensure accuracy, consistency and objectivity.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical behavior is especially significant in social research as it involves human subjects. The underlying principles are universal and involve issues such as honesty, respect for the rights of others, and the concern that subjects should partake freely, based on informed consent (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2005).

3.7.1 AVOIDANCE OF HARM

As with all research, researchers have a duty to protect their participants from harm (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The researcher sought ethical clearance from the Humanities Ethics Committee of the University of Cape Town before the study was conducted. The researcher ensured that the

method was appropriate and did not cause participants any physical or psychological harm. Special attention was given to the potential harm or distress caused by the questions asked or the procedure followed. There was no physical harm resulting from the research.

However, some of the issues discussed caused emotional discomfort as evidenced by six participants who cried during interviews while narrating horrific personal experiences on ill treatment, domestic abuse, growing up without parents, rape, teenage pregnancy and abandonment. The researcher, a qualified social worker, although careful not to turn the interviews into a counselling therapy session, utilised his professional skills and remained empathetic, non-judgmental and supportive to the participants' plight, many of which had never shared their stories with anyone before. He also offered more information and contact details on organizations closer to the participants that provide free counselling for similarly distressed people and ensured that they received the necessary interventions.

3.7.2 INFORMED CONSENT

Ethical research involves informing and respecting everyone concerned and or affected by the research (Halai, 2006). The researcher visited schools in Philippi requesting permission to access their databases that had contact information of their former learners who had dropped out of school in order to contact them. Permission was sought from the principals of the seven schools clearly stating the purpose of the study. A letter of consent to participate in the study was then sent to the parents/guardians of learners (See Annexure B) chosen and showing willingness to voluntarily participate in the research since it was expected that some of the learners would be minors. The letters were both in English, Xhosa and Afrikaans, the three main languages in the province. Parents/guardians and participants older than 18 years were required to sign and return the consent forms indicating their willingness to participate in the study. Whilst assent forms for minor participants had initially been prepared, these were not used as none of the participants were minors.

Non-return of this slip was taken as an indication that the parent/guardian or learner did not want to participate in the study. Parents' permission did not mean that the participants themselves had automatically consented to participate. The researcher sought active consent from each individual learner (See Annexure C). The respondents were notified that they had a choice to participate in

the research voluntarily or decline as they were not being forced to participate. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from participating in the research at any point in time should they so desire.

3.7.3 DECEPTION OF SUBJECTS/RESPONDENTS

The researcher did not disguise the real goal of the study to the participants. Participants were fully informed of, and made aware of the nature, purpose and outcomes of the research. The researcher gave accurate and complete information and there was no deception with regards to the matter under research. They were told that the research was only for academic purposes and no personal benefits of it were promised to the participants. This allowed the learners to decide if they wanted to participate in the research with all the knowledge of the study at their disposal.

3.7.4 VIOLATION OF PRIVACY/ANONYMITY/CONFIDENTIALITY

Participants were assured of confidentiality during the course of the study. The researcher made use of pseudonyms and did not use real names when recording to safeguard the participants' identities. The use of pseudonyms ensured that the people who will read the research report would not be able to identify, or link the response to a particular participant. They were also assured that only the researcher and the supervisor would have access to the transcripts, which would be kept safe in the researcher's private space.

3.7.5 ACTIONS AND COMPETENCE OF RESEARCHER

As a social worker by training, and a person with previous work experience as a researcher in sensitive issues, the researcher had the necessary expertise to handle this research. The researcher worked hand in hand with the assigned university research supervisor who authorised all actions that the researcher undertook.

3.7.6 COOPERATION WITH CONTRIBUTORS

The researcher committed to full cooperation and guidance from the delegated university supervisor, school personnel and participants' parents/guardians to make sure no ethical considerations were violated. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from

participating in the research should they choose to. The researcher respected the assertions of the participants.

3.7.7 RELEASE/PUBLICATION OF FINDINGS

The participants were informed that the research report may be published online on the University of Cape Town online library. The findings may also be published. However, they were advised that since pseudonyms were used, this would not compromise them in any way.

3.7.8 DEBRIEFING RESPONDENTS

Debriefing is especially important where the researcher uses some form of deception as part of the study (De Vos et al., 2005). It is used to inform the respondent of this deception as a way of undoing any harm the deception may have caused the respondent (De Vos et al., 2005). This study did not involve any deception of the research participants. However, participants were also given an opportunity to reflect upon their experiences of the research process. This ensured that they were not left worse off than they were before the interviews.

The researcher began debriefing with a statement of gratitude extended to the respondents for their participation. This was followed by a brief restatement of the objective of the survey that would have initially been provided to the participant at the time that the informed consent was being sought. Finally, an overview of the main points discussed during the interviews was given to allow for participants' comments and queries. The researcher then provided information to restore participants to their original state which was no worse than before they participated in the study. Although some participants had cried during the interview, the researcher made concerted efforts to ensure that these participants accessed proper counselling to help them heal the emotional trauma they had bottled up for years. This left them at a better position than they were before, as they openly admitted.

3.8 REFLEXIVITY

Considering the process of research and its possible implications for the validity of the main claims and conclusions of a study is what may be referred to as reflexivity (De Vos et al., 2005). The researcher considered the likelihood of errors of different kinds during research. He went into the

research without holding assumptions as this could have consciously or unconsciously led him to select evidence that supported one outcome rather than another. This could have led him to shape the data of the research in order to meet his own assumptions.

In the qualitative paradigm, the researcher's own biases and feelings can and might impact on the research process (De Vos et al., 2005). For this reason, the researcher was conscious of these feelings and biases before entering the field. He was careful with the choice of his words and phrases to ensure that they did not result in leading questions. He was also aware that his relationship with Amandla, an NGO that helps such school dropouts could cause a power imbalance between him and the participants by giving some participants the impression that this research could bring direct benefits to them. The researcher was a reflective practitioner, continually thinking about the research process and especially about his own role in it and the implications of this for the analysis.

3.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher initially intended to interview twenty participants. An equal number of males and females would have been more representative of the Philippi area. However, due to difficulties accessing participants, the researcher managed only 15 respondents, with the majority being female. Having already left school, most of the prospective participants' contact details had changed making arranging for an interview difficult. However, it should be added that the focus of qualitative design is research quality and not the quantity of the research.

There is a possibility that some learners may have portrayed themselves in good light, as victims of circumstances beyond their control, trapped into dropping out of school when in actual fact poor personal decisions and choices as a result of their stubbornness and naivety were actual causes. The researcher asked many questions in different sections in order to avoid participants' self-biases. He insisted that there were no right or wrong answers.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the research methods used to gather, analyse and verify data. It examined why particular choices were made. Ethical challenges faced and research limitations encountered

were also discussed. The following chapter examines the outcomes of the research and it analyses the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and analyses the research’s key findings from the qualitative interviews of 15 school dropouts from Philippi. To begin with, the 15 research participants are profiled and discussed. Pertinent information that gives insight into why the learners dropped out of school are also discussed. Using the layered approach, a framework for analysis in Table 1 presents the themes, categories and sub-categories that emerged from the research findings. These are subsequently discussed and analyzed in detail in the rest of the chapter.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC Profile of participants

Table 1: Profile of participants

Variable		Number of learners	Percentage of learners (%)
Gender	Males	2	13
	Females	13	87
Age cohort	Below 18	1	7
	18-24	7	48
	25-35	7	48
Average age	25		
Age when learner dropped out of school	Below 16	1	7
	16-18	6	40
	19-21	8	53
Average school leaving age	18		
Grade when learner dropped out of school	Grade 9	2	13
	Grade 10	1	7
	Grade 11	10	67
	Grade 12	2	13
Average grade learners dropped out	Grade 11		
Current employment status	Unemployed	7	48
	Employed	1	7
	Entrepreneur	4	27
	Students	3	20
Sample size= 15			

Fifteen learner dropouts that attended a school in the Philippi area were interviewed. Table 4.1 above shows that of the fifteen participants interviewed, thirteen were female whilst only two were males. Their ages ranged from 16 to 31 years and the average age was 25 years. The average age when learners dropped out of school was 18 years. One learner dropped out of school below the age of 16. According to SASA, education is compulsory until a learner reaches grade 9 or sixteen years, whichever is early (RSA, 1996). The learner was however in grade 9 already. Six learners dropped out between the ages of 16 and 18 years and the majority of learners dropped out between the ages of 19 and 21 years.

The majority, 10 participants (67%), dropped out in grade 11; compared to two each (13%) in grades 9 and 12. One participant dropped out in grade 10. The majority (seven) of participants (48%) were not in employment, education or training (NEET category). Only three participants were pursuing an educational qualification whilst five were economically active, one as an employee and four in entrepreneurship.

4.3 STATISTICS FROM DBE

The researcher sought to establish how serious the problem of learner drop-out is in Philippi by examining statistics on non-completion of education from the schools based in the area under study. The researcher examined the information showing learners in Philippi schools who deregistered on Centralised Educational Management Information System (CEMIS) for a period of five years, between 2012 and 2016. The results, as discussed below, demonstrate that non-completion of secondary education, especially from grades 9 upwards is a serious problem in Philippi.

However, it should be made clear that being deregistered from the CEMIS does not necessarily mean that the learner has dropped out as learners get deregistered for many other reasons including being deceased, registered twice (duplication), wrong grade and other reasons. It should also be noted that there are no set boundaries between Philippi and its neighbouring areas, especially Crossroads, Nyanga and Gugulethu as learners in these four areas can go to schools in the neighbouring areas which makes an accurate aggregate of the extent of the problem in Philippi

difficult to isolate. Despite these limitations, the researcher sought to examine the extent of the problem in the seven schools in Philippi as per the DBE categorization.

Excluding all learners who had been deregistered for other reasons, the researcher established that 123 learners between grades 9 and 12 had dropped out of the seven secondary schools in Philippi in 2016. Of these, only 42 were in grades 11 and 12. This shows that 65.8% of learners who deregistered in 2016 in Philippi between grades 9 and 12 were in grades 9 and 10. Of these, the majority (63%) were males compared to 37% of female learners. This tally with the view by DBE (2011) that most learners drop out in grades 9 and 10. However the researcher's findings as shown in Table 1 shows that the majority of participants dropped out in grade 11 and not grades 9 and 10. It should, however, be noted that this could be because the researcher's sample size was small and generalisations could be misleading.

These statistics show that learner dropout in Philippi is a major challenge that needs strategic solutions. This concurs with Adlard (2009) who contends that Philippi youths still experience deprivation and a gloom future even after the abolishing of apartheid. Although significant improvements have been made to address this challenge since the dawn of democracy, more still needs to be done. A lot of these learners are facing barriers to socio-economic advancement in the area. The effects of such exclusion are immense and could create generational disadvantages, as argued by Sen (2010). The findings on the reasons for such high dropouts are discussed below.

4.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 2. below shows the framework for discussion which highlights the three main themes that emanated from the analysis of the findings in line with the objectives of the research. These are personal, schooling and structural factors contributing to learner dropout in Philippi.

Table 2: Framework of Analysis

THEME	CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORY
Personal factors	Struggling academically	-frustration and disappointment caused by underperforming -exploring alternatives outside education -self-taught practical skills development
	Grade repetition shame	-humiliation in learning with younger classmates -too much pressure to excel for repeaters
	Pregnancy and taking care of own kids	-their infants needed motherly attention -financial pressure/ need for a job -vengeful parents -lack of support from parents and babies' fathers
	Alcohol and substance abuse	-drugs easy availability -negative effects of coming to school drunk
	Other learner indiscipline and delinquent behavior	-bunked classes -sexual relations - violent and disruptive behavior/gangsterism -resulted in suspensions and low performances
Schooling factors	School systems	-Long distances to school -Unsafe learning environments at school
	Poor educational facilities and teacher support	-Poor educational facilities - Poor teacher support
Structural factors	Social factors	-lack of social support at home -lack of academic assistance at home -peer pressure -sexual abuse -poor living conditions
	Cultural factors	-forced marriages -traditional healer calls -traditional male initiation practices
	Economic factors	-failure to afford school uniforms, fees and transport money to school -shame of comparative poverty -hunger and deprivation -finding a job to help poor family

4.4.1 PERSONAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO HIGH LEARNER DROPOUT

The research findings showed that some learners dropped out of school because of personal reasons. There were noticeable processes and patterns resulting in learners dropping out. These

could thus be seen both as causes of and processes leading to school dropout. They include struggling academically, grade repetition shame, teenage pregnancies and taking care of infants, alcohol and substance abuse and learner indiscipline and delinquent behaviors. It should be made clear that these factors cannot wholly be separated from structural factors nor can they be so clearly separated from one another as they seem to feed into each.

4.4.1.1 STRUGGLING ACADEMICALLY

A few participants indicated that failure to meet the expected grades disappointed them. They could not understand how they had suddenly failed when they had done so well in previous grades and had not repeated a grade before. Some participants indicated that struggling in their subjects made them realise that they were not good at academic education, and had to drop out and explore other practical skills. Some argued that academic pardon in which struggling learners, usually older learners who would have failed for the second time after repeating a grade, were given an opportunity to progress to the next grade without necessarily passing in the hope that they will improve, was not a solution to dropping out.

Grade wise i was not doing well at all but i kept on going. So I decided what's this going to grade 11 with a condoned mark? I didn't pass it (Anelisa, female 22).

I moved to this school in Mitchell's Plain. That school is an Afrikaans school so you have to learn Afrikaans and if you fail Afrikaans you fail it all so that's why i decided to drop out because I was going to waste my time because I do not know Afrikaans (Nosi, female, 19, female).

I just realized that I am not good at listening and concentrating to a person for a very long time. I find education so boring and formal. I don't think it's that important. According to me education is not for everyone like me. I am more interested in things that you do with your hands and I am very business minded so that's why I left school (Sibo, female, 23).

These participants stated that despite their efforts, they failed to perform to the expected standards. Once they reached a stage in which education was no longer compulsory, grade 9 or sixteen years (RSA, 1996), whichever comes early, they dropped out. This post compulsory stage is also marked by grades 9 and 10, refereed by DBE (2011) as gate keepers, in which the education system imposes stricter demands to progress compared to lower grades. Part of that includes passing home languages. One participant added that having transferred from a Xhosa speaking school to an Afrikaans speaking school, she found learning and passing Afrikaans difficult. Despite doing well

in her other subjects, this new adjustment and failure to pass the new language that she had only started doing at this new school, frustrated her and became a learning barrier. Such failure to meet a requirement for grade progression resulted in student disengagement thus influencing her to drop out. Some academically struggling participants added that they dropped out to explore other avenues like finding a job, venturing into entrepreneurship or learning a practical skill that does not need academic intelligence.

Once learners felt uncomfortable in class, with no sense of belonging emanating from poor performances, they started missing classes which further worsened their class performances and commitment. This resonates with the engagement theory in which Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison (2006) argue that disengagement exists when the learners do not have a certain level of identification with the school, the teachers and fellow learners. The theory states that once learners start to struggle and their relationships with their teachers and other learners are not positively developed, then they are more likely to drop (Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison, 2006).

Some participants felt that the school was too theoretical whilst they preferred practical courses that enhance their skills and that had real life value. This tallies with the engagement theory in which learners who describe school as boring, meaningless, unhelpful and not suitable for them or their needs are more likely to drop out of school than those who describe their experience as exciting and worthwhile (Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison, 2006). Such students lacked motivation, were not meaningfully engaged, felt they were being forced to go to school and the process was not student driven and as a result did not retain the information they learnt as they did not value it, consistent with the engagement theory. The findings also resonate with the theory of planned behavior in which both poor attitude towards education and the lack of control or perceived lack of capabilities in getting desired results, like failing, can cause learners to drop out (Burrus and Roberts, 2012).

4.4.1.2 GRADE REPETITION SHAME

The majority (nine) of participants repeated a grade at least once after they had failed. They also indicated that repeating a grade at the same school was embarrassing and pushed them to drop out.

Learning with junior learners was described as something that damaged participants' self-esteem and destroyed one's social status at the school.

I am thinking that i am old now to repeat that class. I was very very active so everyone will look at me...talking false things about me gossiping. I was very tired of repeating the standard with other kids so i drop. I hate the fact that i fail and now i am repeating the grade...better i must go to work (Asanda, female, 29).

The thing of repeating the same grade totally drops your self-esteem because the next learners that are coming from the previous grade will be the same class as you, the learners we left two years ago. The teachers were like expecting the repeater of the class to know everything and to be top in class. If there is homework, they would expect me to do all the correction in front and the first person they ask questions it's you in the class (Sibo, female, 23).

they said I must repeat again and I said I can't repeat in the same school unless they are going to take me to a private school and they said that they can't do that because they didn't have money...I said I am going to study with these kids!? I can't do that. I felt very painful...being in school with small kids and you are older makes me feel shy because kids can be clever too much than me (Zimbini, female, 20).

Whilst the majority of learners indicated that they were doing well in their grades before they decided to drop out, two-thirds repeated a grade at least once, an indication of struggling academically. This is in line with the view by Strassburg, Meny-Gilbert, and Russel (2010:69) that "10% of learners across all grades are three or more years outside the age-grade norm". Although the idea of repeating grades is grounded in good reasoning, the majority of learners were more worried about their peers' perceptions, something to be expected at these teenage years. Some also added that their educators also expected them to know everything, put them under immense pressure. They viewed repeating a grade as a public humiliation. This is consistent with the view by Crouch and Vinjevoold (2006) that grade repetition embarrasses the older repeater which increases frustration and disengagement from school thus leading to dropping out. This also tallies with the views by Branson, Hofmeyr and Lam (2013) that being an older struggling learner who is repeating could be a powerful indicator of a potential dropout.

The majority of the participants had not repeated in lower grades. This could be either because they were doing well in class as explained or because the system was not very strict in lower grades. Grade repetition offered them a chance to get back on track. However, consistent with

DBE (2011), continuous repetition coupled with poor performances send a message of failure to the learners thus leading to dropping out in order to save further embarrassment. The problem of learner dropout results in illiterate, unskilled and unemployable young people trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and social exclusion (Cloete, Wissink and De Conning, 2006). According to the theory of planned behavior, such subjective norms on learners' capabilities as reinforced by other peers and teachers when they see them as academically struggling, can further contribute to learners' perceptions that they are failures. The end result is that they will seek to do something they feel they are good at, thus dropping out of school.

4.4.1.3 PREGNANCY AND THE BURDEN OF TAKING CARE OF OWN CHILDREN

Out of the 13 female participants, three did not have children. Of the ten who had children, seven (70%) were pregnant whilst still at school. The majority of the female learners (60%) had their first child between the ages of 16 and 18 when they were between grades 9 and 11. As shown in Table 3, only two of the ten female learners who have children indicated that they only became pregnant after they had already left school, unlike the two male participants who only became fathers at age 23, long after leaving school.

Table 3.

Variable		Number of learners	Percentage of learners
Age when female learner had first child (years)	16-18	6	60
	19-21	3	30
	22+	1	10
When female learner had first child	Grade 9	4	40
	Grade 10	1	10
	Grade 11	3	30
	Grade 12	0	0
	After school	2	20
	No child	3	30

All of the seven female participants who were pregnant whilst at school managed to continue going to school after falling pregnant and were aware of their right to education even when they were pregnant. However, they all conceded that the embarrassment that came with being a teenage mother and the harsh realities of juggling motherhood and being a learner were too unbearable a burden to continue going to school. They indicated they had dropped out of school for reasons

emanating from teenage pregnancy and related responsibilities. Having disappointed their guardians by falling pregnant in the first place, the majority of respondents added that their guardians, the majority of them were single parents and or people already financially struggling, did not support and encourage the learners to continue with their studies after falling pregnant. Some guardians were even portrayed as vengeful.

Now I was a parent that time so it forced me to be at home and work so that I can look after my child and look after me because dad told me straight that he won't pay my fees and he won't buy me clothes. I was like homeless. And even at home it was "hello, hie" and they leave me (Noxy, female, 31).

The time I dropped out of school I was pregnant and having two kids, they are twins. My mother made the decision because she said I am not going to take care of your kids. "So you see that you are old enough to have kids so just be it, they are your kids". My mother could have supported me and said that you must go to school (Lulama, female, 24).

It was very embarrassing even for myself. You can see some learners can look at you and see if they are talking about you...So my mother sometimes she would say it's my fault, it's my choice. I caused this problem for myself so I must deal with it. So I have to look after those cousins and my child. I decided to stay at home. My child was still little, he was also in need of care...if i did not have a child, i would have gone forward with school (Kholeka, female, 29).

Participants indicated that the added motherhood responsibility meant that they had to ensure that their children were looked after when they were at school, a costly and emotionally draining responsibility for the unprepared single young mothers. The situation was compounded by the lack of support from both the young fathers who had impregnated them and the learners' parents or guardians. Many participants argued that they did not have anyone to leave their newly born babies with. Day care centres were out of their financial reach. In an urban setting in which the learners' parents had their daily commitments, the learners soon learnt the hard way that juggling the two roles was no child's play. The babies also increased financial pressure, a responsibility the teenage mothers soon realized could not be passed on to their guardians.

The high numbers of pregnant learners is in line with the DBE (2013) report in which a total of 99 041 pupils had fallen pregnant in 2013, up from 81 678 pupils who had fallen pregnant in the previous schooling year. The findings clearly highlight Chigona's (2007:159) view that without social, emotional and economic support and encouragement from people around them, teenage

mothers face a daunting challenge completing their studies, let alone producing good academic results. Such circumstances trap teenagers into dropping out of school which further reduce their opportunities for a better future (Sigei and Tikoko, 2014). This tallies with the social exclusion theory in which learners' exclusion in the educational dimension further creates barriers of entry into other social and economic realms, as stated by Sen (2010). According to this theory, the learners' backgrounds and experiences disproportionately put them in situations that make finishing school exceedingly difficult. Poor financial resources to help navigate such social challenges like teenage pregnancies further excludes such learners from academic participation as propounded by the social exclusion theory.

4.4.1.4 ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The majority (60%) of participants indicated that they were drinking alcohol and or abusing drugs during their school days. The frequency of such alcohol and substance abuse ranged from daily to weekend consumption. Such abuse of alcohol and substance abuse happened in or around the centers of learning, including in school toilets and playground areas.

I was so much into partying and drinking. I started when i was in grade 9 and then we bunked we went to one of my friends' house. She had money muza and she bought us meat and alcohol and we were drinking alcohol and smoking (Sibo, female, 23).

..going to school drunk just like that. My friend smoked weed but I was never into that...The guy who I was dating used to sell cigarettes. Even during break time I would go there and ask him. And then for alcohol we put money together. Someone who looks bigger, older could go buy and we would drink in the school toilet (Micky, female, 16).

I was doing that every day. Then we are high when the teacher talks we laugh at her...taking dagga mixing with soup and then cook it when we were doing grade 11. My friend would come at 4 o'clock and then she will call us and then we wake up and then we will go to another friend and cook it when her mother go to work (Mona, female, 23).

Participants indicated that they financed their activities from the pocket money they saved, money swindled from their guardians, doing paid piece jobs, gangster activities and from boyfriends. What was apparent is that they largely managed to hide this from the people they lived with for very long periods, which can be understood from the fact that their guardians paid very little

attention to them, academic and otherwise. This left a huge vacuum and opportunity for them to be mischievous without being noticed.

Of the nine learners involved in substance abuse, all of them had repeated a grade at least once. This shows a clear relationship between substance abuse in school and academic performance which eventually leads to learner drop out. The majority of the learners who abused substances also bunked classes whilst the majority of the female learners ended up pregnant. This tally with the assertion by Aloise-Young and Chavez (2002) that there is co-occurrence of misbehaviors and learner disengagement. In addition, all of the learners who were once suspended at school reported abusing alcohol and or drugs at school. These findings concur with the view by Reckson and Becker (2005: 114) that learners who exhibit one form of misbehavior also exhibit others. Alcohol and substance abuse, as argued by Aloise-Young and Chavez (2002) resulted in school dropout.

4.4.1.5 OTHER LEARNER INDISCIPLINE AND DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR

Most learners admitted that a lot of their misbehavior inside and outside school went unpunished as they managed to hide it from school authorities and their less concerned parents/guardians. They also indicated that their own indiscipline eventually influenced their decision to quit. Four participants admitted that they had been suspended from school at least once for various offences including substance abuse, violent behavior, being a nuisance, gambling, theft, disruptive behavior and bunking classes, among other reasons.

We put money together and one of my friends go to a bottle store and bought a bottle of brandy. They found it in my bag... then I pepper sprayed the whole school the children were coughing and coughing. I could say I did it just for fun. I knew that they would cough and their eyes would swell and burn but I didn't know it would make someone that sick. After 5 days suspension I go with my parents and they said another 5 days that's when I decided no I won't go back to school. If they (parents) were very strict I would say I wouldn't want to think of dropping out of school (Micky, female, 16).

They were teasing me like why are you always sitting alone and all those stuff they were picking. They continued pestering and pestering me so I got into a fight and I ended up hurting him and I was suspended for a month (Anelisa, female, 22).

I don't think it will pass two weeks without the principal calling my mother. I was naughty at school, stealing learners' calculators, wearing skirts. I would steal from

other class or a friend of mine would steal from another class and then we swap (Steve, male, 31).

The participants' responses showed that their delinquent behaviors caused poor academic performances in class and resulted in them dropping out of school. This is consistent with the view by Kokko et al. (2006) that school misbehaviors are associated with lower grades and dropping out as these delinquents are the most disengaged learners in class.

Half of participants indicated they were not attending classes every day and would occasionally bunk classes or were late comers. Whilst there were many reasons the participants were not attending class on a regular basis, bunking lessons became an indicator of potentially dropping out.

I failed because I was not attending that much of classes because I was busy fighting. I didn't want to attend first period; i am always late...exams i write only three or two because if they know that you are going to school to write the exams, they would wait at the gate, you can't go in (Steve, male, 31).

I did not attend classes. I could stay outside or stay in the toilet with my friends. My friend was staying alone and we used to go to her house during lunch time, watching movies (Sibo, female, 23).

We would wonder in the park. There is a park near our school at the back of our school. We always sit on the park that's where we always sit when we not in school or bunking school and some would smoke there (Micky, female, 16).

The findings show that some learners tried by all means to avoid attending classes, which they viewed as boring and unhelpful. This absenteeism further jeopardised the learners' chances of improving their grades and enjoying class. Blum, Beuhring and Rinehart (2000) argue that the more absent one is in class, the less they will achieve as they miss out on important information and further trail behind. The findings concur with the view by Finn, Fish, and Scott (2008) who argue that this tendency of bunking classes is a gradual process of student disengagement, which results in dropping out of school altogether. The more disengaged to school matters the learner is by not attending some classes, the easier it is to stop altogether.

These findings reveal that dropping out of school is a process rather than an event. Although daily learner attendance is a parent's responsibility, as stipulated by The Policy on Learner Attendance

(2010:7), bunking school usually happened without the parent's/guardian's knowledge. The participant thus ended up wasting the time they should be in class by doing some mischievous acts like alcohol drinking, substance abuse, gang activities, entertaining boyfriends and just hanging out with bad company. The consequences of such bad behaviour worsened the learners' academic progress as argued by Kokko et al. (2006).

However, it would be unfair to attribute the high learner dropout rates to purely personal factors whilst ignoring a myriad of structural barriers impeding the learners from completing school. Not all the mischief can be solely attributed to personal factors. Some of them were triggered by underlying social and economic problems at home. This means that there are structural problems that influenced their decision to quit school.

4.4.2 SCHOOLING FACTORS

Other learners also indicated that they dropped out of school as a result of the negative educational factors. These include the long distances to school, poor teacher support, unsafe school environments, poor teaching methods and educational policies.

4.4.2.1 SCHOOL SYSTEMS CONTRIBUTING TO HIGH LEARNER DROP OUT

Some participants cited long distances to school and poor school control systems as factors that contributed to their decision to drop out.

4.4.2.1.1 LONG DISTANCES TO SCHOOL

Almost half of the participants indicated that the distances to their schools were more than 45 minutes on foot. Whilst many participants did not complain about this as a strong factor that influenced their decision to drop out of school, they made it clear that the distances were long.

Maybe let me say it takes one hour 30 minutes for us to go to school on foot. Even our teachers used to ride bicycles. We were passing 2 locations, jumping this location and that location to the half of the next (Noxy, female, 31).

Let's say forty five minutes away. We were crossing over railway line. We were not using the bridge so I wouldn't say i was able to travel from the other side to the other side so that's when I dropped out of school. If my mom was still employed at that time it would have been possible for me but she wasn't employed. I needed transport to travel from home to school because we were crossing over from Philippi to Samora (Aneliswa, female, 27).

Although participants indicated that their schools were some distance from their homes, the majority did not cite the long distances as a factor that contributed to their decision to drop out. They, however, stated that it was their poor economic position that made these distances long. In an urban setting with good transport network, participants argued that it is the lack of money for transport fares that exacerbated the problem.

4.4.2.1.2 UNSAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AT SCHOOL

One third of respondents indicated they did not feel safe at school which ultimately influenced their decision to drop out of school. Gangsterism, bullying and violence among learners based on cultural/ traditional differences were cited as incidents of great safety concern.

I hated school because at school there is bullsh that leads other people to leave school...When you report bullying at school, they ask for evidence and there is never evidence of bullying. And I really feel like schools are failing kids at this one (Anelisa, female 22).*

There were gangsters at school. Someone will come into the class, fight with you, get stabbed. Like those things used to happen back then. I mean from inside the school by one of the learners. Sometimes they would come to class and even bully some of the kids. Nothing was done really (Busi, female, 28).

They put their knives out there. They came in that time when we were studying with other classmates. I wasn't feeling safe because the time i am going out, the gate is open and those boys are getting inside. I go and talk to the principal and then he talks to us that this thing must stop in the school...They didn't listen, i tried but nothing happened (Abo, male, 24).

Most participants indicated that they did not feel safe at school due to gang violence that usually erupted spilling into the school environment. This further strengthens the view that Philippi is one of the most dangerous areas in Cape Town. More so, Philippi is notorious for gangsterism and territorial fighting for control. In fact, some of the learners preferred to go to schools outside Philippi where they said schools were better. The learners who came from other parts felt unsafe and as they were easily targeted.

"You think you are better than us. You know that those guys can come and shoot you there in lower Crossroads and then we won't say anything because you are no longer part of us". That's when I started to become one of the members of the gansterisms in Langa...started not to go to school because it was difficult to go to school because the guys we were attacking each other...We used also to go there to make a chaos. They come to Langa so it was this thing we are blocking each other to go to school (Steve, male, 31).

..giving a better education, not studying in my location, maybe going to coloured school or white school because there the transport taking you to school earlier and then coming back later so you don't have friends and you don't see these things (Asanda, female, 29).

Such targeting of learners coming from other areas forced them to join gangs in their neighbourhood for protection. This only created further problems due to the gang fighting in the area. This tally with the assertion by Block (2009) that there is social pressure and a level of attraction in joining gangs in township schools. As a result, schools have become recruiting zones for gangsters, who are also idolised by some young people in the community that is short of positive role models. Their often flashy lives in poor townships thus attracts young learners and are seen as alternative employment, especially given the high unemployment rates in the country for poorly skilled unqualified young people.

More difficult for learners and teachers alike is that they did not think much has been done to combat the situation. As argued by Reddy and Sinha (2010), these unsafe school environments characterized by high tensions and school disruptions in which learners' lives are threatened cause learners to drop out for their own safety. Being raised in such an environment places structural barriers on what one can achieve as well as the options available to him or her, as argued by the social exclusion theory.

4.4.2.2 POOR EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES AND TEACHER SUPPORT

Although a few participants indicated that their teachers were more supportive than their parents, that they provided the necessary academic and emotional support and could not be blamed for their decision to drop out, the majority of participants explained that their educators could have done more.

The teachers were the ones who were making me feel like having a low self-esteem. They were not trying to understand my situation. The relationship wasn't good especially to those teachers that was teaching me the subjects I was failing (Sibo, female, 23).

Some of the teachers back then i would say they were racist, you could not go to a teacher and open up...Other teachers too, they will only help the coloureds (Busi, female, 28).

I was bad in Afrikaans and I did try to explain to them that it was my first time learning Afrikaans. I was learning Xhosa and Sotho only at my previous school but there you have to learn Afrikaans. That teacher used to be rude and they don't like anyone who do not understand. So that's why he don't like me (Nosi, female, 19).

Some participants revealed that some teachers were judgmental, insensitive to the learners' plight and racist while some put more pressure on repeaters to outperform the non-repeaters, failure of which resulted in learner embarrassment. Some participants mentioned that their schools were far too backward compared to Models B and C schools in which there were better resources, like laptops, which made learning more interesting. Whitbourne (2002) echoes similar sentiments and contends that there is a relationship between resources and teachers' professional commitment on one side and student engagement on the other side. Whitebourne (2002) adds that those good teachers who have access to more resources, demonstrate sensitivity, professional attitude, encourage learners, and understand learners' problems and their outside classroom circumstances create a positive educational environment which results in higher student engagement, class attendances and better grades. Such learners exposed to such high quality teaching are less likely to drop out than those in impoverished schools, like in the researched area.

The high teacher-learner ratios in most of Philippi schools made quality teaching difficult for educators, resulting in learners' frustration. Unlike schools in wealthy areas, these school teachers face many resource challenges and work with minimal resources which affect the quality of their teaching. Participants' views that schools should be made more interesting tally with the engagement theory which posits that schools should embrace technology-based teaching and learning methods in order to make learning less boring (Berger, 2012). The current techno-savvy generation prefers that the education system utilize modern teaching methods. The use of technology and captivating projects with practical, real world application rather than mere theoretical studies thus increase student engagement and reduce dropout rates.

Improving the human resources capacity of schools, developing schools' infrastructure and learning environments will thus increase student engagement and reduce dropouts. Given the apartheid history of segregatory development through government structures and strategic disinvestment in townships (Adlard, 2009), Philippi schools are generally under resourced and have poor infrastructure. This concurs with Sen's (2012) views that learners drop out because of

structural factors of segregation. Berger (2012) argues that prolonged experience of discriminatory behavior, such as the legacy of apartheid in Philippi schools, usually results in those structurally excluded retiring to their fate and stop attempting to be included. Berger (2012) thus argues that just because the excluded choose to drop out of school does not make the decision voluntary as this is due to structural impediments.

4.4.3 STRUCTURAL FACTORS

To understand fully the causes and processes of learner drop out, it is imperative to understand all the dynamics around the learner as the phenomenon cannot be understood outside the learner's environment. Participants cited structural problems that denied them the opportunity to complete Matric. The social, cultural, economic and educational conditions of the learner, though difficult to clearly separate, constrained the learners from completing their studies as discussed below.

4.4.3.1 SOCIAL FACTORS

These factors contributed to the exclusion of certain learners from the school system. Had it not been because of the social constraints beyond the participants' control, as discussed below, some learners indicated that they would have completed school.

4.4.3.1.1 LACK OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AT HOME

Whom the learners lived with and what kind of help they got proved to be an important contributing factor towards their decision to drop out. Of the fifteen participants, only three lived with both biological parents during their schooling days before they dropped out. The majority lived with relatives, friends or their single mothers who barely offered any social support or protection from outside influences.

Then that's the year that they raped me. And I was like dad I can't concentrate at school and then he would say to me, "what must I do. Did I say that man must rape you?" The only thing that I needed from him is that "don't drop out of school, I will make means that I will pay fees for you. They were happy for me when I dropped out because they know that they will have someone to wash their clothes and do everything for them" (Noxy, female, 31).

She was not treating me the same way she treats her daughters because I was suffering...sometimes I went to school and I am hungry so I can't concentrate at

school when I am hungry. Sometimes my aunt chases me away. If I ask like for example aunt I don't have shoes or socks to go to school. She would say, 'Where do you think I get the money? I have 2 daughters that I have to support. So you go out find a place where you will find them'. If you don't get the love at home and you are not treated well at home that is the other thing that would make you drop out of school (Vaty, female, 25).

I don't get lunch money, my cousins do get it. Sometimes when I come back from school, I don't eat because there is no food to eat because my cousins eat all the food, they come first then i come last home because I took a train...That's when I decided maybe if I work for myself and get what I want in life, I will make my own decision (Anelisa, female, 22).

Lack of social support at home was one of the biggest causes of learner dropout. This included the manner they were treated at home and their relationship with their guardians or parents. Many participants indicated that there were no proper communication channels and they did not feel comfortable sharing their problems with people at home. This is also related to and evidenced by the fact that sexually abused participants did not tell the people they lived with what had happened to them as they did not feel they would get the kind of support they wanted. This lack of social support means learners carried emotional baggage which affected their concentration levels in class.

This resonates with the engagement theory in which a lack of social support from parents on learners' lives can cause disengagement in their lives. Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison (2006) argues that, in general, parents who do not engage with learners' lives and do not provide the necessary structures to ensure that the learners succeed significantly contribute towards learners' disengagement and eventually dropping out. The findings showed the positive correlation between learners' engagement and their parents' involvement in learners' social lives. This supports the engagement theory in which an indifference to educational matters and a demonstrated lack of interest in both the educational processes and outcomes of learners from both parents and teachers can be transferred to the learners. Higher parent and teacher engagement with the learner's education partnered with higher student engagement with their school could increase the likelihood of learners completing high school.

These findings validate the Theory of Planned Behavior that says reduced expectations to finish school decreases the chances that learners will finish school (Burrus and Roberts, 2012). The fact that many people around the learners who dropped out had not completed Matric is a de-motivating factor that reduces one's chances of completing high school. According to this theory, learners who live with parents who are high achievers and have completed Matric will most likely finish school as Matric graduating is the norm rather than the exception (Burrus and Roberts, 2012). Such high standards to excel, notably absent in many of these participants' lives, are a great factor in encouraging learners to reach their full potential, even amidst notable challenges. Given the low socio-economic status and educational qualifications of the majority of people in Philippi as argued by Anderson, Azari, and van Wyk (2009), the parents' lack of educational attainment became the yardstick of comparison for the learners and dropping out of school became normal.

4.4.3.1.2 LACK OF ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE AT HOME

The majority of participants revealed that their guardians did not discuss issues around education, academic progress, homework assistance or school work assistance. Many added that they were expected to be grateful that someone took care of them without adding the burden of being assisted with their academic studies or homework, a responsibility that squarely rested with them.

I just have to make my own homework, myself. No she never asked me that because she was not interested in my education (Kholeka, female, 29).

I tell the teachers that I came for me because my uncle was always working...he is a drinker. He was only asking those things in December when the report is coming...He was not minding about schools... he was not asking for proof (Abo, male, 24).

She never asked me why I did not go to school. She has never cared about me at all...if i ask her, "aunt can you help me with this?" She would say "I am very tired I can't do that. I am working so hard for you to eat so i can't help with your homework too" (Vaty, female, 25).

Participants related stories of hardship in which their parents/guardians were always too busy to help them, left home in the early hours of the days and came back late. They also highlighted the struggles they faced in single headed families, usually characterized by absent fathers. A key issue was how many fathers were described as not supportive and helpful in giving their children social

support. Those lucky enough to have fathers indicated that their presence did not make things any easier for them.

Sometimes our father used to say you are not going to school now, we are going to town and make some money. My father is a farming guy so he used to take cabbage, spinach and carrots from his garden and he would say we are going to town and we are going to sell them... I have to stay away from school because of my father...So when I come from school and my father sees me he say ok just drop your bag, take off your uniform we just want to be somewhere. I would say “daddy I have homework” and he will hit me and say “close your mouth and go” (Noxy, female, 31).

...she (mother) fell sick and then she died when I was doing grade 10. And then I tell my father he must buy me books for school and he told me that he need to support her girlfriend then I dropped out of school. My father when he had that girlfriend he never looked back for me (Mona, female, 23).

The other thing that made me to drop, is my mother is a single parent. All the other years I grew without knowing him (father). I know that he was my father, he was staying in Langa there...sorry for crying like this. I didn't have a father figure (Steve, male, 31).

Many of them also indicated that their guardians were either too busy to attend or were not interested in attending parent meetings at school and showed little to no interest in their academic developments. Some participants indicated that they ended up asking strangers or neighbours to come and attend parents' meetings at school for them.

My mother used to be interested but my father is that old father that tells her that you are not going there; if the teachers want to say something to you they must come here (Noxy, female,31).

My mother is always at work so I will go out. There is a place called Leaks there and ask whoever to come and represent me at school. They will always see different faces and ask which is which? Who is your real mother, because my mother will never come (Steve, male, 31).

My mother fell sick and then she died when I was doing grade 10. My father was already staying in PE. I would ask the neighbour. I would ask that mama because I was her child's friend (Mona, female, 23).

Although the lack of parental involvement in learners' educational matters cut across many divides, it was clear that it was exacerbated by many factors including the relationship between the learner and the guardian. It can therefore be argued that the dysfunctional family structure,

especially the little help from absent fathers was also a contributing factor. Participants from single headed structures encountered many challenges as the remaining parent or guardian failed to cope with the demands of the learners' educational affairs. This is in line with the view by Bowen, Bowen and Ware (2002) that learners' household space, environments, and neighborhood social characteristics place significant limitations on learners' academic lives. As argued by Anderson, Azari, and van Wyk (2009), learners' social lives, their conditions at home, as well as how they are treated are issues that surface in the child's academic life at school. This highlights the importance of a holistic understanding of their decision to drop out.

Not monitoring learners' academic progress and not checking if they had completed their homework caused learners to slack off academically, resulting in poor academic performances. Interestingly, social networking applications allowed some learners to get support from people who lived very far away from them. A few indicated that they sought assistance from neighbours or relatives they did not necessarily live with.

The lack of parental support in learners' educational matters showed how disengaged the parents were in educational matters. This contributed to the learners' negative attitude towards educational matters. Upon realizing their parents' lack of interest in their education, many learners lost appreciation of the value and importance of education and dropping out became an option whenever they faced challenges. This is line with the engagement theory in which parental involvement in a student's education plays an important role for a learner's success in school (White and Kelly, 2010). Such social structural barriers echo the social exclusion theory as being excluded from the opportunity to graduate from high school may lead to under or unemployment which may in turn lead to economic impoverishment that may, in turn, lead to other deprivations (Sen, 2010).

4.4.3.1.3 PEER PRESSURE

Half of participants indicated that they dropped out of school because of influence from the bad company they kept. They stated that in an attempt to fit in a group or be seen as "cool" by their friends, they ended up in delinquent behavior that eventually influenced their decision to drop out.

Such mischief included alcohol and substance abuse, having boyfriends, the majority of which were already out of school, a life of partying and other delinquent behaviors.

My boyfriend was not at school and then we do some wrong stuff. Honestly he was also a thug. Last year i heard that he is in jail. If I go to his house I couldn't go to school tomorrow because I slept and he doesn't care I sleep. And he influenced me with alcohol. When I got that boyfriend I didn't have time to go to school, to do my homework because I am busy running after this guy (Vaty, female, 25).

I was seventeen years that time and we have friends. I started dating so i don't concentrate at school sometimes. I started partying, drinking with my friends. So I failed because of that (Asanda, female, 29).

That's where I met those girls and they had a group called "Attitude girls" and then went to them. Many people did warn me saying "no this is not good friends for you". I could see them with cool guys and stuff. I did the stuff that my friends did; never go to class or never do my homework. They were the ones influencing me. I never drank before but then I saw my friends doing it then I thought what if I don't do it i won't be cool as my friends...They were the first ones to drop out. They always told me to drop out but I tried hanging on. I also dropped out. Most of them are now pregnant living with their boyfriends. They have children (Micky, female, 16).

The findings reveal that the majority of learners were influenced by their peers and most female learners were influenced by their boyfriends who themselves had dropped out of school. The learners revealed that they wanted to fit in the group and ended up doing things that their peers expected of them. It became clear that partying, substance abuse, bunking classes and other delinquencies had a strong relationship to the company one kept. These findings echo the TPB in which social pressure from people whose opinions are seen as important has a significant influence on behavior and actions (Ajzen, 2002). As argued by the theory, conformity to group dynamics based on subjective norms can jeopardise learners' educational outcomes and processes, especially where there is little parental guidance and control or the non-existence of good models, as was the case for the majority of the participants. This shows that learners' behaviors were not only influenced by their attitudes about school but also by subjective norms and pressures on what the learners thought were expected of them, as argued by (Burrus and Roberts, 2012).

4.4.3.1.4 SEXUAL ABUSE

It was disheartening to realise that six of the participants wept during interviews retelling the abusive conditions they had endured. More worrying is that four of the learners had experienced

sexual abuse and or rape, the majority of which had never sought justice, nor shared their horrendous ordeals with anyone. These abuses caused tremendous emotional suffering, with some having conceived from the sexual rape incidents.

I was raped by his father when I was 19 years old and I still have to look after these children that I have so it hurts me. It hurts me when they ask me “mummy where is daddy? Is daddy alive or where is he?” It brings back the memories when I have to explain what happened. It is the reason that caused me to drop at school (Noxy, female, 31).

Then they forced us, gun pointed us and they took us to their house. They raped us so from that day, I have never been myself even at school. I couldn't concentrate at school. Then my friend committed suicide...so I decided to leave school (Vaty, female, 25).

I got pregnant when I was 16. I was raped by my uncle. Then after that I didn't tell my family because he threatened to rape my younger sister. He is like “I am going to rape your sister if you don't give me what I want. You are the eldest you must protect your sister”...then he would grab me, push me down and then he would do the things that he used to do. It's either he took my shoes or he took my books so that I cannot go to school so he can carry on doing the same things he did. He did carry on even after I had given birth to my child. I decided let me just drop out and just stay at home. I wasn't in the right mind at school at that time (Anelisa, female, 22).

Sexual violation and abuse of learners in their neighbourhood was one of the surprising findings of this research. These traumatised participants indicated how they were manipulated and threatened into silence by the abusers they lived with. This further highlights some of the dangers that children who are raised by poor single parents experience. The lack of supervision did not only promote the learners' wayward and delinquent behavior, putting them in harm's way, but it also gave room for abusers to target unsupervised children without raising alarm bells.

One teenage girl was raped by strangers whilst coming from an excessive late night beer drinking spree. This could be seen both as an indication of poor parental supervision and a reminder of the violent and unsafe nature of Philippi as a neighbourhood. This is consistent with the view by Adlard (2009) who argued that Philippi, just like the rest of the Cape Flats, is characterized by high crime rates, including violent crimes, sexual crimes and substance abuse. Such participants who were traumatized ended up engaging in other delinquent behaviors as coping mechanisms. Some ended up drinking alcohol and abusing substances in order to forget the experiences whilst

others found solace and comfort in boyfriends who took advantage of and promised to fill the obvious love vacuum by giving romantic attention to the broken hearted, alas with worse consequences. These unfortunate circumstances caused them to further disengage from their academic work, bunk classes and academically perform poorly, eventually dropping out. Such an array of social complexities acted as barriers that inhibited the sexually abused learners from enjoying the same opportunities as the rest of the society, in line with the social exclusion theory as advanced by Sen (2010).

4.4.3.1.5 POOR LIVING CONDITIONS

The majority of participants indicated that they lived under difficult conditions that were not conducive for studying. A fifth of respondents lived in shacks whilst the majority lived in brick houses. Three fifths did not have nearby bathrooms/toilets nor did not they have their own rooms. Two fifths lived in households without running water while a third did not have electricity which is crucial for studying.

My mother's house is three rooms and in our room we are eight. So sometimes when we want to study things were not right they would be making noise and then we have to work up early in the morning and go to school without washing. It was not good condition for learners. There was no electricity, we used candles and sometimes lantels...we had to go maybe from here to Salt River to get some water, maybe 20 to 30 minutes (Noxy, female, 31).

We are living in a shack. I am living with my aunt and her two daughters...it's only one room; the kitchen, the bed, everything is there. My relationship with my aunt is not that proper because at the end of the day I am not her daughter (Vaty, female, 25)

The findings revealed that the majority of learners experienced marginalisation in terms of service delivery. A lot of learners came from households without access to piped water at their homes and relied on public taps. Poor sanitation and electricity problems in learner households were common themes. The electricity challenges echo the view by Stats SA (2011) that half of Philippi residents do not have electricity. This aligns with the contention by Anderson, Azari, and van Wyk (2009) that lacking basic services interfere with learners' educational performances. Ndlovu (2008) adds that electricity is linked to educational success not only because it provides lighting for studying at home but also provides warmth, makes life easier for learners and improves the quality of their life.

4.4.3.2 CULTURAL FACTORS

Some learners indicated that cultural duties and expectations contributed to their decision to drop out. These included forced marriages, leaving school to train as a sangoma and male traditional initiation practices. Two learners indicated that they left school in order to train as a sangoma, a calling they said could not be ignored. Another participant dropped out of school after she was forced into marriage to the man who had raped her.

I didn't want to accept the calling. So I got sick I couldn't see the board, I could sit and feel dizzy sometimes that I ended up hating going to school because when I get there I get sick. So I decided to quit. I had to go for the ritual. When your ancestors want you to do something and you don't want to go, they will make sure that you go (Busi, female, 28).

I was 19 years old...so in our culture I was forced to be with him and his culture because he is a Venda and we are Swatis so our culture forced us to be together even though he raped me (Noxy, female, 31).

Initiation for learners brought an expectation that the traditional graduands were now “men” rather than “boys” and they had to do “manly stuff” including looking after themselves and earning their money. This created a conundrum in which some of the ways the two male learners used to get money, including illegal means, did not tally with student life forcing them to drop out. The enhanced sense of importance also created conflicts, spilling into violence and gangsterism, between those who attended initiation at the mountains and those who had not or were in different groups.

After initiation, there is this thing that you are no longer a child. You must stand on your own. Now you are a man you can't go to your mother and say mum I am hungry because even you feel ashamed that you are asking bread from your mother. It's like that mentality has been like there for a long time. You must go out there and hustle. She is going to say haibo you are old enough, why you always come and ask for toiletries, roll on, whatever? So you are also deciding what's the use of going to school? I will just tell her I don't want to go to school and yet there is nothing to say because she can't beat me now because I am a man (Steve, male, 31).

There is language they were talking there in the bush. So we also came like in the streets when we get together. We also are doing that language so that we can know each other. It's part of culture. When its break time they are doing that initiation talking. But others they don't want to be known. So it's like a group but they are

also fighting. I was trying to avoid those things. They were going to stab me because i don't want to do that thing because they were carrying the knives (Abo, male, 24).

Initiation is a cultural practice in which young men go to the mountains or bushes, to be circumcised. They temporarily erect shelters away from the community. They are culturally taught their responsibilities as they transition into manhood. Whilst the cultural practice, a rite of passage into adulthood, is generally a good cultural practice, it comes with its own challenges. Upon return, the young men ended up demonstrating that they were no longer boys in wrong ways such as violence and not listening to instructions. The idea of what maturity entails became a subject of great dispute between initiates and those who did not attend these ceremonies, usually resulting in misunderstandings and rivalry. Some participants also stated that even parents changed the way they treated them, with some expecting these initiates to take care of themselves financially as well. The pressure to transition resulted in some exploring delinquent behaviors, eventually influencing them to drop out of school.

Culture thus acted as a structural barrier to completing high school. As argued by Cloete, Wissink and De Conning, (2006), dropping out of school creates a pool of illiterate and unskilled young people who are unemployed and unemployable. Cultural expectations also contributed in creating subjective norms and pressures to behave in certain ways that ultimately negatively influenced some learners' chances of completing school. Such cultural expectations from significant others resulted in some youths engaging in behavior inconsistent with learners who wanted to complete Matric. This relates to the TPB in which people's behavior are also shaped by the "social pressure one feels to perform the behavior" in order to attain approval of other people viewed as important (Burrus and Roberts, 2012:6).

4.4.3.3 ECONOMIC FACTORS

Some participants also explained how their poor economic statuses played a major role in them dropping out of school. They indicated that they dropped out due to poverty and the shame of deprivation and scarcity. Despite the majority of schools in Philippi being no-school fees schools that also provide textbooks, participants indicated that their guardians could no longer afford to buy the necessary materials like school uniforms, food and money for transport to school, among other financial needs.

At school there are children that are silly who are like, “look at your shoes, look at your jersey, why are you so dirty?” They don’t understand that I don’t have money to buy stuff like jersey school shoes and that was so painful to me. So they were insulting me in front of others. Aunt’s daughter sometimes helped me because aunt sometimes bought her two or three skirts, jerseys or T-shirts; she would share with me. I didn’t mind even if it was in bad condition. Then I found this boyfriend that is doing for me everything and on the other hand sometimes he doesn’t want me to go to school... I thought before I need that support he gave me but now I understand that he was not good enough for me (Vaty, female, 25).

I see my friends have a lot of things. Me I don’t have like track suit, blazer and textbooks... if they have something and we don’t have that thing they will make a joke in the class and the class will laugh at you. Then I told myself no I will stay at home (Mona, female, 23).

My father said i am not going to pay fees for you and you know that I am not working and you are old now you need to work so that you can put bread on the table. We didn’t have money to pay the school fees and then I didn’t have uniform and I didn’t have shoes. I had to drop out and find some money so that I can pay school fees for my sisters and my brother. We used to share a uniform me and my cousin sisters (Noxy, female, 31).

Learners indicated that their economic position affected their concentration levels as they became the laughing stock in class, went to school hungry, poorly dressed and stood out in class as the most deprived. Some indicated that they walked long distances to school as they could not afford transport fees. It was also evident that the learners who came from poor backgrounds became more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation as they attempted to find ways of coping. Some got themselves into toxic romantic relationships with older boyfriends who temporarily cushioned them from their poor backgrounds. However, many of these boyfriends who dated school kids were school dropouts, gangsters, substance abusers, and people who did not encourage their girlfriends to attend school, often influencing them to bunk classes to spend time with them. This further left the girl learner more vulnerable. The situation was compounded by the fact that the parents or guardians socially neglected them.

This is in line with the views by Gustafsson (2012) and Strassburg, Meny-Gilbert, and Russel (2010) who argue that absence from schools can also be caused by financial constraints and costs involved in attending school. The findings concur with views by Prinsloo (2004) that poverty and economic hardships de-motivates learners and cause learners to doubt their academic capabilities

which feed into failure, delinquency and higher dropout rates. This is also consistent with the exclusion theory in which such structural economic issues involuntarily constrain the learner's ability to go to school (Sen, 2010). The parents' poor education and subsequent unemployment made it difficult for them to pay for their children's education. This locked the economically deprived learners into a vicious cycle of poverty characterised by vulnerabilities and domestic violence. As argued by the social exclusion theory, economic deprivations transcend into social and education exclusion which traps youths into future unemployment (Sen, 2010).

Despite dropping out of school to get employment, most of the participants were still unemployed. Only four participants were running their businesses. None of them were formally employed at the time the research was conducted. This supports the argument by McWhirter et al. (2007) that dropping out of school further puts one into dangers of unemployment and employment in lower level jobs with low salaries and job insecurity. For those who had been employed at some point after leaving school, they had been employed in lower level jobs as security guards, waiters, shop assistants and merchandisers as well as petrol attendants. The lack of job security tallies with Sen's (2010) assertion that structural barriers to education trap people into unemployment which reproduces poverty and inequality. This is consistent with the findings by StatsSA (2013) in which learners dropping out of school have increased the rate of the NEET in townships.

However, not all learners had legitimate or reasonable economic reasons for quitting school. In SA, including Philippi, there are no-fees schools in which government funds free education and the majority of the learning materials are also freely provided at the school. Many of these participants may have just used parents' poverty as an excuse. A closer look at some of the items that some participants dropped out of school because their parents/guardians could not afford to buy for them, like blazers and track suits, demonstrate that they were not basic educational materials. Committed learners could have completed school without them. This shows that the reasons learners dropped out of school were intertwined and complex.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented and analysed the research findings. The main themes, in line with the research objectives, sought to give more insight into why learners dropped out of school in

Philippi. Based on direct quotations from respondents, the individual, schooling and structural factors that may have contributed to learners' decision to drop out were discussed in connection with the literature review outlined in Chapter 2. Informed by these findings, the next chapter outlines this researcher's own conclusions and recommendations on how the problem of high learner drop out may be addressed.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In light of the high learner dropout rates in the country, this research sought to give insight into personal, schooling and structural factors behind this phenomenon in Philippi, a high density residential area in Cape Town. The research utilised a qualitative research methodology to gather and analyse the data in order to understand factors that contributed to the dropouts' decisions to drop out of school before completing Matric. A case study approach was used when face to face interviews were conducted with fifteen participants chosen using a snow balling sampling method in order to explore. This last chapter, informed by the findings and analysis from Chapter 4, explores the main conclusions derived from each objective. The chapter also makes recommendations to the various stakeholders.

5.2 MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Objective 1: To give insight into the personal factors which contribute to high dropout rates among high school learners in Philippi.

- Reasons for dropping school were so intertwined that it was not always easy to tell one factor that made the participant to drop out of school.
- Struggling academically and failing to meet expected academic competencies influenced some participants to drop out of school. Two thirds of learners had repeated a grade, an indication that their grades had not met required minimums for grade progression.
- Embarrassment caused by repeating a grade contributed to learners dropping out. The majority of participants described repeating a grade as degrading, frustrating and as something that damaged their self-esteem contributing to their decision to drop out. Repeating a grade also added more pressure on participants, from fellow peers and educators, who expected them to perform better than their younger non-repeating classmates. Failure to do this resulted in more humiliation in public which contributed to their decision to drop out. As learners, participants attached a lot of importance to what other learners thought about them, a teenage characteristic.
- Previously pardoned participants felt uncomfortable and embarrassed knowing they had only been allowed to progress to the next grade despite their failure only because they were older

rather than because they deserved it. This resulted in disengagement and contributed to their decision to drop out.

- Pregnancy and the added parenthood burden also contributed to some female learners' decision to drop out. A child needs attention, resources and money for day care centres or to pay people who look after them when their mothers are attending school. Juggling motherhood and being a full time learner proved difficult for all the seven previously pregnant learners, contributing to their decision to drop out in order to take care of their children.
- Alcohol and substance abuse was cited as a significant contributing factor towards learners' decisions to drop among participants. 60% of participants abused alcohol and other substances during their school going days. Substances abused included alcohol, illicit home brewed beer, dagga and many other unspecified drugs. Many participants admitted abusing substances at school premises. A life of partying, beer drinking and substance abuse distracted participants from doing school work resulting in them missing class, lacking interest in school work and eventually contributing to their decision to drop out.
- A few other participants indicated that they dropped out because they had been suspended from school. Delinquent behaviors included gangsterism, general nuisance at school, substance abuse and bullying other learners, which all had put their lives and other learners' lives at risk at schools. These delinquent behaviors were linked to other behaviors like bunking classes, struggling academically, grade repetition, and learner disengagement contributing to their decision to drop out.

Objective 2: To give insight into the schooling factors that contributes to a high dropout rate among high school learners in Philippi.

- School authorities' failure to provide a violence free school environment and address reported issues contributed to a third of learners dropping out. Participants did not feel safe at school due to bullying, school disruptions from other learners and gangsterism.
- Educational inefficiencies contributed to some learners' decision to drop out. Racist behavior, poor teacher support and unprofessionalism in which some teachers constantly humiliated academically struggling learners rather than encourage them, contributed to learners' lack of interest in their studies and eventually dropping out.

Objective 3: To give insight into the structural factors that contributes to a high dropout rate among high school learners in Philippi.

- Personal and schooling factors only partially gave insight into factors contributing towards the high dropout rates as other structural factors such as social, cultural and economic factors also influenced participants' decisions to drop out.
- Lack of social support at home contributed to the decision to drop out for the majority of learners. The environment at home was cited as not conducive for them to continue attending school. Most participants did not live with their biological parents. They lived with relatives who did not treat them well which affected their concentration at school and thus their school engagement and academic performance.
- Parents and guardians at home did not support learners at home by giving them the time and resources they needed for them to do well at school which resulted in them dropping out. With the majority coming from economic disadvantaged backgrounds, the parents did not provide them with proper school uniforms, study material, food and other basic necessities important for their academic success. This contributed to their decision to find income generating activities to sustain them, such as in gangsterism, relationships with boyfriends that could finance them. Such relations and associations with the wrong people badly influenced them, eventually influencing them to drop out of school.
- Coming from families of low socio-economic status, falling pregnant and child birth trapped the young mothers and forced them out of school. All seven of the participants who got pregnant at school remained single and received very little, if any, support from the fathers of their children and or their own families. The burden to provide for their young children forced them to drop out of school to take care and provide for their children.
- Peer pressure was a major cause of school dropout. Half of the participants indicated that the decision to drop out of school was influenced by their peers who had dropped out first or who later dropped out before completing Matric. Due to high poverty levels at home, participants relied on friends and older boyfriends for financial support. However, these peers and boyfriends, the majority of them being drop outs themselves, did not encourage them to complete school but instead influenced to drop out.
- Non-participation and lack of concern of parents and guardians in their children's academic work de-motivated learners, gave learners the impression that education was not very important,

and afforded them more time to do mischief resulting in their academic performances falling and eventually dropping out. The majority of parents did not take interest in their children's academic studies, did not help them with homework, did not attend parents' meetings and were always too busy to help them. Some learners ended up hiring people to come to parents' meetings or asked their friends' parents, a situation that gave learners the impression that education was not very important.

- Incidents of learners' sexual abuses and rape cases and the resultant emotional trauma contributed significantly towards participants dropping out of school. These gender based incidents emotionally damaged the teenage girls who became more disengaged and ended up abusing substances and joining gangs as a way of trying to cope with the trauma, eventually dropping out.
- Although learners stated that they lived in low quality houses that are not ideal for studying, very few blamed their choices to drop on these living conditions. Living in structures without running water, toilets, bathrooms, privacy, poorly ventilated and with limited electricity supply for lighting and cooking had little bearing on learners dropping out. Many actually hinted that they wanted to go to school and pass so that they could eventually escape these conditions of living in poor conditions.
- Cultural factors like culturally arranged marriages, attending traditional healer calling training, and going for weeks to the traditional male initiation school at the isolated places like bushes during school days, took the learner's focus away from schooling. There were also cultural misunderstandings and misinterpretations on what being a "man" meant for recently initiated school going male learners. Four participants dropped out of school due to these cultural practices whilst another participant ended up being married off to the man who had raped her as per culture thus causing untold emotional trauma that resulted in her dropping out.
- Economic reasons, mainly poverty and deprivation, forced the majority of learners to drop out. Participants were forced to drop out to find jobs as their parents could no longer afford school fees, uniforms and other school materials. They felt they needed to take care of themselves and other family members or their children. This was a common reason among repeaters who did not stay with their biological parents.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The research sought to add knowledge that would assist different stakeholders in promoting learner retention and reduce dropout rates. This section thus explores some of the ways in which this can be achieved.

5.3.1 THE LEARNERS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- The learners admitted that they had the responsibility of staying at school. To do so, there is need for more education, motivation, and support for learners, especially for learners showing withdrawal signs. This timely intervention will reinforce the importance and value of education even amidst all the challenges they will be facing.
- Greater collaborative campaigns should be made on open communication and dialogue with learners so that they have someone to talk to regarding the challenges they face. Cases of sexual abuses, or any other types of abuse against learners should not go unreported and unpunished.
- Parents' lack of social and financial support and disengagement were cited among main reasons for high school dropout rates. As such, concerted school efforts to encourage parents and guardians to be more active in their children's education may help. Educational campaigns to promote engagement and familiarity among parents, teachers and learners need to be reinforced through organising school events in which parents and teachers forge relationships and share information that could be helpful in enlightening each other on what is happening in the learner's academic and social lives that could affect their commitment. This may help in identifying school shortcomings as well as identifying undiagnosed attention deficit issues among learners.
- Parents cannot adequately support their children academically if they themselves do not understand the value of education. Night schools and or short academic courses offered to willing parents who are uneducated could help. Not only will this improve their skills, ability to find employment and improve their earning potential thus reducing difficulties in paying their children's education, but it will also instil the culture of valuing education and give their children better support which promotes learner retention.
- Learners' poor attitude was a major problem. As such, collective concerted efforts should be made to help improve youths' tolerance, resilience, engagement and commitment. Early

exposure to positive role models and career services could be helpful. Parents, schools, communities, civil organisations and youths themselves have to help in nurturing responsible youths; it takes a whole village to raise a child.

5.3.2 TEACHERS, SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- The educational authorities should strive to make learning more interesting. Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and other interactive teaching methods could bring an interesting dimension. Use of computers can capture student's interest and retain them at school.
- There is greater need for teachers to remain professional and sensitive to learners' plight. Canning, teasing and public humiliation of learners only further frustrate learners. There is a need to utilise alternative disciplinary and motivational methods.
- There is need to have more social counselling services for learners at school and better access to such services in township communities.
- Whilst many learners indicated that they would like to finish their Matric, very few were aware of the options available. The education system has to put in place systems and mechanisms to help school dropouts who are too old for convectional classroom teaching. Information on night schools, educational correspondences and alternative tertiary options should be promoted and easily accessed.
- High schools may also develop learners into their areas of specialisation so that learners study subjects that they have the best chance of passing. In the last two years of secondary school, learners can specialise in certain related subjects that are relevant to what they intend to do or study after secondary school. Rather than studying all subjects, educational policy makers may consider having learners narrowing their scope and focusing on few select subjects such as sciences, humanities and arts, commerce, engineering and so on. Specialisation may significantly improve learner engagement and can have significant benefits. In-depth studying to one's own strength may also reduce the gap between secondary and tertiary education in which many learners struggle with the transition into tertiary education.

5.3.3 GOVERNMENT/POLICY MAKERS

- There is a need for a multi-pronged approach to address learner dropout. Government should continue to improve the quality of education especially in townships as well as strengthen the

social work departments to provide the much needed counselling services to struggling students. Social workers at school need to help more to improve educational environments.

- Government should better interact with townships schools in order to be able to identify the challenges they encounter and how best to deal with them. More teachers are needed in order to reduce the high learner-teacher ratios. Smaller and manageable class sizes may help with one-on-one sessions with learners, especially struggling learners. This may help reveal the real challenges they are facing and ways to overcome them. More so the teachers should be fully equipped with the right skills and attitudes to deal with and support children who are at risk of dropping out,
- There is a greater need for cooperation between schools and other government departments, including department of health, social welfare and police services. Such strategic networking, shared communication on dangers of substance abuse, proper cultural practice and managing cultural expectations, avoiding unwanted pregnancies and domestic abuse are all important issues for such teenagers that need further education.
- Philippi, just like many parts of the Cape Flats, is plagued by high incidences of gang violence and gangsterism that usually spill into the school environment. More safety measures are needed to protect school environments with increased police visibility being important.
- Participants complained of poor access to community halls, arts centres, community libraries and general community activities that can reduce idleness and develop other areas of their lives. Keeping children busy by creating safe environments for social activities will reduce chances of learners getting involved in illegal and anti-social activities that are detrimental to their academic lives. Such investment in infrastructure may play a huge role in reducing learner dropout rates.
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), civil society and government should play collaborative roles in creating spaces that help address the girl child. It is sad that in a city with so many NGOs providing counselling free services, none of the abused participants was aware of their services. More awareness of the existence of such services is needed, especially in township schools. Building relationships among these various stakeholders in which there is mutual learning and collaboration will help communities access their services.

5.3.4 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- There is need for additional analysis that can examine, within a representative sample, the effects of the factors identified in this research on the outcome variable.
- Given the number of sexually abused participants in this report, the majority of which had not shared their ordeals with anyone, it maybe be imperative and insightful to have more research on the extent of such gender based abuses among secondary learners in schools.
- Focus should however be on how many such cases the school psychological counsellors deal with. It would also be important to understand why some learners do not utilise these counselling services and how they can be made more victim-friendly.
- It was interesting to note that the fifteen participants were not married although some had children. More research is needed to explore the relationships between school dropout, teen pregnancy and implications on future marital relationships.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The researcher used a qualitative case study methodology to explore factors contributing to high learner dropout rates in Philippi. With the aid of Amandla, the researcher used a snow balling sampling method in which he utilised the participants he had to refer him to other learners they knew who had dropped out of school. Fifteen participants shared their opinions and lived experiences on the factors that influenced them to dropout before completing their studies. Many reasons were cited, including personal, school, social, cultural, and economic factors. This final chapter outlined the research's conclusions and discussed the recommendations to various stakeholders that could help address this drop out scourge. The recommendations emanated from the findings and analysis from chapter 4.

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ANNEXURE A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi.

LovemoreVushe (VSHLOV001)
Department of Social Development
University of Cape Town
Supervisor: Dr KhosiKubeka

My name is Lovemore Vushe and I am in my second year of a Master of Social Science degree at the University of Cape Town. I would to talk to you about the reason(s) why you dropped out of school before finishing high school. This interview will be 45 minutes to an hour long.

In an effort to make my Masters dissertation practical, Amandla Development can use these findings to inform its direct and/or indirect intervention in high schools in Philippi.

“We need to keep learning about the challenges our youth are facing to develop programmes to support them.”

Demographic Data

What name would you like to use for the purpose of this interview?(so that nothing you say can be traced back to you?)

What gender do you identify with?

How old are you?

Are you currently in school?

If yes: What are you studying? Where are you studying?

If no: How far did you go with school?

Are you working at the moment?

If yes: Where do you work?

What do you do?

How long have you been working there?

If no: How long have you been out of work?

How do you make money? (for food, clothes, shoes etc)

Are you married?

If yes: How long have you been married?

If no/yes: Do you have any children?

Housing

Please describe your house for me (brick house, shack, flat)

How many rooms are they?

Do you have your own room?

If no: who do you share your room with?

Do you have running water?

If no: how far is the nearest tap?

Do you have electricity?

If no: what do you use for: lighting? cooking?

Do you have a toilet/bathroom?

If not: How far is the nearest toilet/bathroom?

Family

Who do you live with?

How long have you lived with them?

What do your family members do? Are they working/studying?

If studying: What are they studying and where?

If working: Where do they work and what do they do?

Of your family members, Who do you get along with the most? (Who are you close to?)

Did they support you when you were in school?

Did they come to parent meetings?

Would they ask if you had homework? Did they help you with homework?

Did they talk to you about how you were doing in school?

Did they know when you had exams/tests? Did they check if you had studied for them?

Did they know where you would go/ what you would do after school?

Would you say that your relationship with your family influenced your decision to drop out of school? How? Please explain/ elaborate/ Go in detail

Schooling

What would you say is the value of education?

Is school important?

If yes, why is it important? Is there any value of obtaining a Matric certificate?
If no, Why is it not important?

How would you describe your experience of school?
(Respondent to give more detail on the following questions)

Did you like going to school?
If yes: what did you like about school?
If no: what did you dislike about school?

Which school were you attending?
When did you drop out of school?
Why did you drop out of school? *Please elaborate*

What did it mean to your parents/guardian when you decided to drop out?
How did they react?
How did your friends/peers react to you dropping out of school?
Did anyone advise you not to drop out of school?
If yes: who advised you not to drop out of school?
: Why did they say you should stay in school?
: Why did you choose to go against their advice?

How were you doing in school (grades) (before dropping out)?

Had you repeated a grade before?
If yes: how many times did you repeat a grade?
: Which grade/s did you repeat?
Do you have any friends or family members who dropped out of school?

How often were you attending classes before dropping out?
If not so often: why were you not going to school?
: Where and how were you spending your time?
Did your family know that you were not going to school?
If yes: how did they react?

Had you ever been suspended from school before dropping out?
If yes: how many times had you been suspended?
: Why were you being suspended?

Did your family know that you were suspended?
If yes: how did they react?

How did you perceive your schools' discipline practices? (fair/unfair)

Were you using any drugs/alcohol in your days at school?
If yes: what drugs were you using
: How did you get into it?
: How often were you using these drugs?
: Where would you find them?

Did you family know that you were suspended?
If yes: how did they react?

How far was the school from home?
If far: how did you get to and from school?
If using transport: did you always have money to travel to and from school?

Did you have enough learning materials?
Did you have your own learning materials (eg. Books)?
If shared: How many people did you share with?

Would you say your teachers showed interest in your education? (Did you receive enough support?)
How many were you in class?
How would you describe your experiences while you were at school with teachers
Did you trust them?
Did they understand you?
Did you get along with them?
Did you feel they paid attention to you?
Could you count on a teacher when you were having a problem?

How would you describe your experiences while you were at school with your friends? (*Please elaborate*)
Where they influential in your life?
How often did you spend time together?
What kind of things would you do together?

Did you feel safe while you were at school?
If no: why did you feel unsafe (please elaborate)

Which after-school activities were you involved in?
If none: Why were you not part of any after school activities? (*Please elaborate.*)

Do you have any plans of going back to school?
If yes: why would you like to go back to school
When do you plan on going back? What grade would you start in? At which school?

What do you think can be done to overcome learner dropout? (*Please elaborate*)
What role can the following people play to keep students in school
Parents/guardians
Teachers
Friends
Government

Thank you for your participation in this study.

ANNEXURE B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS' PARENTS



A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi.

LovemoreVushe (VSHLOV001)
Department of Social Development
University of Cape Town
Supervisor: Dr KhosiKubeka

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

I, _____ (write name in full) the parent/guardian of _____ (write child's name in full), give permission for my child to participate in the research project conducted by a Masters student in the Social Development Department at the University of Cape Town in collaboration with Amandla Development.

1. I understand that this project is designed to gather information about the reason my child dropped out of high school.
2. My child's participation in this project is voluntary. My child may withdraw and choose not to participate at any time without consequences. My child will let the researchers know if he/she decides to leave the study.
3. My child will be interviewed by the researcher at a convenient location. The interview will last approximately 1 hour. Notes will be written during the interview. A voice recorder will be used in the interview to record the conversation. If my child does not want to be taped, he/she will not be able to participate in the study.
4. My child will arrive at the interview on the date and time set by the researcher and my child.
5. If my child feels uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, he/she has the right not to answer any question or to end the interview.
6. My child will not be judged because of what is said in the interview.

7. I understand that the researcher will not use my child’s name or any other identifying information in any reports that use information gathered from this interview. I understand that my child’s confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. This means that the information will be kept private and safe.
8. I understand that there is a team of researchers working on this project, and that they are allowed to see and use the information provided in the interview. I understand that they will use the information my child has provided to write reports and they may present the information to others and publish articles on the research.
9. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to allow me child to participate in this study.

Parent’s Signature

Date

Researcher Name

Researcher Signature

ANNEXURE C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS



A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi.

LovemoreVushe (VSHLOV001)
Department of Social Development
University of Cape Town
Supervisor: Dr KhosiKubeka

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

I volunteer to participate in the research project, conducted by a Masters student in the Social Development Department at the University of Cape Town in collaboration with Amandla Development.

10. I understand that the research is designed to gather information about my reasons for dropping out of high school.
11. My participation in this project is voluntary. I may withdraw and choose not to participate at any time without consequences. I will let the researcher know if I decide to leave the study.
12. I will be interviewed by the researcher at a convenient location. Notes will be written during the interview. A voice recorder will be used in the interview to record the conversation. If I do not want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.
13. I agree to arrive at the interview on the date and time set by the researcher and me.
14. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I understand that I have the right not to answer any question or to end the interview.
15. I understand that the researcher will not use my name or any other identifying information in any reports that use information gathered from this interview.
16. I understand that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure (that is, private and safe) in all instances.
17. I understand that there is a team of researchers working on this project, and that they are allowed to see and use the information I provide in the interview. I understand that they will use the information I have provided to write reports and they may present the information to others and publish articles on the research.

18. I will do my best to be as open and honest as possible during the interview and I understand that no one will judge me because of what I say.

19. I have read and understood the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher Name

Researcher Signature