Absenteeism and the role of Love Life programmes in the reduction of absenteeism at the two secondary schools at Marapong

By

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DECLARATION

I Mogalapitja Sybil Bokgola hereby declare that this mini-dissertation for the Master in Education degree at the University of Limpopo submitted by me has not previously been for any other university and it is my work in design and execution and all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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Mogalapitja Sybil Bokgola

Research on young adults who are at risk to get lost between education and labour market and end up practicing unhealthy living.

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Summary

This report describes the research conducted at two secondary schools at Marapong. The title of this report is ABSETEEISM AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF LOVE LIFE PROGRAMMES IN THE REDUCTION OF ABSENTEEISM. The research is taking part in the third and fourth pillars of the research programmes in Adult Education namely: young adults at risk and health adult education.

The aims of this study are two fold. Firstly, to identify and describe problems that might have contributed in making youth to stay away from school and secondly, to evaluate the impact of Love Life programmes on the reduction of absenteeism in participating secondary schools at Marapong.

The following research questions were formulated, for me to be aware of the above-mentioned aims.

- What is the rate of absenteeism?
- What are the reasons of absenteeism at these two secondary schools?
- What are the characteristics of Love Life programmes?
- What is the impact of Love Life programmes in the reduction of absenteeism?
- How can the programmes be improved?

To provide the most valid, accurate answers possible to the above- mentioned questions, a descriptive research with both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. Different instruments were used to collect data. The participants are the principals, co-ordinators of the Love Life programmes, educators, the School Governing Body (SGB), Representative Council of Learners (RCL), participants and non-participants of the two secondary schools.

The most important findings have to do with different factors, which are related. The findings are presented into three factors: socio-economic, school and personal.

Many problems relating to the socio- economic aspects were; poverty, overcrowding in families, lack of parental involvement, peer pressure, teenage pregnancy and the child support grants. At the school level, most problems the youth were facing were; inadequate supervision, presentation of lessons and labelling.

On the basis of the data provided, several improvements need to be made. In the last chapter of this report, recommendations are given on problems experienced by youth and the school. These problems concern absenteeism and the role of Love Life programmes in the reduction of absenteeism.

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BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION[1]

1.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I intend to give a short description of Adult Education programmes at the University of Limpopo (UL), Baswa at Risk projects initiated by the university and the Department of Education (DoE), the background of Limpopo Province, population and educational facilities of Lephalale wherein Marapong is a township. The aims of the study as well as the research questions will be summarised.

1.2. Adult Education Programmes

These programmes in UL were established when the university and University of Groningen (RUG) collaborated. Representatives from RUG visited the university to explore a possible collaboration after a long period of academic boycott, to make adult education one of the priority areas for collaboration (Van der Kamp in Zeelen, 2004). The first of stage of collaboration was from 1994-1998 when post graduates from RUG came to visit UL to conduct research together with the UL staff and students.

After the first evaluation, the collaboration partners in 1996 concluded that it was hard to ensure sustainability of adult education activities every time students went back to the Netherlands. This resulted in the request directed to Zeelen to come to UL as a visiting professor with the support of Vice Chancellor Professor Njabulo Ndebele and the Netherlands Embassy for a period of three to four years, (Zeelen, 2004). The main aims were the establishment of a Department of Adult Education, including teaching, training and research programmes as well as capacity building.

Rampedi and Zeelen (1998) had basic assumptions to guide the research activities in the Adult Education (AE) programme. They formulated the following assumptions that Adult Education and Training should not only be about:

[1] See appendix 1

- Literacy. Reading and writing skills are very important but at the same time will fade away if they are not embedded in a repertoire of skills that are used in everyday life. In a developing context like the rural areas of the Province, affected by enormous poverty, the links between literacy skills and, for instance, income generation skills, in the formal and informal labour market, seem to be of vital importance.
- English. For many South Africans, the mastering of the English language has been regarded so far as the main passport to becoming a successful citizen, it also seems to embody a permanent stumbling block for becoming a self-confident and self- respected human being. To express oneself in one's mother tongue seems to be an important condition for lifelong learning. In adult education more attention should be paid to the role of the mother tongue and the advantage of multi-lingual approaches in addition to acquisition of English, (Joseph and Ramani, 1998).
- Another way to obtain matric (grade twelve certificate). When learners drop out of secondary school at the age of 15 because of teenage pregnancy, or fail four times in their grade twelve examination; are still at the age of 25; or finally passed grade twelve and get unemployed, then questions can be raised about the overall structure, curriculum and guidance systems of the secondary schools. Matric should not be seen as the only way to become a respected citizen. More differentiated streams in secondary schools with different exit points could offer many possibilities for learners who are more capable in technical and other non-academic professional domains. Consequently adult education should not only present itself as a second chance for achieving matric, as was often the case in the "night school" past. Vocational education, combination of work and education or support in establishing income generating projects might enhance people's chances to become respected citizens and valuable workers in the developing provinces.
- Skills. International developments in adult education show a strong emphasis on skills training in connection with the labour market. Although dimension of skills is important, one should not neglect other important dimensions, such as the issues of social responsibility, citizenship and other aspects of norms and values (Wildemeersch et al, 1998). For instance if one would like to improve the participation of parents in schools, attention should not only be paid to literacy skills but also to responsible ways of dealing with pedagogical and guidance problems, which occur on a large scale in many families in the rural areas. Moreover, in provinces like the Limpopo Province, where for instance, the belief in witchcraft is still very strong, adult

education should also address the role of traditional beliefs and the tension with modernity, including the specific role of gender.

- Lack of competencies. Only talking about the deficits of people, neglects their intellectual competencies and useful survival strategies. Not being able to write and read does not mean that people do not have a story to tell. Their experiences, wisdom, skills and interests should form the breeding ground for new learning processes. In the first phase of any adult education activity conversation space ought to be created to bring these experiences, competences and views into space.
- Women. In the Limpopo Province, women form the majority of the participants in Adult Education programmes. There were several reasons for this. First, the fact that many men in this Province are migrants and work often in Gauteng. Another reason seems to be the belief that men who take part in adult education programmes would harm their status as- in their own view- educated human beings. Going to class would implicitly mean that they admit that they have something to learn. A rather fruitless conclusion of these considerations would be to concentrate mainly on women in adult education programmes. To be gender sensitive should on the contrary mean to also be keen on the participation of men as well as to investigate the gender aspects of education and obstacles to the participation of both sexes. For instance it happens frequently that women are not allowed by their husbands to attend adult education programmes. Men's fear for women empowerment could be the issue here.
- Elderly people. In the past the common sense image of adult education was being a facility for mostly elderly people who did not benefit from formal education in the past. This image seems to be no longer appropriate. It becomes more and more clear that adult education has to play a role for many other age groups. For instance, for earlier mentioned various groups of school dropouts and for the huge number of unemployed adults of different ages with minimal forms of education. This task should of course not be executed by adult education and training only. Collaboration with secondary school education and further education and training is highly necessary.
- Learners who are already in the system. It might be tempting to concentrate on the process of improving adult education programmes of the learners who are already taking part. However, it is necessary to explore the needs of those who are not yet reached by the programmes, especially the socially excluded in remote rural areas.

- Individual learners. The strong belief in Outcomes Based Education as introduced in South Africa, which is mainly focussed on the individual learner in school situations, should not lead to a complete neglect of the community perspective and the role of the community perspective and the role of informal education outside class situations. During the Apartheid period adult education in South Africa was much more focussed on social action and social empowerment (Walters (ed.), 1998). Although the new democratic South Africa demands new competencies of adult education and training, the potential of collective engagement and *social* learning should not be put aside completely in favour of a purely individualised concept of learning.
- Education. Programmes in adult education and training seem only to be effective if they are sensitive to an inter-disciplinary approach. In the Limpopo Province this means for instance that because of the immense problems of illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and HIV/AIDS, the collaboration with the sectors of Health and Agriculture is of vital importance. Such a strategy of linking sectors should not only be developed with respect to the activities of the provincial government, but also extended to the different NGOs and the employers in the province.

All the work around approaches and assumptions formulated by Rampedi and Zeelen led to basic objectives and four pillars of research programmes namely: policy and implementation issues; community development and curriculum development; young adults at risk; and health adult education.

This study is taking place in the third and fourth pillars namely: young adults at risk and health adult education. The social problem of Marapong (see the description of the area, below) indicates that youth (young adults) are at risk of getting lost between education and the labour market and end up practising unhealthy lifestyles to survive. To assist the youth to make informed decisions, health adult education in the form of Love Life programmes may play a vital role. Within this, a project was developed called Baswa at Risk.

Below I will give a short description of Baswa at risk and its objectives.

1.3. The Baswa at Risk project

In the beginning of 1999 the Department of Adult Education was approached by the sub-directorate of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) of the Department of Education of the Limpopo Province.

The main reasons where with regard to the closure of finishing schools and the necessity to find new answers to the existing problems of secondary education, concerning dropouts.

The awareness grew that problems within the secondary education, as expressed through the matric results, were related to a wider range of conditions within schools and within the system (access to vocational education, quality of existing guidance-systems etc) and that solutions in the short run did not exist.

One of the students of AE developed a research proposal to the problems of dropouts, particularly in one of the schools in Seshego. In the context of the Co-operation in Education between the Netherlands and South Africa (CENESA) project he spent a working visit in the Netherlands. The objectives of the visit were to explore the experience in Netherlands with dropout problems in schools and to special programmes dealing with this problem. During this working visit the idea grew that the project should be developed to deal with these matters ("Baswa"- which means Youth in the Northern Sotho- as it was called by Mthanji in one of his meetings with Wim Boerkamp, staff member of Compaz Group, during the visits).

As a next step the UL invited the Compaz Group of the Netherlands to conduct in the context of CENESA-1, a small feasibility study towards the possibilities of starting a pilot of this nature in Seshego, a township near Polokwane, the capital city of the Limpopo Province.

In cooperation with the Department of Education of the Limpopo Province, the department has supported the idea of Baswa at Risk project. There was consensus amongst the participants on the desirability of an integrated approach on several levels, such as:

- To stimulate co-operation between secondary education, community colleges and technical colleges in order to make vocational education available for high school learners. Co-operation will be made possible by adopted legislation to govern high schools (grades 10, 11, 12) in the context of the FET-band (instead of the South African Schools Act).
- To develop a preventative approach (aiming at learners in grade 12, 11 and 10 to prevent them to dropout).
- To develop a corrective approach (aimed at those large groups that already dropped out because of shortages in the system).

Below I give the objectives of Baswa at risk.

1.3.1. Its objectives

The main objectives of the Baswa at Risk project are as compiled by the working group:

Long term

1. Providing alternative educational opportunities for students (young adults) who are not interested in or capable of reaching up to a matriculation level.
2. Preventing school dropout.
3. Improving the image of vocational education.
4. Providing a high quality system/provision of student services, career counselling and guidance, including substantial parental involvement.
5. Establishing stable networks between secondary schools, community colleges, technical colleges and the formal labour market.
6. Implementing programmes to connect unemployed young adults with programmes in Further Education and Training or formal or informal labour market.
7. Developing the full accreditation of all the programmes in line with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).
8. The dissemination of the results and experiences of the Baswa model to other (rural) provinces in South Africa, not only at the end but in the course of the project too (via the expert group "transfer").

Short term

1. To get further insight, on the basis of the feasibility study and through new research into the current state of affairs on the following issues:
    - quantitative and qualitative information on dropout, matric repetition and unemployed school leavers
    - information on the state of the provision of vocational education
    - information on the existing network and definition of the key-players
    - inventory of actual practices in guidance and counselling

2. To further develop the already existing networks:

   It was thought that for the success of the project, it was important that a tight network involving all the stakeholders was developed in the beginning. Stakeholders here were: the schools in the FET-band, both general education and vocational education institutes, centres for training and schooling, operational Non-Governmental Officials (NGO'S) in the field, employers who provide for learnerships, the Provincial Department of Education. This network is vital to carry-out the project and carry-out the project results after the end of the project period.

3. The establishment of a service centre for dropouts including the development of instruments for students services, guidance and counselling, including health education programme:

   On the basis of the inventory of the existing instruments and inputs from other developed and developing countries (for instance the Netherlands and Botswana) coherent models for guidance and counselling are to be developed (Meijers, 1998 and Nasta, 1993 in CENESA Progress report, 2002).

4. Training of staff to use the above mentioned instruments.

5. Developing (pre)-vocational curricular, assessment tools and learnerships elements including the training of involved staff in FET institutions.

6. The development and piloting of (draft-) programmes for parental involvement in the context of the guidance and counselling activities.

Below I will give a short description of the Limpopo Province.

1.4. Limpopo Province

It may not be possible to give a full description of the Province. More attention will be on the position, climate and the lifestyle of the inhabitants. The Limpopo Province, formerly known as the Northern Province, is divided into six (6) District Municipalities namely: Waterberg, Capricorn, Vhembe, Mopani, Bushbuckridge and Greater Sekhukhune. It is one of the nine Provinces of South Africa,

which celebrated its tenth year in the democratic government. It covers 124 000 square kilometres, which is about ten percent of South Africa.

The Province is the northern most beautiful land of South Africa. It shares boarders with neighbouring Southern African Developing Countries (SADC) countries of Botswana on the western side, Mozambique on the eastern and Zimbabwe on the northern. Its proximity to all these SADC makes it the perfect springboard for exploring its richness (Limpopo leader, Volume 3:2005). The capital city of the Province is Polokwane, meaning a 'place of safety'. It has the largest Metropolitan centre in the north and has a major economic hub serving a rich agricultural district. It lies ± 300 kilometres north of South Africa's main markets, which are Johannesburg-Pretoria industrial complex.

Limpopo has pleasant warm to hot summers and moderate winters. It has an annual rainfall ranging between 577 and 1 000 millimetres. The lowveld areas have a higher average rainfall and temperatures (Investing in South Africa's Limpopo Province Pamphlet). The Province is positioned on the plateau, which is 1 312 metres above sea level, where the summer temperatures rise to 28, 1°C and drop to 17°. Winter temperatures range from 4, 7 °C to 19, 6 °C.

The Province has a rich diversity of cultures which define it as a destination of choice and unique experience. It abounds in legends, ruins and relics and again it has a breathtaking natural beauty. There are eleven official languages. English language is most commonly used in business. Sepedi language constitutes 57 %, Tsonga 23 %, Venda 12 %, Afrikaans and Ndebele 8 % of the population (Investing in South Africa's Limpopo Province Pamphlet).

Although the Province had celebrated its tenth anniversary of freedom in 2004, the change from the apartheid regime (i.e. freedom from want; from hunger etc) is moving at a slow pace. The rights of all citizens affirm the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. Kiggundu and Swierstra (2002) supported the matter by indicating that citizens in the Province do not enjoy their rights, such as the freedom from want, hunger, deprivation, ignorance, suppression and fear.

The high rate of unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and AIDS related diseases that are in the Province, support what studies have indicated when emphasising the non- fulfilment of citizen's rights. Most people in the province live in undeveloped rural areas which have socio-economic problems.

The South African Statistics (2001) showed that a total of 97 % black Africans are living in the Province. 33, 4 % of adults aged 21 and above are without formal education, and 14% have not completed their primary education. These figures support what other researchers have indicated (Mabasa: 2002; Kiggundu and Swierstra: 2002) about the Province, that is characterised by illiteracy, unemployment and socio-economic factors. This may be the reason why some youth are unable to get formal education or attain grade 12.

According to Baswa at Risk proposal (2000), as quoted by Mabasa (2002: 3), the Limpopo Province has an average of 46% of unemployment rate as compared to other nine provinces which makes it to be the second largest province of unemployment in South Africa. High rate of unemployment and illiteracy cause poverty. Other studies emphasized that the Province suffers from the highest dependency rate. This further explains that every income-earner in the area supports an average of almost five or more other people (Mabasa, 2002).

The above-mentioned problems may force youth to practice unhealthy living. There is therefore, a need for the Province to guide and educate youth with regard to health issues in order to improve their health conditions. Youth fall pregnant at early ages, contract STD's and HIV and do not make correct decisions when choosing friends.

Above I presented the description of the Limpopo Province and below I will present the background, position, population and educational facilities of Lephalale town.

1.5. Lephalale Town

It is a town in the Waterberg Region. It took its name from the magnificent and unspoilt Waterberg Mountain Range.

1.5.1. Background

Lephalale town, which was previously known as Ellisras[2], was proclaimed officially as a town on the 7th December 1960. It is situated in the western part of the Limpopo Province, bounded by Botswana.

[2] Ellisras was proclaimed officially as a town on a farm Waterkloof.

According to the Destination Lephalale pamphlet (2004), the area lies on the landscape of the foothills of Waterberg. It was laid on the farm Waterkloof in 1960 and named after its owners Patrick Ellis and Piet Erasmus. A railway bus stop was developed between Vaalwater and Stockpoort. This eventually led to the development of facilities like schools, churches and businesses (Destination Lephalale, 2004). There were a number of major influences on the development of Lephalale town.

Those developments are:
In 1973, ISCOR decided to continue with the development of the Grootgeluk Coal Mine (Kumba Resource Mine). The mine was officially opened on the 15th April 1981. Grootgeluk is an open cast coal mine, which is the largest of its kind in South Africa. It provides ISCOR with high-grade metallurgical coal for iron and steel production (The Tourism Blueprint Reference Guide to the nine Provinces of South Africa, 2001:283).

The construction of ESCOM Matimba Power Station, which was officially opened on the 17th November 1989, was the second major influence. Blueprint Reference to the nine Provinces of South Africa (2001) indicated Matimba Power Station as the largest dry cooled power station in the world.

1.5.2. Position

It is positioned between 23°S and 24 °S and 27° 30'E and 28° 00' E (Destination Lephalale, 2004). The average temperature of Lephalale during summer ranges between 20° C to 32° C with summer rainfalls of an average of 400 mm per annum and a 72% average of sunshine/duration.

The winter temperature is estimated at an average of 8°C to 25° C. The mild winter months, with moderate summer evenings makes the area a popular venue for camping and stargazing (The Tourism Blueprint Reference Guide to the nine Provinces of South Africa, 2001: 283).

Lephalale area offers an infinite variety of scenic contrasts from its unique Waterberg wilderness with its extraordinary beauty, which lies in its superb long narrow view of mountain gorges, streams and rolling hills. The Mogol Post of the 2nd September 2005 explains the variety of birds, trees and grasslands that are in the area. Its vegetation varies from sour bushveld, which is in the south-eastern part of the area, mixed bushveld in the central area and the sweet bushveld in the Limpopo valley.

1.5. 3. Population

As estimated by the Lephalale/ Marapong Transitional Council, Lephalale has a population of about 13 988 000. From these figures Blacks dominate, followed by Whites, Coloureds, Indians and Asians. A large population of people are from the northern and eastern regions of the Province, and other provinces within South Africa, whilst few come from neighbouring countries like Botswana and Namibia.

It has a total of 25 246 Blacks, 39 Coloureds, 3 Asians or Indians and 1 919 whites who are unemployed (The South African Statistics, 2004). Studies on this subject indicated that areas with high rate of unemployment usually experience problems such as poverty, crime, alcohol and sexual abuse. The Crime Stop Unit of the area (2004) supported this subject by indicating that there were cases which were reported at their station weekly. Such cases are of robbery, rape and murder.

1.5.4. Educational Facilities

The South African Statistics (2004) indicated that the Lephalale town has fifteen (15) pre-primary, four (4) primary, four (4) secondary schools, one (1) Technical College and three (3) ABET centres. From the three (3) ABET centres one (1) is private and the remaining two (2) are of the Department of Education.

The study is not about the whole of Lephalale. It takes place in Marapong. Below I will give the description of Marapong.

1.6. Marapong

The research would be based on youth of Tielelo Junior and Phegelelo Senior Secondary Schools which are situated at Marapong Township. Niersman, (2003:35) defined a township[3]. It has male hostels for the employees of Kumba Resource Mine and Matimba Power Station, dwelling houses and squatter camps. The streets, houses and schools are electrified except for one section, which is called Ext 2

[3] As an urban area next to a town or city where black people had to live during apartheid

Ninety percent (90%) of the community are used to the agrarian lifestyle. For example, they like to gather until midnight playing cards, drinking alcohol and smoking. This type of lifestyle is also practiced by children. To them it is not a taboo for an eleven year child to arrive home late in the evening (23h00).

This social problem indicates that the youth at Marapong are at risk to get lost between education and the labour market and end up practising unhealthy lifestyles to survive. HIV/AIDS, matters of abuse, violence against women, etc are the results of unhealthy living. To assist youth to make informed decisions, Health Adult Education in the form of Love Life programmes could play a vital role.

The area has two (2) secondary schools namely Tielelo and Phegelelo, two (2) primary schools Ditheku and Nelsonskop with seven grades (i.e. grade R-6), 2 ABET centres, one (1) is private (Mogolo Academic) and the other one is under the supervision of the DoE in the Limpopo, and some few recreational facilities.

Lessons in the ABET centre in Marapong are given in the afternoon i.e. from 17h00 to 19h00. Most adult learners are women. Tutors have little knowledge about teaching adults and the new curriculum. Some of the tutors have one year certificate obtained at the University of South Africa. The following learning areas are offered at the above adult centre:

- Fundamentals: Mathematical Literacy and their home language,
- Core subjects: Life Orientation, Economic and Management Science, Natural Science, Human and Social Science and lastly
- The electives: they choose the field of their specialisation.

Initially black learners were not allowed at Ellisras FET in the apartheid era. Mogolo Academic was established to train adult learners from the two companies, Matimba and Kumba. They were trained as tradesmen. The school does not follow the requirements of an ABET General Education and Training Certificate (GETC). Their curriculum has the following learning areas: Mathematics, Science, Technology, English Communication and Engineering drawing which are the bridging courses for N1. The school has enrolled young adults from the age of sixteen (16) to twenty four (24) and this made the enrolment to go down as the old learners feel embarrassed to be in the same class with their children.

Below I will give a short description of Tielelo Junior and Phegelelo Senior Secondary Schools.

From the two schools, there are some youth who commute by bus, taxi and bicycles as they are staying far from school. Some of them are from Onverwacht a nearby suburb town, while others are from various sections of Marapong. Those commuting by bus and taxis leave their respective places as early as 5h50 and come back at 16h00.

Tielelo Junior Secondary School is a Senior Phase according to the new Curriculum 2005. It had three General Education and Training (GET) band grades namely: grades seven, eight and nine. The policy Document (1997) of the Department of Education states that during this phase, learners are increasingly able to reason independently from concrete materials and experience, engage in open arguments and should be in a position to accept multiple solutions to a single problem.

This phase also prepares youth for life after school, i.e. life in the world of work, at the institutions for further education and lastly for adult life in general. The learning programmes for the Senior Phase as stated in the Department's Policy Document (1997) create opportunities for youth (learners) to be informed about career and further learning opportunities, giving them ways and means of realising their expectations for the future; rights and responsibilities as citizens in the democratic and multicultural society.

The school had a total number of five hundred and forty nine (549) learners and seventeen (17) educators with twelve (12) classrooms. There are twelve (12) toilets, six (6) for boys and six (6) for girls; and two (2) for male and female educators. From these educators nine (9) of them are males and the rest are females. In each class the learners are above sixty (60). The school starts at 7h20 and knocks off at 14h30. When the siren rings, gates are locked. Those who are late will enter the yard after they had been punished. There are teachers who wait for late comers. Learners are not allowed to loiter during lessons.

The school is actively involved in sports. They are able to challenge senior secondary schools and win. The school partakes in Love Life programmes; they had twice participated in the National Games held in Durban i.e. 2003 and 2004.

According to the new curriculum, Phegelelo Senior Secondary School comprises of NQF levels 2 to 4 i.e. grade 10-12(Department of Education, Policy Document, 1997).

The Policy Document indicates that the FET Band comprises of the following:

- Senior Secondary Schools
- Technical Colleges
- Regional Training Centres
- Private providers and private colleges
- Private Training Centres
- Private Companies
- Industries Training Centres
- Community Colleges

It is stated that, at these levels, youth (learners) should be prepared for higher education, vocational education, careers and self-employment. For youth to attain all these levels and be future leaders, they must practice a healthy lifestyle. One of the most negative elements that negate the achievements of the objectives in my view has to do with the lifestyle of the youth[4].

There are three hundred and fifty eight (358) learners with twenty-four (24) classrooms and thirteen (13) educators. There are twelve (12) toilets. From these thirteen (13) educators, six (6) of them are males. Each class has a total number of about thirty-nine (39) learners. There are empty classrooms, which are used as centres for various learning areas.

The school starts at 6h50 and knocks off at 14h00. Learners from this school are not disciplined. They come to school as they like and do not wear proper uniform. For example, shirts are not tucked in. This school also took part in the Love Life programmes; they participated until the Provincial Games.

1.7. The social problem

Youth at Marapong are at risk to get lost between education and labour market and end up practicing unhealthy lifestyles. One of the biggest problems at the above mentioned schools is absenteeism, which is related to lifestyles determined by poverty and unemployment. To change youth's sexual behaviour and to make informed decisions, Love Life programmes might play a vital role.

[4] Are all those between ages of 14 and 35

The above mentioned social problem might have a negative impact towards the youth and lead them to practice unhealthy living. For example, those who have problems of poverty would device means of combating it by stealing or exchanging money or goods for sex. This makes them vulnerable to HIV/ AIDS.

Youth are at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. It is reported in newspapers, media that there are death cases causes of which are AIDS related or even unknown. Most citizens do not know their HIV status as they are afraid to be stigmatised. This might make them (people) be ashamed to use clinics. They are afraid that those who know their HIV status might expose them. Those who tested positive prefer to keep their HIV status a secret.

The high rate of AIDS related diseases amongst youth indicates that there is lack of understanding, awareness and skills; hence they might not make informed decisions about their sexual activities. As they are of school going age, and future leaders, they need to explore programmes, such as Love Life that would provide them with the opportunity to think about, talk about and experience positive ways to live healthy lives and achieve their personal ambitions.

The relationship between the Love Life programmes and health adult education is important as they contribute to the combat of the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is affecting all South Africans.

Below I will give a short description of Love Life programmes.

1.8. Love Life programmes

Love Life programmes are South African's national HIV prevention programmes for youth, (on www.lovelife.org.za). The programmes has brought together a broad based coalition of international foundations working in HIV/AIDS prevention, major South African media organisations, private corporations, the government of South Africa, and leading South African non-government organisations. All share one goal which is to turn down the epidemic of HIV/AIDS, and related epidemics of teenage pregnancy and sexual transmitted infections (STI's) among young South Africans.

The above mentioned website indicated that more than 5 million South Africans are living with HIV, more than in other country in the world. Studies project that by the year 2010, this toll could reach 10 million, and South Africa's GDP could be reduced by more than seventeen (17) percent as a result of the disease.

Approximately forty percent of South Africa's population is under the age of fifteen (15). About fifty (50) percent of HIV infection occurs before the age of twenty. If dramatic action is not taken, and current infection rates continue, half of all South Africans now fewer than fifteen (5) could become infected with HIV during the course of their lifetime.

Research shows that achieving carefully targeted reduction in high-risk sexual behaviour among young people, including delaying in sexual debut, reducing the number of sexual partners, managing the STI's, and increase use of condoms, may dramatically change the course of South Africa's HIV/AIDS epidemic. That's the kind of change that Love Life is working to achieve.

1. 9. Aims of study

Aims are two fold. Firstly the study is aiming at identifying and describing problems that might contribute in making youth stay away from school. Problems like teenage pregnancies, prenatal visitation at local clinics and receiving of child support grants contribute to absenteeism.

Secondly, to evaluate the impact of Love Life programmes on the reduction of absenteeism in the participating secondary schools. Love Life programmes aim at changing youth's behaviour and influencing them to live healthily.

Youth have the right to build and guarantee the democratic order through playing a positive development role in South Africa

To play such a role they have to take the following into consideration:

- Promote human dignity and respect for adults and fellow young people
- Promote positive lifestyles and behaviour by young women and men
- Ensure a society free from racism, violence, coercion, crime, degradation, exploitation and intimidation (National Youth Development Policy Framework, 2002 – 2007).

I believe that the study will:

- Give insight into the causes for absenteeism
- Investigate how Love Life programmes could play a role in the reduction of absenteeism and lastly
- Explore possible improvements of these programmes in these schools.

1.10. Research Questions

The following are the questions of the study:

1. What is the rate of absenteeism?
2. What are reasons of absenteeism at these two schools?
3. What are the characteristics of Love Life programmes?
4. What is the impact of Love Life programmes in the reduction of absenteeism?
5. How can the programmes be improved?

1.11. Delimitation of the study

To answer these research questions, I decided to focus on youth at the two secondary schools at Marapong. One of the biggest problems at these two schools is absenteeism which is related to lifestyle as determined by poverty.

It is difficult to change youth's sexual behaviour, maybe the Life programmes could assist in making them to take precautions on the pandemic, be future focused and lead them to act more responsibly to avoid the exposure. Acting responsibly makes the youth to be focused; and opt for a healthy living.

The characteristics of the area were mentioned, other areas in the Province are experiencing similar problems. As such the outcomes might be relevant and helpful to other areas in the Province, in solving their problems.

I will be careful of overgeneralization because the areas might be different because of their physical features.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter the factors that might have contributed in making youth to be away from school will be described. The role, implementation and the objectives of Love Life programmes will also be presented.

The South African Crime Stop Unit of Lephalale indicated that the area is characterized by poverty, crime, rape, high rate of incest, alcohol and drug abuse. I assumed that the socio-economic factor might be the contributing factor to the style of living that persuades youth to absent themselves from school. The reason being, where there is no money people device means to obtain it in order to combat poverty.

This report follows the studies of Oving (2002) and Conen and Rutten (2003). Their studies focused on problems which young adults face in the Limpopo Province.

Oving (2002) did a research study on 'young mothers between formal education and labour market in Mahwelereng'. In her research she investigated the background and needs of young mothers and what role adult education could play in helping them. One of her findings was that Adult Education programmes do not always serve the needs of young mothers. Some of the programmes provided offered lower levels of education than the level of education young mothers have acquired. This makes them to get bored and to loose interest in attending the Adult Education programmes.

Conen and Rutten (2003) did a second study on early school leaving, career guidance and counselling. They looked at the school leavers' rate in the district of Seshego and Mahwelereng in the Limpopo Province and studied the possible reasons of early school leaving as perceived by different stake holders. In their research they investigated the content of career guidance and counselling and what role this could play for students who are still in the school system.

For explaining the causes of unhealthy lifestyles that led to absenteeism and looking at the percentage of unemployment at Lephalale, one may consider what Mabasa indicated in his research (2002:2). He indicated that Limpopo Province has a high rate of unemployment and it is one of the poorest out of the nine Provinces in South Africa (2002:2). He also emphasised that chances for every income-earner in the area, supports an average of almost five other people. From 13 988 000 population, a total of 27 207 is unemployed. All these points further show that there is a problem.

2.2. Causes of unhealthy lifestyles that lead to absenteeism

There are different causes of unhealthy lifestyles. Some of them are:

- Economic and social factors
- School
- Personal factors

2.2.1.Economic and social factors

2.2.1.1. Poverty[5]

Lauer and Lauer (2002:222) in their study defined poverty as a social problem.[6] They indicated that a person, who is poor and out of work, lacks motivation. The reason for him/her to be out of work might be laziness, or the state of economy and retrenchment.

Poverty is an economical, social and political situation, (Shirreffs, 1982:328). The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volume 9 (1999: 625) supports this subject by noting that the condition of poverty exists when people lack the means to satisfy their needs. In this context the identification of the poor requires determination of what constitutes basic needs[7].

Several studies on this subject indicated that poverty might be regarded as absolute[8] or relative[9]. The first criterion, which is absolute poverty, covers people who are extremely starving or near death

[5] Is a state in which income is insufficient to provide such basic necessities of food, shelter, medical care and clothing.
[6] Is a problem, whose causes and solutions lie outside the individual and the immediate environment.
[7] They may be defined as those necessary for survival, or as broadly as those reflecting the prevailing standard for living in the community.
[8] The insufficiency is so severe that is life threatening.
[9] The insufficiency is substantially greater than that of most others in the society.

exposure. The second criterion extends to people whose nutrition, housing and clothing, do not measure up to those of the population as a whole.

Poverty has been associated with poor health, low education levels or skills, inability or unwillingness to participate in the society and high rates of disruptive or disorderly behaviour. While all those attributes have often been found to exist with poverty, their inclusion in the definition of poverty could tend to obscure the relation between them and the inability to provide for one's basic needs.

The effects of poverty are harmful, both to the individual and to the society. Gells and Bartollos in Conen and Rutten (2003:26) indicated that poverty is one of the contributing factors of early school leaving. According to their study, youth from poor families are more likely to absent themselves, and leave school before attaining a grade 12 certificate especially if their parents have received little or no education. Such families experience social problems such as conflicts among the family, abuse, violence against women, etc. This might be the results of unhealthy lifestyles.

Other studies have corroborated these findings and extend them to show that youth from lower socio-economic levels as compared to those from middle and upper strata are likely to leave school. The weak socio-economic position of the family may also affect the youth in another way; for example, those who live in poor areas might become de-motivated to take part in school activities and practice unhealthy lifestyle to survive. Anyone who practices these unhealthy lifestyles might be encouraged to go into prostitution[10] for survival and also gain some income.

The website of youth livelihood (on www.worldbank.org/poverty.htm) explains that young boys who come from impoverished homes or had run away from home, thrown out of their homes, may or do offer themselves as sexual partners to gay men. By doing or acting in this manner, they believe they would survive as well as make money. In this case it makes them vulnerable to diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

On the above mentioned website, it is also stated that youth who are from poor families, have an increased risk of infection because they are more likely to:

- Yield to pressure, exchange money or goods for sex

[10] Paid sexual relations between a woman or her client, the remuneration providing part or all of the woman's livelihood

- Lack the potential to a brighter future
- Fall pregnant in order to receive child support grants
- Become involved in selling and using drugs
- Hijack, rob banks and steal in order to have money
- Offer themselves as sexual partners of the same sex.

Shirreffs (1982:329) supports them on this subject. He indicated that youth that live in poverty are more likely to contract communicable diseases, come up with ways of getting money to survive and satisfy their needs. By this type of behaviour, chances for them to pass grade 12 certificate are minimal.

2.2.1.2 *Non parental Involvement*

Non parental involvement can be expressed in different ways. For example, parents can show interest in the work done by their children, such as helping them with their homework, encouraging them to study, monitor the work done at school and advice them on educational decisions.

Sui-Chu Williams in Conen and Rutten (2000:27) supports the above mentioned factors by stating that parents might talk to teachers regularly and visit schools to express their involvement in school activities. This proves that, if parents do not show interest in the welfare and education of their children, they are less likely to break rules laid at or by the school.

Barollas in Conen and Rutten (2000: 27) emphasised the point of parents who do not guide, discipline and support their children. He indicated that, learners who are likely to dodge classes, absent themselves and eventually leave school before attaining the grade 12 certificate are not supported by their families.

Most parents are unable to communicate with their children about sex education. Studies on this subject revealed that parents think that they will lose their dignity if they talk about sex with their children. The Love Life pamphlets (2003) and Caring together for life, Khomanani pamphlets on you & HIV/ AIDS (brought by the Government), urged parents to talk about sex education and the changing parts of their bodies. Parents are urged not to shift their responsibilities of communicating about sex to schools. It is important for both parent and the school to talk about such issues as we are all affected and infected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

This is a wake up call for change. For those who test negative, a choice to stay negative can be made and for those who test positive, they should opt for a healthy life. To avoid being infected with HIV and spreading the HI virus, they should know about sex, abstain from it, or change sexual behaviour by choosing to delay, use condoms if they are sexually active and reduce their sexual partners to one.

Dryfoos (1990:177) expressed the importance of parent-child communication. He emphasised that it helps the youth to improve on their decision-making skills and delay on the initiation of intercourse. The delay in the initiation of sexual activities, show the measure of success in the prevention of teenage pregnancy and the contraction of HIV and STIs.

Some researchers on this subject indicated that a healthy lifestyle practised by youth, result in a positive relationship between the parents' interest in education and open communication about sex. For instance, if youth are informed, skilled, motivated or simply have access to protection, they will prevent themselves from sexually transmitted diseases and HIV and thereby live a healthier life.

Studies in other countries, as Conen and Rutten (2003:26) have elaborated, revealed that poverty or a weak social-economic position might influence parental involvement in the education of the child. Further more, it may be expantiated to what they have indicated that in poor families, the interaction of children with adults tends to be minimal.

Lauer and Lauer (2002:244) for example, emphasised that in such families there is no parental involvement, as their homes will be overcrowded, busy and noisy. The reason cited is that no single child gets a great deal of attention. They get no attention, as they will be watching television, listening to music and seeing movies till dawn. They also do little reading, and have little sustained interaction with adult members of their families. Such children usually fall asleep in classrooms, and fall behind with their studies. They eventually absent themselves from school or leave school permanently.

Another factor that might make parents not to communicate with their children is lack of finance. Financial problems may make parents to focus on the problem and not on their children's education. This problem leads to social stress. Eventually, it leads youth to loose interest in his/her education and may opt for unhealthy lifestyle. Most families at Marapong are poor. Some of them are entrapped in vicious poverty circles. For example, those who are working as domestic workers, working at shops, cafés and as garden cleaners, their jobs pay only poverty- level wages.

They cannot get better–paying jobs because they lack educational skills. They cannot afford to leave their jobs, to gain the skills or advance their education as they have families to take care of. To these families, education is not seen as valuable. Youth who grew in such families are likely to leave school early, absent themselves from school and might have multi-partners to survive. This puts them at risk of contracting the pandemic.

2.2.1.3. Peer Pressure

Research has indicated that youth learn from their friends and age-mates. They are likely to play the behaviour that will be socially rewarded and the role that best suits them. The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volume 14 (1999:730) noted that youth rely heavily on peer group for support, security and guidance. For example, youth who always have money might encourage others to device means to get it. To fit in properly with their peers, they begin to steal, to engage in love relationships or even have sex for money.

A weak socio-economic position often means that a child is raised in a weak social-economic environment (Conen and Rutten, 2003:28). For example, a child living in a high-crime area, who also suffers from poverty and dense living conditions, might be highly involved in criminal acts. Elliot in Dryfoos (1990:40) demonstrated that peers display a very powerful influence over the behaviour of teenagers. He also emphasised the point that, the chances of becoming delinquent are greatly increased when one lives in a non-supportive environment.

Gage in Mwamwenda (1998:175) supported the subject by noting that youth like to imitate things they see; experience and apply them to their daily lives. Peer pressure may influence the behaviour of youngsters in different ways. For instance, they may influence each other with regard to issues such as educational aspiration and performance.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volume 14 (1999: 720) stressed the point that parents and youth have different attitudes on issues of contemporary social concern, e.g. politics, drug use and sexuality. Their difference reflects contrast on attitude of interest rather than attitude of difference. The same counts for youth with friends who have already had sexual relationships. They are likely to practice what their friends are doing in order to have money and be able to have things that their friends possess, e.g. some are buying expensive food during lunch breaks, able to buy clothes and go to hair salons to expensively style their hair. All these put them at risk of HIV/AIDS.

Peer pressure may contribute to crime, shoplifting, smoking, and alcohol and drug abuse. Those who are involved in crime, some of them were successful in getting money from stolen goods. Their friends are influenced to practice that in order to get money. The unfortunate ones get caught and appear before the courts. This results in absenteeism due to court appearances.

Peer pressure may also contribute to teenage pregnancy, for example, those who have befriended the ones receiving the child support grants are likely to fall pregnant. These cases might contribute to underachieving and labelling, because they do not attend school regularly and at risk of contracting the pandemic. This may result in making them finding it difficult to catch up with their school work.

2.2.1.4. Teenage Pregnancy

Studies on teenage pregnancy explained that this subject seem to be prevalent in families with low income, or with parents who have low levels of education. McKenzie, Pinger and Kotecki (1999:198) indicated that the results of the pregnancy forces youth to be out of school or absent themselves as some would be undergoing pre-natal visits at health centres or clinics.

Conen and Rutten (2003) in their study, support what McKenzie et al had emphasised by noting that for the youth to leave school early, is that, the young mother has to deliver and raise the child, which makes it more difficult to continue schooling. They are now forced to be adults and to be responsible for their babies while they are young.

Kiggundu and Swierstra (2002: 198) supported the matter of teenage pregnancy by expressing what Malema had found on the study conducted at Ga-Dikgale. Malema (1998) revealed that out of 120 grade 12 learners, 75% were already mothers. Malema's study found that those girls had indicated that they have had their first boyfriends when they were fifteen (15) and sixteen (16) years of age. This is an indication that when they reach the age of eighteen (18), they would or might have had multi sexual partners, and sexual relationships. When they are nursing their children, they are not at school. Some leave school permanently as there would be no one to look after their young ones.

Dryfoos (1990:43) indicated that early sexual initiates have more frequent acts of coitus and multiple partners. A study conducted by Malema (1998) support what Dryfoos had indicated when stating that there were girls who had already sexual relationships when they were only fifteen (15) and sixteen (16). It is assumed that there are those who had fallen in love with their peers and older people at a

time. The age at which the youth enters into the sexual relationships, is less likely to use effective methods of contraception. Other consequences other than teenage or unplanned pregnancy are sexually transmitted diseases (STI's) and their related effects.

Teenage pregnancy may also be found in families headed by single parents or those lacking support and monitoring. Cohabiting may be a contributing factor, as they believe that it is a norm to live with the opposite sex out of wedlock and bear children.

2.2.1.5. Child support grant

According to the statistics from the local clinic at Marapong, a total number of +/- 40 girls fall pregnant each year. It seems as if this is done on purpose in order to receive child support grants. Receiving child support grants seem to be more prevalent in families with low income, or with parents who have low-level of education.

The Premier of Limpopo Province Sello Moloto, in (Directory of Black Business, 2005:177) stated that government continues to alleviate poverty through social grants. He indicated that in the Province the number of children under the age of seven (7) who are receiving grants had increased from 385 653 to 539 010 by December 2003. Reason for this increased rate might be as a result of the increased grants (i.e. the money increased from R150 to R180 and now in 2006 has increased to R190). Poverty and lack of parental involvement might be the causes for the increased number of children who are receiving the support grants.

Receiving child support grant might be the results of absenteeism at school. Young mothers, who absent themselves to receive the grants, find themselves left behind with studies. To be a mother at an early age puts youth at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and high risk of health consequences. Those who are not receiving child support grants might be labelled as being foolish and are therefore pressurised to emulate what their peers are experiencing, which is receiving money at the end of each month.

2.2.1.6. *Child Abuse*[11]

Child abuse is called cruelty to children. Frequently child abuse may have serious future consequences on the victim. The abuse is regarded as a major public health problem and affects youth's lives and their families (Shirreffs, 1982). Abuse may be recognised in various forms, namely:

- Physical abuse
- negligence
- emotional abuse
- deprivation
- verbal assaulted
- sexual abuse

Wolfe, McMahon and Peters (1997:99) on this matter noted that abuse might be more prevalent in families with poor economical position because there is lack of parental care. Other studies on child abuse revealed the following features:

- Parents are younger than average
- Frequent change of homes
- Families are larger than an average size
- There is a typical family structure (i.e. higher than average proportion of step-parents and other non biological parents)
- Frequent marital discord
- Low socio economic status
- High rate of general criminality

Wolfe et al (1997.99) indicated that incest and child sexual molestation are partially or not reported by families who experience the problem. The failure had led to recognition of private forms of violence, forms of tact and denial, effects and the consequences thereof on the victim.

Prejudice, anxiety, shame and lack of information, seem to be the major reasons for child abuse (Lober in Wolfe et al, 1997). Boys were more frequently the objects of physical abuse, until they turn 13, while girls were abused sexually.

[11] The term denotes the use of inordinate physical violence, unjustifiable verbal use, and the failure to furnish proper shelter, incest, other cases of sexual molestation or rape, and making child pornography.

Abusive patterns of behaviour on the part of parents might be maladaptive responses to stressful situations and feelings of powerlessness. They represent adult's warped efforts to master out-of-control situations or regain psychological equilibrium. This might be done through imposing their will and powers of control on their own defenceless children.

The psychiatric and paediatric research in Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volume 3 (1999: 207) stressed the point that a high proportion of parents guilty of abusive and inhuman treatment of their children, were physically and mentally maltreated themselves as children. These parents were over disciplined and deprived from parental love in their infancy; therefore they repeat the pattern with their own children. They also indicated that they often believe that they were legimately exercising their parental rights.

Abuse may also take place in schools. Jones and Pickett (1987:108) in his studies indicated that teachers have been criticised in great numbers for child abuse. For example, there are those who abuse learners, verbally, physically and emotionally. There are still educators who apply corporal punishment to the learners, have sexual relationships with them and those, when talking to learners, use a note of mockery in their voices.

2.2.1.7 Alcohol Abuse

The Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volume 1 (1999:229) refers to alcohol abuse as alcoholism[12]. It is viewed that causes of the abuse of alcohol might be the hereditary defects, physical malfunctions, psychological disorder, and the response to economic and social stress. Studies classified alcohol abuse as caused by the *inherited* and *environmental risk factors*.

McKenzie, Pinger and Kotecki (1999) support what other researchers have indicated by classifying alcohol abuse as caused by the hereditary defects. The *inherited traits* which are the cause of abuse might increase one's risk of developing while the environmental *risk factors*[13] may be identified as those which are influenced by the following: one's home and family, school, peer group, society and may thus cause a person to use alcohol excessively.

[12] Is a repetitive intake of alcoholic beverages to such an extent that repeated or continued harm to the drinker occurs
[13] Factors that increase the probability of disease, injury, or death

Inherited risk factors

McKenzie et al (1999) on this factor indicated that observational studies have been conducted. The findings show that alcohol related problems might cause one to respond positively to the effects of alcohol and thus drinking more.

Environmental risk factors

Psychological and social factors may influence the person to use and abuse alcohol and other drugs (McKenzie et al, 1999:108) on the following:

- Personal factors

These factors include personal traits, such as impulsiveness, depressive mood, susceptibility to stress and personality disturbance. For example, a person chooses to use alcohol or drugs abuse in response to a stressful situation which may result to either inherited characteristics or learned behaviour.

- Home and Life

Meller and Needle in McKenzie et al (1999:113) did a research on this subject and assumed that family problems, family structure and family dynamics may contribute to drug experimentation by children and adolescents (youth). For example, negative family events such as death, divorce, and parental drug abuse may cause a person to be associated with the initiation of alcohol and other drug use.

Youth who grew in the above situations are likely to practise the behaviour. When they are using drugs, they are at risk to be raped or to rape. Studies revealed that over half of young people have had sex while under the influence and this put them at risk of contracting the HI virus.

There are youth who take alcohol and drugs. They see to it as the best option to escape the problems of daily life. Mwamwenda (1998) in his study emphasised that the effects of alcohol extends to youth who were known to perform poorly. The results of the youth to take alcohol might be the lack of parental guidance or lack of recreational facilities in the area where he/she lives. This has an influence on the performance of the youth at school. Those whose performances were affected may start to have mental problems and have to absent themselves or leave school.

The effects of alcohol abuse might not be limited to the person concerned, but extends to others particularly his/her family members.

2.2.1.8 Incest[14]

Studies on this subject indicate that all societies have faced the problem of reconciling the need of controlling sex with that of giving it adequate expression. Young girls at their homes staying with step-parents are more likely to be the victims of incest. For example, young girls are raped, or forced to have sexual intercourse within the family members. Wattan, Huges and Blagg (1996:66), in their studies stressed the point that most males turn to adolescent girls when their sexual needs are not met.

Lauer and Lauer (2002:440) for example, expressed a concern that when these adults' sexual needs are aroused, they begin to have a development of sexuality towards the youth. These developments affect the attitude to and the feelings of youth. They noted that adults admit that their feelings of sexual attraction towards youth are common, while they are creating problems for themselves. They may contribute for the youth to be withdrawn, run away from home, live on streets, live with age mates; and see no value of attending school.

2.2.2. School Factors

In this study one has to understand the school[15]. A school is a major social institution other than the family, which nearly everyone is involved in during the critical years of childhood and adolescence.

Gouws and Kruger (1995:109) supported the matter and stated that educators should understand different developmental stages of their students. For example, to some educators it comes as a surprise when they had taught a child from grade one and the child move to the next developmental stage. This usually happens to middle schools, which their grades start from 1-9. Boyer in Conger (1991) supported Gouws and Kruger by urging educators to foster youth overall development, or simply decrease the youth's problem by communicating with their parents.

The problem of some youth who behave unhealthily at secondary schools might be related to conditions within the school. Examples could be the way educators treat youth and the discipline that is applied at school. Presentation of lessons is important as it connects knowledge in daily life and the school. Some of the lessons presented do not connect with the interest and opportunities of learners.

[14] Sexual relations between persons who, because of the nature of their kin relationship are prohibited by law from intermarrying

[15] Is a place where activities are done, educators are intervening by helping, supporting and accompanying the learners.

For example, if youth were required to memorise large amounts of information, which does not integrate to important principles or ideas, this could lead to boredom. Boredom encourages youth not to attend regularly.

Boredom may afflict youth at any level. For example, the slowest learner may be bored because he/she cannot grasp the material and may see no point to what he/she is doing. Eventually he/she will loose interest and absent him/herself or leave school permanently.

Studies on this subject indicated that absenteeism in secondary schools might be caused by lack of safety, (Lauer and Lauer, 2002:67). There are schools that do not look after learners. When learners enter the schoolyard they should be protected until the end of lessons. If there are things that hinder their protection they are likely to be away from school.

Things that may hinder their protection may be characterised as follows:

- Physical fights
- Theft (property stolen, or damaged)
- The use of weapons
- The use of drugs and alcohol on school property
- The treatment of educators towards youth e.g. calling them by names, talking to them rudely in front of their peers etc.

All the above problems are most common at schools. The above mentioned factors encourage gangsterism. Some of the learners might be forced to be in those gangs. Such gang members might be involved in drugs, violence and thus not perform well at school. To some the crab bucket syndrome[16] affects them. As they try to do good work, they face enormous pressure, harassment and even violence as others try to pull them back into the bucket. Such learners eventually see no value of attending school and absent themselves.

Mwamwenda (1998) in his study pointed out that overcrowded classes were difficult to control and forces teachers and learners to abscond their classes. He stated that such classes experience discomfort because of poor ventilation or extreme temperatures in the classes. Youth who are taught in such

[16] It refers to the fact that a certain group of learners who try to free themselves from the culture of gangs, drugs and violence and do good work.

situations, might abscond from lessons. There might be those who would after break or lunch, leave school and do not return.

2.2.3. Personal Factors

There are several factors among youth, which seem to contribute to absenteeism.

They are:

- *Low performance due to lack of motivation*
- *Low performance due to poor attendance*

2.2.3.1. Low performance due to lack of motivation

Learners with poor attendance, fall behind their peers. This makes them to have low self-esteem and to think that they are incapable. They eventually absent themselves because they see no value in attending.

The above mentioned factor is defined as those inner psychological characteristics that both determine and reflect how a person responds to his environment as Schiffman and Kank (1978) had noted. The emphasis is on youth's inner characteristics namely, specific qualities, attitudes, traits and those distinguish them from one another. A learner who performs poorly at school and whose interests are shattered low, might absent him or herself from school and practice unhealthy living to survive.

Rampedi and Zeelen, (2000) in Conen and Rutten supported the matter by indicating that youth who lack motivation or who had no plans for their future are likely to leave school early. Their lack of motivation may be caused by the age gap. If he or she is older than other learners in his/her class, he/she might get demotivated and absent him/herself from school or leave permanently.

2.2.3..2. Low Intelligence due to poor attendance

Clenson S.C., the National Prevention and Network (on www.dropoutprevention.org.) note that, youth who have poor attendance are likely to absent themselves from school. Such youth miss their lessons and they fall behind in class leading them to low self-esteem and lack of confidence in their learning

abilities. It can be further explained as Conen and Rutten (2003:36) had indicated that underachievers may absent themselves from school more than those with average or more intelligence due to the medium of instruction offered at school. They may be experiencing problems in expressing themselves fluently using the medium of instruction.

Van Batenburg and Roeeveld, Derks and Roede in Conen and Rutten (2003:36) indicated that when a learner is not fluent in the medium of instruction offered at school, he/she is at risk of leaving without attaining a grade twelve certificate.

The author has a feeling that Love Life programmes might play a vital role in the reduction of absenteeism.

2.3. The role of Love Life programmes in the reduction of absenteeism

The study intends to find how Love Life programmes are operating and what more these programmes could do in schools to reduce absenteeism.

Henry J. Kaizer (on www.kff.org) defines Love Life as a comprehensive, scientific approach to youth's behavioural change. He stated that these programmes implement the international experience and establish public health techniques with innovating marketing approaches. These approaches promote a healthy sexuality[17], responsibility and healthy living of youth.

It was stated in the report by Rena Singer of the Mail and Guardian of 19th to 25th August 2005 that these programmes use a slick marketing campaign, volunteers in government health centres and schools to pitch its slogan, "positive living". The report indicated that the programme's shorthand for lifestyle is letting youth know that condoms are cool, abstaining from sex is hip and hanging out in "chill rooms" is the in-thing. This explains that if they hang in "chill rooms" they are inviting the virus.

The (www.kff.org.) states that these programmes combine highly valuable multi-media campaigns worldwide with Adolescent- Friendly service development in Government health clinics, national network and support for youth.

[17] Their body and sexual feeling are important parts of their being. They should make correct decisions with their body

The multi-media campaigns include the following:

- A sustained multi-media education and awareness campaign, that includes TV, radio, outdoor media, that will educate youth about HIV and promote dialogue about sexual issues.
- The National Adolescent- Friendly Clinic initiative, which is a major drive to establish adolescent health services in South African's public clinics.
- A national network of 16 multipurpose youth facilities, known as "Y-centres", provide recreation and skills training as well as sexual health education and care in non-clinical settings.
- A countrywide programme of community-level outreach and support to youth led by a national volunteer corps[18] of 18- 25 years old, known as the Love Life groundbreakers.
- A national accessible toll-free telephone helpline for youth, which provides them with specialized sexual health information, counselling and referrals averaging 60,000 calls per month.
- The Love Life Games, which is the largest sport competition in South Africa, promotes health living to youth.

In South Africa, a Consortium[19] leading to Public Health Organisation launched these programmes in September 1999. This Organisation is in partnership with a coalition[20] of more than hundred locally-based-serving organisations, the South African media group and private foundations like that of Kaizer. The aim of launching these programmes is to make youth to live positively and be more focused on their future. These will lead them to act more responsibly and avoid exposure to the pandemic.

The National Survey (2002) showed that two thirds of youth in South Africa knew about Love Life Games and a substantial majority of them have been exposed to them. For example, most schools have participated up to the National level. There are some youth who have been using the Thetha Junction line for advices on life issues, (Love Life pamphlets). The programme had also used radio, TV, and billboards to convey the message of practising healthy lifestyles.

[18] A set of people engaged in the same activity
[19] A combination of countries, or groups acting together
[20] Temporary alliance

2.3.1. Love Life's main objectives

The role of Love Life programmes is to shift the youth from the existing high-risk patterns of sexual health behaviour, so that they should delay in sexual activities. Those who are sexually active should use condoms. Youth are taught to respect their bodies and by not involving themselves in abuse of alcohol and drugs. It also champions "non-smoking" habits and this is a challenge that all communities are facing.

South African youth are among those at the highest risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. These programmes sell AIDS prevention to a mass market of youth because sexual behaviour drives the HIV epidemic. The Love Life programmes try to change youth's sexual behaviour, reduce the infection rate, a delay in sexual debut, partner reduction including the usage of condoms among those who are sexually active.

If youth are uninformed, unskilled and even unmotivated or simply lacking access to protection, they will still have sex, which is likely to be penetrative and unprotected. A fundamental prevention of HIV and the means of protecting one; are when one changes his/her sex life and live a healthy life.

There are indications, which prove that youth at the two secondary schools at Marapong might be engaged in practising unhealthy lifestyles. It is assumed that some of them might be receiving child support grants. Being a mother at an early stage might lead to the vulnerability of HIV/AIDS.

Their participation in these programmes might help in the reduction of absenteeism, make them aware and take precautions on the pandemic. If the youth are exposed to the ideas and objectives of the programme, life becomes organised and stress free. This inadvertently leads to non-absenteeism.

The Department of Education implemented the Life Skills programmes, in the learning area Life Orientation that aims to encourage youth to have:

- Dignity[21]
- Respect[22]
- Open communication about sex
- Sexual and gender relation based on informed choice

[21] Believe in their own worth
[22] They should respect their body, and treat others as they want to be treated

- Shared responsibilities
- Healthy lifestyle, aspirations and also love themselves

Rena Singer in the Mail & Guardian of the 19th to 25th August 2005 commented that Love Life had helped South Africans to talk more openly about sex, and provide youth with the knowledge of HIV as the Life Skills programmes do. There was also a report that these programmes had been visible in getting the message across the youth, promoting positive and healthy living.

2.4. Implementation of the Love Life programmes at schools

To be successful in this subject, the schools and Love Life programmes had to change the pervasive values and attitudes among youth to sex, sexuality and gender relations. The Love Life Monitoring Team's annual report of 2004 (on www.lovelife.org.za) stated that Love Life's strategy was to encourage the implementation of Love Life's programmes at schools. They indicated that if the DoE could support the implementation, the number of young people who are currently in schools could increase tremendously. One could further add that even the rate of absenteeism would decrease.

It is believed that if the new infection rates among 15-19 year olds could be reduced by sustained behaviour change, then the total prevalence of HIV in South Africa would decline sharply and rapidly (Love Life Monitoring Team's report, 2004).

2.5. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have established the following:

- Possible causes of absenteeism
- The role of Love Life programmes in the reduction of absenteeism
- Love Life's main objectives
- Implementation of Love Life programmes

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will start by stating the design and the nature of the study. The main aim will be on the approaches of collecting data. There will be an explanation of the instruments that were used to collect data from different participants. As indicated in the theoretical framework, there were possible assumptions that forced youth to be away from school. This study focuses on youth who are at risk of dropping out at the educational level and find the role that the Love Life programmes could contribute in the reduction of absenteeism.

3.2. Research Design

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:31) defined research design as a plan which described the procedures for conducting the study to provide the most valid, accurate answers possible to research questions. To provide accurate answers, I decided to undertake a descriptive approach to find causes for absenteeism in the two secondary schools at Marapong. I chose the descriptive study as it puts me in a good stead to address the problem of absenteeism, the role of Love Life programmes, views of educators, participants and non participants towards these programmes.

3.2.1. Nature of the study

This study is qualitative in nature, in the sense that it reaches out to people in their natural setting to gather first hand data. The data can be based on what is happening presently or what happened in the past.

The aim is to identify and describe the problems that contribute in making the youth to absent themselves from school. It also intends to evaluate the impact of Love Life programmes on the reduction of absenteeism in participating schools. Qualitative research is defined as a multi perspective

approach to social interaction, aimed at describing, making sense of, interpreting or reconstructing this interaction in terms of meanings that subjects attach to it, (Niersman, 2003:30).

The research also contains aspects of quantitative research. The quantitative research is used to present statistical results with numbers. For example, in this study tables were used.

3.2.2. Target Group

I targeted two male principals, three educators of whom two were females and one was male, coordinators of the Love Life programmes were two males, eight Love Life participants and eight non-participants from each school. The participants' ages ranged from 14 to 24 years.

A purposeful sampling was used to select the participants. From the eight participants, four were males and four were females, and the same sampling was also applied to the non-participants. The class teachers and the programme coordinators helped in identifying the group.

A focus group and the feedback committee comprised of the respondents, two members from the School Governing Body (SGB) and two representatives from the Representative Council of Learners (RCL). The aim of this group was to help me with ideas that I might have ignored when dealing with causes of absenteeism. They helped to explore possible improvements that the programmes could bring at the two schools. In all, the respondents comprised of thirteen males and ten females.

3.3. Data Collection

This is the process of gathering data from the selected sample by using certain instruments or methods. Data collected in this report involved everyday events like information from class registers and the Love Life documents, recording of peoples' gestures obtained from both schools.

This design is classified as, quantitative and qualitative. The state of being different was that, the quantitative approach uses numbers to find the rate of absenteeism between the two schools and gave a clear picture of the group which has more absents (i.e. males and females). The qualitative approaches made a narrative description from the respondents and aim to discover why youth at these schools absent themselves.

The following instruments were used to collect data:

- Documents
- Interviews (Individual)
- Focus group
- Feedback meetings

3.3.1. Documents

During this stage, an explorative research was done to obtain the rate of absenteeism, total number of learners at the two schools, their ages, sex, and also obtained information on the characteristics, aims and programmes offered by Love Life. Class registers for all the grades for the year 2003 and for grades 8 and 10 for the year 2004; and Love Life documents were requested from class teachers and coordinators with the permission of their principals (school manager).

From the registers the following were obtained:

- Their grade
- Age
- Gender
- Dates in which learners were absent
- Possible attendance at both schools
- Absent percentage

The coordinators assisted in determining whether participants were taking part or not. The Love Life documents were also requested from coordinators. From the Love Life Documents the following were obtained:

- Characteristics of the programme
- Aims
- Programmes offered by Love life

3.3.2. Interviews

Interviews are techniques which involve direct interaction between individuals. They require intense listening, respect for and curiosity about what people tell. McMillan and Schumacher (1997: 250)

indicated that interviews should be flexible and adaptable as they provide information on what people need, why they need that and possible solutions to the problem. Semi-structured interviews were carried out. They gave the interviewer great latitude in asking questions, which were open ended. These questions allowed individual responses. The theoretical framework was used to indicate kinds of problems to be expected.

Below follows the guideline for the interviews.

3.3.2.1. Interview Guide

The guide was divided into three sections namely:

- Section A

The introduction was the first. It was important as it explained the purpose of the research. Respondents had to know that there were no marks to be allocated for the completion of the questionnaire. The aim was to make them comfortable when answering questions asked. Their participation might bring changes to the two secondary schools mentioned earlier.

To record the responses, a tape recorder and note taking were used. The aim of recording was to replay the cassette and to ensure the accuracy of data captured. Permission for the usage of a tape recorder was requested. The usage of the language was of their choice (i.e. Northern Sotho or Tswana). The reason was to encourage them to give information freely. They were assured about the confidentiality of the report and that real names would not be used when the report was to be written.

- Section B

This was the central section of the interviews. During this section, personal and general questions were asked to put respondents at ease. Questions about causes of absenteeism, views about the programmes, problems encountered during presentation of the programmes to the youth; and suggestions on improving the reduction of absenteeism were asked (see appendix 3-7).

- Section C

It was the last section of the interviews, where the respondents were given the opportunity to ask questions and give their remarks. They were thanked for their attention, cooperation and taking part.

3.3.2.2. The interviews

I designed questions made up of seven components (see appendices). The aim of forming these questions was to gather data that helped in answering the research questions. Studies on this subject indicated that interviews provide information on what people need and their possible solutions to problems. In this study, participants were to give the information about absenteeism, describe the causes and also to state the possible solutions of absenteeism (see appendices).

Semi-structured interviews were used and I asked open-ended questions which helped to achieve defined answers to defined questions. The open-ended questions gave time for further development of answers given. This helped in getting the clear picture of absenteeism; finding out how the two schools dealt with the problem and feelings of the coordinators when presenting the programmes to the youth.

The interview questions had to cover the research questions. The theoretical framework was used to indicate factors that could be expected. During the interviews, principals and educators were asked to give their views about absenteeism, how absenteeism affect their work, how it affected their work, how they dealt with the problem at their respective schools and in their classes. Youth were asked to give views about the Love Life programmes and the main focus was mainly on what forced them to abscond. (See appendices).

3.3.3. Focus Group

A focus group which comprised of two principals, three representatives from educators, coordinators, School Governing Body (SGB), Representative Learners Council (RLC) of both schools was formed during the early stages of the interviews. The aim of forming this group was for the group to assist in identifying factors that I might have overlooked when investigating things that promote absenteeism and gave ideas on how to conduct and approach the youth. The group gave inputs on how the programmes might be improved.

The principals of the two schools agreed on having one meeting, which was held at Phegelelo Senior Secondary School as it had a bigger hall. The distance between the two schools is less than a kilometre (150m). The aim of choosing the school was to accommodate all the stakeholders of the two schools.

3.5.4. Feedback Meetings

Feedback committee was formed after the completion of data collection. It comprised of two principals, three educators, two coordinators, learners and the SGB of both schools. The aim of forming this committee was to discuss possible ways of reducing absenteeism and how Love Life programmes contributed in this.

During the meeting, problems brought by the participants were discussed. They were glad to hear the causes for absenteeism and promised to solve the problem by conveying the problems mentioned to other staff members and start with the implementation.

3.4. Data Analysis[23]

The information that I have gained from the interviews and documents gave me a broader understanding about the kinds of problems that exist in the two secondary schools. The aim was to give a description on the problem of absenteeism and investigate how the Love Life programmes would play their role in the reduction of problem.

In order to reduce data, a number of variables were identified on the basis of the theoretical framework, aims of the study and the research questions. They were: socio-economic, the school and personal factors. The three factors were the basis for selecting particular words that produce the categories of the interviews. I decided to find data on the basis of the research questions. The aim was to find the rate, reasons of absenteeism, and the characteristics of the programmes and the impact of Love Life programmes in the reduction of absenteeism.

The tapes and information gathered were processed. To order information gathered, I used a *Matrix*, which helped to categorise data. Information that fitted in the *matrix* would have a more concrete character.

[23] Data has to be clustered and summarised.

Quantitative data were analysed by making use of descriptive statistics. Borg and Gall (1996) in White (2005:256) define descriptive statistic[24]. Data from registers were organised and represented by means of tables, see the next chapter.

Below is table 1 that gives an overview of categories that emerged during the study.

Table 1: Categories that emerged during the study

Categories	P1	P2	Ed 1	Ed2	Ed3	PA1-8	NP1-8	CO 1	CO 2
Parental Involvement									
Poverty									
Peer Pressure									
Child Abuse									
Child Support Grants/ Teenage pregnancy									
School									
Personal Factors: Over-aged Failing several times									
Others Juvenile Delinquency Alcohol abuse									

[24] As a mathematical technique for organising, summarizing and display a set of numerical data

Legend:
P1 and P2 represent the two principals of both schools
Ed1, Ed2, Ed3 for the representatives from the educators
CO 1 and CO 2 for the Love Life coordinators
PA1-8 for those learners who are participating in the Love Life programmes
NP1-8 for those who are not taking part in the programmes

Lastly, meetings were organised in order to identify factors that I might have ignored when finding causes that promote absenteeism and discuss ways that the role that the Love Life programmes could play in the reduction of the problem. During the meeting, the participants were asked to give opinion on the findings of the interviews. New data was collected from the group, which was used to draw the final conclusion about causes of absenteeism and how the Love Life programmes would play its role.

Milles and Huberman (1984:219) suggested that after each theme was described, a summary on the conclusions was made on that category in order to understand the phenomenon better. The findings of the analysis are described in Chapter 4.

3.5. Difficulties

Interviews took place during final year examinations. I had a problem of conducting them as scheduled because educators were busy with the invigilation and marking, while learners did revision as they were writing examinations. I made appointments with them several times, and I thanked them for making this study a success. Having different supervisors delayed the conclusion of the report as they had different views on my work.

3.6. Experiences

A good proposal is the foundation of a good research, for referral purposes and making the process of data collection easier. For example, the assumptions stated in the theoretical framework helped a lot and those not stated in the section were recorded as others.

3.7. Concluding Remarks

This chapter consist of:

- How data was collected from the documents
- Ways in which interviews were conducted
- Types of interviews
- Gaining insight on the causes for absenteeism
- How the focus group and feed back committee were formed
- How data was analysed
- The difficulties and experiences encountered during the study

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter is about the results from the documents and interviews conducted at the two secondary schools at Marapong. It answers the question of absenteeism; the role that Love Life programmes could play in the reduction of absenteeism and explores the changes that these programmes could bring about. The intention is again to provide answers to the research questions.

Below are the portraits to give the reader an insight into the situation of the lives of the respondents. The portraits are chosen because they describe some causes of absenteeism, the characteristics and aims of the Love Life programmes. A short description is given thereafter. To guarantee anonymity, names have been changed.

4.2. Portraits

Mark Mabusela (grade 8, participant in Lifestyles)

My name is Mark and I am fourteen years old. I am doing grade eight with my twin brother. We are a family of nine, myself, father, mother, two brothers, three sisters and my twin brother. I am doing MLMMS, NS, A&C, LO, HSS, LLC1-3, EMS and TECH. After completing school, I wish to be a traffic officer. My parents support me in relation to school matters. They are both working; my father works at Kumba Coal Mine as a driver, my mother works as a day care mother at a nearby crèche. My parents and some teachers at school motivated me to take part in the Love Life programmes. These programmes are interesting as they help youth to develop confidence, leadership skills and team work. I recommend youth to take part in these programmes. I am involved in Mayibuye, a local club that teaches me cultural dances of the Pedi and Tswana nations, showing the role men and women should play in family circles and keep me away from the streets. The club has the attire for both traditions. There are boys of my age who during weekends and after school, hang around the shebeens and taverns. These cultural dances are also used in Love Life programmes even though the message

conveyed differs from that of Love Life programmes. The Love Life programmes encourage youth to take care of themselves, abstain and live a healthy life. The programmes also guide and encourage youth" to love to be there" by 2010 while at Mayebuye we sing cultural songs, which motivates us to know our roots. We sometimes go to places, where we sing, dance and entertain the tourists who visit our area and come in the early hours of the morning (at 00h30 or 1h00). Sometimes our local municipality invite us to entertain their guests such as MEC's and even when the Premier visits the area. We also participate in municipal competitions. One member from our group was selected to represent our province in Japan unfortunately the trip failed. I fail to wake up because most of the time I arrive home in the early hours of the morning. This behaviour annoys my parents because they feel that I am ignoring my school work.

Rosina Rabodipa (grade 10 and a non-participant)

I am twenty-two years old. I have two brothers and a sister. We both stay with our parents. I am in grade ten and doing the following subjects: N.Sotho, English, Afrikaans, Biology, Physical Science and Mathematics. Hoping that after completing school, I would become a nurse. My father is working at Eskom and my mother is unemployed. I do not know anything about the Love Life programmes. At first I thought that they are for those who are actively involved in sports, who know about dances, gumboots, dramas and other activities. I do not take part in any sporting code at school. I wish to join them, to know places as others do. The group from Tielelo once went to Durban performing in the Lifestyle category. On their return, they told me how they enjoyed themselves. Some even went to swim in the Indian Ocean, which I do not know. They also told us that they have met artist like Arthur Mafokate and some other local artists. They have also met the then Minister of Arts, Culture and Sports Mr N. Balfour. The group also told me that they had seen big cargos at the ocean and manufacturing companies like that of Selati. I'm always absent after writing monthly tests because I know that teacher X will be making a mockery out of me. I also know that absenting oneself regularly will make one to fail at the end of the year. I have experience in that, as I have failed several times. I suggest that the principal could talk to teacher X as he/she is making my life a living hell.

4.2.1. Descriptions

Mark is fourteen years old and he is doing grade 8. He is from a family of nine and intends to be a traffic officer after completing his grade 12. His father is a driver at Kumba Coal Mine and the mother is a day care teacher at the crèche. He participates in the Love Life programmes in the lifestyle

category. The lifestyle category includes dances (western and traditional), dramas, poetry and songs. This category aims at empowering youth to make informed choices, share sexual responsibilities and to engage themselves in healthy sexual behaviour. It conveys the message to the youth that they should live a healthy life and abstain from sex to avoid contracting HIV/AIDS that affects most South Africans.

The programmes educate youth to delay on sex, reduce the number of sexual partners and to use condoms. The programme also empowers youth to value, evaluate and manage their lives. His teachers and parents had motivated him to participate in the Love Life programmes.

He is also participating at the local club in order to keep himself away from the streets. He indicated that youth of his age spend most of their time at shebeens and taverns. After lessons he goes to the club to do some rehearsals for the new dance.

The name of the club is "*Mayebuye"* which is a Zulu name meaning, "Bring it back". The club wants to bring cultural dances back so that youth should know their roots. In this club youth are doing cultural dances of the Pedi and Tswana's. They have the cultural attire for the Pedi and the Tswana people. The Tswana attire is made from the springbok and impala skin.

The difference between Mayebuye and Love Life programmes is the kind of messages conveyed. At Mayebuye they only practice cultural songs which convey how the Pedi's and Tswana's were living culturally while the Love Life programmes inform youth on how to engage themselves in a healthy lifestyle.

The Lephalale Municipality and owners of game parks around the vicinity invites the Mayebuye club to their important occasions. The reason for the invitation is to entertain the tourists and guests who visited the Lephalale area.

The Mayebuye club took their members away from school several times to entertain the tourists at game parks and most of the time they came home late, even though they had to be at school the following day. The Municipality invites them during weekends and sometimes took them to Municipality competitions. He indicated that one member (best dancer in Tswana) was supposed to go to Japan in July 2005 but the trip failed instead.

Categories that were discovered during the interview showed lack of parental involvement and poverty. The reason being they are a family of nine, with a minimum wage income to satisfy the family's needs. In a family which is financially stable, it is unlikely that parents would allow their children to partake in such activities i.e. which allows them to go out until late, especially during the week.

He indicated that his parents do not want to hear anything about the club as it (club) pays fees (school) for its participants. In Mark's case, the financial problems made his parents to focus on Mayibuye as it pays the fees and not on his educational well-being.

Mark is the fourth participant (P4), (see table 3.3). It was explained in Chapter 2 that if a family is unable to satisfy its needs its members would end up being poor. This has been associated with poor health, low education levels or skills, inability or unwillingness to participate in activities of the society and high rates of disruptive or disorderly behaviour. For parents who had received low levels/ skills of education, chances for their children to be away from school are much higher. The parents could never value the school and the club equally.

Mark's parents gave the club permission to take their child out during the week while the child (youth) was supposed to concentrate on school work. He indicated that most of the time they arrived late (at round about 00h30 and 01h00) and this would lead to some of the members being unable to wake up early to go to school. His parents failed to wake him up.

In the second portrait, Rosina is twenty-two years old and is doing grade ten. She is over-aged for the grade. If a learner started school at the age of seven, when he/she reaches eighteen or nineteen he/she should be in grade twelve. She is from a family of six. She intends to be a nurse after completing her grade twelve. Her father is working at Eskom as an operator and the mother is unemployed.

She is a non-participant. Rosina does not take part in any sporting code. The reason for her not to participate in these programmes was that she thought the programmes were meant for those who were actively involved in sports or who knew how to dance (cultural and western). She wanted to join the programmes as she thought that for a person to know places, he/she must be involved in such programmes. She indicated that the Life style category of Tielelo Junior Secondary School went twice to the National Competitions, held in Durban (i.e. in 2003 and 2004).

On their arrival back home they told her that they shook hands with Arthur Mafokate the "*Kwaito Star"* and other celebrities. They also met the former Minister of Sports, Arts and Culture, Mr N. Balfour. She had never met them except on TV, in magazines and newspapers. She thought that it was a privilege for one to take part in the Love Life programmes because one meets celebrities. They also had the chance to swim in the Indian Ocean, which she did not know. They even told her that they saw big cargos, and big manufacturing companies e.g. the Selati for sugar etc.

Categories come out from the second portrait are the school and personal factors (referring to Rosina). The explanations of how these factors could be linked to absenteeism were explained in Chapter 2. From the school, she indicated that teacher X was making a mockery out of her in front of other learners after failing a test. She was aware of the consequence of absenteeism that one fails at the end of the year. She had experience on that as she had failed several times. She wished that the principal could have a word with teacher X with regard to his/her actions.

Another reason that contributed to her several failures was her inability to understand the medium of instruction used at school. Learners who experience such problems see no value of coming to school as they have a problem of understanding things taught in the medium of instruction used at school. This leads them to have a low self-esteem and increase their chances to abscond from school totally.

When teachers bring back test scripts to them, those who failed become ashamed and blame themselves for coming to school on that day. She indicated that she absented herself from school when she knew that teacher X was going to give them their test scripts.

Below I will present the findings from the documents and interviews.

4.2.2. Findings from the documents

The findings are from the following documents:

- Registers
- The Love Life documents

4.2.2.1 Registers

Class registers for all grades for the years 2003 and 2004 were obtained from class teachers. For the year 2004, more concentration was on grades 8 and 10 for the study. The aim of asking for these registers was to find the rate of absenteeism and which gender absents most.
The information obtained from the registers was as follows:

- Age
- Gender
- Grade
- Absentees
- Detailed information of learners

Attention would be paid on age, gender and the absenteeism. The following tables (i.e. 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3) show the age groups, gender, grades and the absentees of Tielelo Junior and Phegelelo Senior Secondary School.

Table 2.1: Absenteeism at Tielelo Junior Secondary School (April-June)

Grade	No of classes	Age	Gender		Pay dates of every Month (April – June)					
			M	F	15th		22nd		30th	
Grade 7	4	12-14 yrs	96	104	18	24	19	20	23	10
Grade 8	4	14-19 yrs	117	123	12	50	7	33	17	31
Grade 9	4	15-20yrs	69	76	24	36	18	28	34	34
Total	4		282	303	54	110	54	81	74	75

Four classes of grades 7 have ninety six (96) boys and hundred and four girls (104) with their age ranging from twelve (12) to fourteen. On the 15th the following were absent: eighteen (18) boys and twenty four (24) girls, on the 22nd, nineteen (19) boys and twenty (20) girls were absent and on the 30th, twenty three (23) boys and ten (10) girls were absent.

The grades 8 with two hundred and forty learners (240) i.e. hundred and seventeen (117) boys and one hundred and twenty three (123) girls, their age range from fourteen (14) to nineteen (19). Their absenteeism was as follows: on the 15th they were sixty two (62), the 22nd were forty (40) and on the 30th forty eight learners were absent.

The grades 9 with one hundred and forty five (145) learners, with their ages ranging from fifteen (15) to twenty (20), had the following absentees: on the 15th they were sixty (60), the 22nd there were fifty four (54) and on the 30th they were sixty eight (68). In all these grades, girls had the highest absenteeism rate.

The chosen dates were the pay days of the employees of Kumba Resource Mine, Matimba Power Station, and SANDF and the days for receiving social grants. The table indicates grade 9 as the class with more female learners who do not attend regularly.

Table 2.2: Absenteeism at Phegelelo Senior Secondary School

Grade	No of classes	Age	Gender		Pay dates of every Month (April – June)					
			M	F	15th		22nd		30th	
Grade 10	4	16-19 yrs	102	133	19	33	10	16	10	8
Grade 11	4	17-21 yrs	88	105	8	37	13	23	10	4
Grade 12	4	17-22yrs	70	95	28	23	8	12	24	16
Total			260	333	55	93	31	51	44	28

Table 2.2

Legend: M for males F for females

Table 2.2 shows the rate of absenteeism of four classes of grade 10, 11 and 12 at Phegelelo Secondary School. Their age group ranges from sixteen (16) to twenty two (22). In grade 10, there were two hundred and thirty five learners (235). On the 15th, nineteen (19) boys and thirty three (33) girls were

absent, the next pay date there were ten (10) boys and sixteen (16) girls and on the 30th, ten (10) boys and eight (8) girls who were absent.

Grade 11, with ages ranging from seventeen (17) to twenty one (21), had eight (8) boys and thirty seven (37) girls who were absent on the 15th. On the 22nd, thirteen (13) boys and thirty seven (37) girls were absent.

The grade 12's with the total of one hundred and sixty five learners, their age range from seventeen (17) to twenty two (22) had the following absentees: on the 15th, there were twenty eight (28) boys and twenty three (23), on the 22nd, twenty three (23) boys and eight (8) girls and on the 30th, twenty four (24) boys and sixteen (16) girls.

The following information is from the class registers for the year 2004 from March to September (the second and third quarter) from the two secondary schools respectively.

Table 2.3: Absenteeism for the year 2004 (second-third quarter) in the two secondary schools

School	Grade	Ages	No. of Learners	Boys	Girls	No. of absentees	%
Tielelo	7	12-14	195	45	55	100	48,7
	8	14-19	205	58	62	120	58,5
	9	15-22	149	22	46	68	45,6
Phegelelo	10	16-19	104	30	42	72	69,2
	11	17-21	123	9	31	40	35,5
	12	17-23	131	12	32	44	33.6
Total			907	176	268	444	49

The above table shows the rate of absenteeism per school. The grade 7 with one hundred and ninety five (195) learners, during these quarters' forty five (45) boys and fifty five (55) girls were absent. Their ages range from twelve (12) to fourteen (14). The grade 8's had two hundred and five learners (205), where fifty eight (58) boys and sixty two (62) girls were absent. The age group of the grades 8

ranges from fifteen (15) to nineteen (19). Grade 9 had one hundred and forty nine learners (149), twenty two (22) boys and forty six (46) were absent.

Following a breakdown of groups of learners from Phegelelo Senior Secondary School who were absent during the second and third quarter, out of hundred and four (104) grade 10 learners, seventy two (72) learners were absent with the percentage of forty eight (48). Out of one hundred and twenty three (123) grade 11 learners, forty (40) learners were absent with the percentage of thirty five, five (35, 5). The grade 12 had forty four (44) absentees. The absentee rate is thirty three, six (33,6) percent.

Now I am presenting findings from the Love Life documents. The documents were obtained from the coordinators of the programmes.

4.2.2.2 The Love Life documents

The importance of asking for these documents was to obtain detailed information about the characteristics and the aims of the programmes.

Youth want to be part of defining, their own future. They do not want to be told what to do; what not to do, but want to discover and explore. Love Life programmes therefore, want to provide them with the opportunity to think about; talk about, experience positive ways to live a healthy life and achieve their personal ambitions.

4.2.2.2.1. Characteristics of the programmes

The following are the characteristics:

- Informs youth about loving one self
- Informs youth on how not to contract the HI virus
- Their operation

Loving one self

The programme informs youth that they should know that they are smart and have everything to live for. It also informs them to know about the HIV/AIDS pandemic and know that they would not be infected if they love their lives. Important points that guide youth to love themselves were:

- Easily avoid getting the HI virus
- Know where the HI virus comes from
- What HIV do to one's immune system
- Know their HIV status
- If tested positive, there are ART's to help them live longer
- How to live a healthy and positive life

How not to contract the virus

On how not to contract the virus, the programme informs youth that this pandemic is out of control. The risks of getting the virus are high. Youth should be aware that, they could stay negative from the virus, or prevent themselves from this disease through abstaining from sexual activities.

The programme also encourages youth to know that a healthy lifestyle includes "no to sex and yes to masturbation, and no to unprotected sex and yes to condoms". If they practice these, they will have the power to control their bodies and avoid contracting the disease. For those who are infected, it is their responsibility not to infect others and make themselves sick by getting re-infected.

How these programmes operate

These programmes operate in various ways. For example, they operate through billboards, media, and magazines and in schools in a form of motivation, debates and health messaging and sport. They (programmes) help youth to develop confidence, self-esteem, team-work and leadership skills. They also inspire youth to take control of their lives, set goals, make healthy choices, and be optimistic for their future.

The following were the programmes offered by Love Life:

- Motivational programmes
- Debating programmes
- Health lifestyle programmes

The motivational programmes

Youth who are optimistic about their future tend to lead a healthier life. For example, perceived happiness and optimism are significant predictors of later sexual debut among males. Through

sustained motivational development, youth could become more assertive in negotiating safer sexual behaviour.

Debating programmes

The debating programmes help youth to develop opinions and empower them to make their own informed decisions with regard to their sexual health.

The health lifestyle programmes

To live a healthy life; games should play a major role. These programmes include the health messaging, sport and recreational activities. The value of love, respect and responsibility are the foundation of Love Life's health messaging for these programmes. The programmes deal, among others with issues of preventing youth from getting along with factors such as: sexual violence, peer pressure and sexual coercion, transactional sex; and poor parental communication.

- The health messaging component

This component provides nutritional information to motivate health, prevent disease and assist youth to manage their nutritional intakes according to their health needs.

- The sports and recreational activity component

Participation in sports and recreational activities enable youth to use their leisure time in a constructive way. Sporting activities teach youth the benefit of self discipline, team-work, mutual respect and fair play. A large variety of sport and recreational activities which the programmes provide are: netball, volleyball, basketball, performing art, visual art, lifestyle, life skills etc.

4.2.2.2.2. Aims of the Love Life programmes

The aim of Love Life programmes is to shift youth from the existing high-risk patterns of sexual health behaviour, so that they should delay in sexual activities. Those who are sexually active should use condoms. They (programmes) encourage youth to be positive and future–focused. These could be achieved if they act responsibly and reduce the number of sexual partners.

On motivational programmes, they aim at helping youth to develop assertiveness, self confidence, defined goals and clear path for accomplishing their aspirations. The debating programmes aim at

enhancing youth's creative thinking skills and their ability to communicate openly with their parents about sex. The programmes provides youth with the knowledge of HIV/AIDS as well as the Life skills. I will then present the findings from the interviews.

4.2.3. Findings from the interviews

I interviewed the following respondents: the two principals, three educators, two coordinators, eight participants, eight non-participants and had a focus group meeting. It was indicated in Chapter 3, how the interviews were conducted (see appendices). The aims of these interviews were to gather information about detailed and factual information that would help in finding the reasons for absenteeism and how the Love Life programmes could play its role in the reduction of absenteeism.

Below I will first present factual information of principals, educators and coordinators and thereafter that of the participants and non-participants. After the factual information of the above mentioned respondents, views on how absenteeism affect the work of principals, educators and coordinators, causes of absenteeism and the results from the focus meeting will be presented.

4.2.3.1. Factual Information

Table 3.1: Factual information of principals, educators and coordinators

Variables	P1	P2	ED1	ED2	ED3	CO1	CO2
Gender	M	M	M	F	F	M	M
Age group	50-55	35-42	50- 55	30-35	25-30	30-35	35-45
Qualif.	BA	STD,BA	PTC,SEC,HDE	PTD,BA,BED	STD	STD	STD,BA,BED
Insti.	P	T	P	P	T	P	T
Year App.	1976	1987	1980	1990	2003	1985	2003
Grade	12	7-9	10-12	11-12	7-8	10-12	8-9

Legend

Qualif : Qualifications
Insti: Institution
Year App.: Year appointed
ED: Educators
P: Phegelelo Senior Secondary School
T: Tielelo Junior Secondary School
P1: Principals (school managers)
CO: Coordinators

All the above respondents were well qualified as reflected in table 3.1. Their age ranged from 25 to 55 years. Some have been long in the teaching field. They have got the experience of handling problematic youth. The abolition of corporal punishment stresses them, as some do not have ways of disciplining those who break the school rules.

Below I present factual information of participants and non- participants.

The table below shows the gender and age of the participants, number of family members, learning areas and the participants staying with: both parents, single parents, without parents who support them.

I interviewed four (4) male and four (4) female participants. Their ages were ranging from fourteen (14) to twenty (20). From eight (8) participants, four (4) of them were in grade 8 and the remaining in grade 10. Those who are in grade 8, their learning areas are ten (10) and those in grade 10 have different learning areas. They all learn the three (3) languages which are English, Afrikaans and N.Sotho or Tswana and Mathematics. Two of them are learning Business Economics and Accounting. The remaining one (1) has registered Biology and Physical Science.

Six participants are staying with both parents except the one who is staying with her single mother and the other one with her mother and grandmother. To those who are staying with both parents, if the mother is working, the father is not or vice versa. Those living with single parents, their parents earn low wages. For example, one is a domestic worker, a gardener and the other one works at the café. Most of them indicated that they do not get support from their parents.

Table 3.3: Personal details and factual information of the participants

Variable	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA5	PA6	PA7	PA8
Gender	M	M	F	M	F	F	F	M
Age	20	17	20	14	15	16	18	21
No. in family	8	4	9	9	10	10	7	6
Grade	10	10	8	8	8	8	10	10
Learning areas	3 Lang. B.Ec. Acc, Maths	3 Lang P.Sc. Maths, Bio	10 learning areas	10 learning areas	10 learning Areas	10 learning areas	3 Lang. Maths, Acc, B.Ec	3 Lang Bio, P.Sc, Maths
Parents	Both	Both	Mo & GM	Both	Single	Both	Both	Both
Support from parents	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Source of income	Mo. Works & Fa unemp.	Fa works & Mo. unemp	Mo dom & grants	Fa. works at I. & Mo. Daycare	Fa. works on a farm & Mo. Unempl	Mo. works at a cafee	Fa works as a G. & Mo. unempl.	Fa works at I. & as D. Mo. unempl.

Legend:

PA: Participants

M: Male

F: Female

B.Ec: Business Economics

Acc: Accounting

P.Sc: Physical Science

G: Gardener

GM: Grandmother

Fa: Father

Mo: Mother

Unempl: Unemployed

Dom: Domestic worker

I: Iscor

D: Driver

Table 3.4: Personal details and factual information of non-participants

Variable	NP1	NP2	NP3	NP4	NP5	NP6	NP7	NP8
Gender	M	M	M	F	F	M	F	F
Age	17	21	19	17	16	17	16	22
No. in family	3	8	3	5	6	5	6	6
Grade	10	10	8	8	8	8	10	10
Learning areas	3 Lang maths, Acc, B.Ec	3 lang, maths, Acc, B.Ec	10 Learning areas	10 Learning areas	10 Learning areas	10 Learning areas	3 Lang; Bio; P. Sc Maths	3 Lang. Bio; P.Sc, Maths
Parents	Single	Both	Single	Single	Both	Granny	Single	Both
Support from parents	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Source of income	Working at shopping centre	Father works at Iscor	Mother domestic worker	Cleaner at Iscor	Mother teacher and father unempl.	Grants from granny	Sister works at car wash	Father works at Eskom and the mother unempl

Legend

NP: Non-participants

Table3.4. has the gender and age of the non-participants, their family members, grade, learning areas, support from parents and the source of income in their families. The table has four (4) males and four (4) female non-participants. Their ages are ranging from sixteen (16) to twenty two (22). The number of family members range from three to eight. Four (4) of them are in grade 8 and the remaining four (4)

are in grade 10. Those who are in grade 8 are learning ten (10) learning areas and those in grade 10, they are taught six (6) learning areas. Those in grades 10, they all learn three (3) languages and the remaining three are of their choice. Only two (2) non-participants are staying with both parents. Five (5) of them are staying with their single mothers except one who lives with his grand mother. Only two non-participants showed that they got support from their parents. Most of them, their jobs pay only poverty-level wages.

4.2.3.2. Views on causes of absenteeism

The information obtained from the interviews is divided into three categories namely: socio-economic, the school and personal. I will first present the views from the principals, educators and coordinators, the participants and lastly the non-participants.

Views of principals, educators and coordinators on how absenteeism affects their work

They indicated that absenteeism stresses them as those who absent themselves from school are left behind with their studies. It then creates a problem of high failure rate.

The table below indicates that absenteeism is a problem at the two schools and affects learners' performance. It illustrates the pass rate statistics of the two schools from 1996 to 2003. It was from the promotional schedule of the two schools.

Table 3.2: Pass rate statistics

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
School					
Tielelo	73,7%	69,3%	65,7%	51,0 %	40,0%
Phegelelo	72,5%	67,3%	68,2%	57,9%	47,9%
Average %	73,1%	68,3%	67%	54,5%	44%

Phegelelo Senior Secondary School in 1999 had the pass rate of 72, 5; it dropped to 47, 9 in the year 2003. Tielelo Junior Secondary School in 1999 had a pass rate of 73, 7 which was a good attempt. In 2003 it dropped to 40%.

Some of the responses from educators were that the causes of these high failure rates seem to be the noise from the taverns, which sell liquor to the youth and turn on radios from morning till the next day. The poor results that affected the two schools were that not all the parents were involved in this matter. When they were called to school, only parents of youth who perform well respond positively.

- Socio-economic factors

These factors influence the position of the school. The two secondary schools have high failure rates. This is caused by the bad socio-economic position of the area. There are several problems the two secondary schools are dealing with, such as: poverty, overcrowding in families, lack of parental involvement and peer pressure. There are those who absent themselves because they are pregnant and some receive child support grants.

Poverty

According to tables 3.3 and 3.4, most parents earn low income wages and are unable to provide their families with basic needs. Some have problems in financing their families, such as those who earn little or have no income at all. They indicated that these make learners to lack motivation. Some educators expressed their feelings as this problem affects learner's concentration and puts them under pressure, which is why they sometimes absent themselves and perform badly.

Overcrowding in families

Tables 3.3 and 3.4 above, show that most families are led by single parents and are overcrowded. One of the principals indicated that overcrowded families lack discipline. No attention is been given to children, as they would be noisy and uncontrollable. He also said that there is no difference between mid week and weekends.

This is what he said:

> *There is lack of parental involvement in our community.*
> *What I am trying to say is most parents cannot discipline*
> *their children. It seems as if they are afraid or they see no fault*

> *if their children are doing wrong things. I am saying this because if one can come late in the township, meaning at 22h00, you will find youth loitering. Sometimes when I went for a drink at a tavern, you will still find some, sitting, drinking and smoking. As a normal person you will never sit there and drink with your own learners.*

Some educators indicated that most learners hang around taverns and shebeens the whole week. Some have no money, men who like to hang around in the taverns pay for them.

Lack of parental involvement

The two schools indicated that there are learners who live with their grandparents and single mothers. Their grandmothers and some of their parents have never attended school. For them to control and monitor the books of their grandchildren is a difficult task to tackle.

They also reported that some parents work in the neighbouring town (Lephalale) or suburb (Onverwacht) and some in neighbouring farms. For example, their wages are so little that they can't afford to travel daily to be with their children for a week or month. There is no monitoring or control to their children. They are unable to motivate and discipline them when they absent themselves from school. This makes youth to hang out on streets at night.

Some of the educators indicated that some parents cannot take the responsibility to discipline their children; they feel that it is the responsibility of the teacher to discipline and motivate the child to value education.

Peer Pressure

The two schools indicated that most learners like to emulate the behaviour of their age-mates and think that they will be socially rewarded. Educators indicated that there are some learners who have befriended those who had quitted school and those who are working. The results hereof are that the learners might be influenced and decide to absent themselves or leave school. Some are pressurized by their peers to stay with them until late.

Teenage Pregnancy

Both schools noticed that parents are not aware of the changes that their children are experiencing. There are parents who work many kilometres away from their homes. They leave in the early hours of the morning and arrive in the afternoons. There are those who work shifts i.e. morning, afternoon and evening. On their arrival home from work they are tired. They also indicated that those who are pregnant absent themselves from school when they are not feeling well or when they visit clinics for check up.

Child Support Grants

Some of the educators indicated that poverty is the contributing factor to child support grants. The socio-economic position of the area influenced some parents to have problem in financing the education of their children. There are those who do not have proper food for lunch or breakfast and clothing. They get involved with men or find boyfriends who give them money. In turn they want to be paid back in the form of unprotected sex.

- School factors

During the interviews the following were mentioned: overcrowding, over-age, the presentation of Love Life programmes to youth.

Overcrowding

Tielelo Junior Secondary is a small school with a large number of learners. A class has sixty-eight learners which makes teaching unbearable. One of the educators indicated that over crowding disturbs teaching and learning. Some complained that it is difficult to control such huge numbers of learners, especially during summer season as it is very hot.

This is what one of the educators said:

> *In my class there are sixty-eight learners. Having such a big number is difficult to control and manage it. Learners also experience discomfort as a result of ventilation and extreme temperatures in summer.*

Over-age

Educators in the two secondary schools indicated that a school is a place where youth should escape their socio-backgrounds and climb the ladder to success. They expressed their sadness, that there were learners who take advantage of their age in the class. Looking at tables 3.3 and 3.4, their age group range from 15 – 22 and there were some who were too old for those grades. The educators indicated that not all of those who are over-aged are problematic. Some of them are troublesome and bully. They make noise when teachers are busy teaching.

Presentation of lessons

One of the coordinators indicated that some of the aspects to be taught are difficult to explain, for example to talk about sex to the learners.

He said:

> *It is difficult to talk about sex issues to youngsters. I am a male. It is taboo according to my culture to talk about sex to the youth. Female educators at my school help me with sensitive issues. You know school children, if they can find that you are afraid of telling them things about sex, they will drive you to talk. If they push me to that extent, I call someone for help. To tell you the truth, I am active when they do activities. I mean when they play* games.

Above I have presented views from principals, educators and coordinators on how absenteeism affects their work and below I will present views from participants and non-participants about absenteeism.

Views of participants on absenteeism

The findings obtained from the participants are divided into two factors namely: socio-economic and the school.

- Socio-economic factors

There are several problems the participants at the two secondary schools are facing, such as: poverty, overcrowding, lack of support from parents and child abuse.

Poverty

Some of the youth are from families where parents have received little or no education. Table 3.3 indicate their source of income. Some have problems in financing their families. Taking the fifth participant (PA 5) as an example, she said:

> *My father is working on a farm and my mother is unemployed. I sometimes don't have money to buy food during breaks or have no lunch box.*

Overcrowding

Table 3.3 showed that most families are overcrowded. There are families with ten (10) members. For example, at the sixth (PA6) participant family, they are ten (10).

Lack of support from parents

All the participants indicated that they lack support from parents except two who are the first (PA1) participant and the fourth (PA4) participant. They indicated that their parents do not check their books, help them with their homework's and monitor the work done at school. Those whose parents are not working, some of them indicated that on their arrival from school they sometimes find their parents not at home. They also indicated that they do not talk sex issues with their parents.

Child Abuse

In the theoretical framework it was stated where abuse is prevalent. Table 3.3 and 3.4 indicates the poor economical positions of the youth.

There are parents who live with their partners and neglect their children. One of the participants (PA1) indicted that he got bored as his stepfather makes his life a living hell. His mother pays more attention to him. He indicated that his father passed away two years ago. The man they are living with is unemployed.

Some learners expressed their sadness about the way some educators are treating them. They indicated that they make them feel ashamed in front their peers. When they talk to them, they talk with a note of mockery in their voices. They then become demotivated and frustrated and see no value of coming to school.

- *School factors*

Problems that the participants are facing are inadequate supervision, over-age and presentation of lessons.

Inadequate supervision

Learners indicated that there are some teachers who fail to show up for a lesson. This in turn makes older boys threaten to thrash the small ones in class. If they report the case to educators, they are making the situation worse. This was indicated by the second participant (PA2). When asked why he absents himself from school, said:

> *I absent myself from school, as I am afraid of bigger boys that are in my class. If they want to take something from you, they do not even ask permission to do so. When uttering a word they promise to beat you after school. Once you report the matter to the teachers, you are making the matters worse.*

Over-age

On this note, some of the learners indicated that there are teachers who call them "Makomiti". "Makomiti" is a Northern Sotho word that was used to refer to the SGB in the past. The elders held these positions. Teachers used these names because of the behaviour the over-aged learners are practising in the class.

One of them (PA8) responded in this way:

> *Teacher P says we are "makomiti" and "ga re tsebe gore re tletseng mo sekolong". Meaning they are over aged and do not know the purpose of being at school.*

Presentation of lessons

Some of the learners reported that they get bored when some of their teachers are presenting lessons. Boredom encourages them not to attend regularly. Some of them find it difficult to grasp the lessons taught and see no point of coming to school. One of them indicated that (PA7):

> *I absent myself because teacher P, when giving notes copies everything that is in the textbook. We sometimes*

do not understand what the teacher is explaining. The teacher has a soft voice and some of the learners who sit at the back do not hear completely.

Views of non-participants on causes of absenteeism

The findings on causes of absenteeism are divided into three factors, namely: socio-economic, school and personal factors.

- Socio-economic factors

There are several problems the non-participants are facing, such as: peer pressure, teenage pregnancy and child support grants.

Peer pressure

Youth like to play the behaviour that would be socially rewarded by their friends and age-mates. There are those who befriended with non-scholars and those who are working. This results in influencing others to absent themselves or leave school permanently. The second non-participant (NP2) is twenty one years (21) old. He indicated that he absents himself as he will be staying with his mates until late. He said:

It is difficult to wake up as I slept in the early hours of the morning, hanging out with friends.

Teenage pregnancy

The fifth non-participant (NP5) indicated that she absents herself as she is pregnant. Some parents do not notice that their children are pregnant. They will be surprised when the child has to deliver the baby.

This is what she said:

I absent myself because I am pregnant. I sometimes have morning sickness, and wish if my teachers could help when I am not feeling well. What they will tell you is that they are trained to teach and not to take care of mother's to be. I also wish if they can appreciate my problem even if it is hard

for them to accept what I am going through.

Follow up: Did your mother know about your situation?

No, instead of coming to school, I go and stay with my friend who is a non scholar. When I saw other learners going home I take my books and accompany them as if I was from school.

Child support grants

Table 3.4 shows the socio-economic position of the non-participants. Most of them are from families with parents who have low-level of education. Some parents have their jobs which pay only low level wages.

Grants assist some families to alleviate poverty. The forth non-participant (NP4) indicated that:

I had to go and receive the grants for my child who is three. If I fail to go there my mother will yell at me telling me that, I will see what my child is going to eat for the whole month.

- School factors

Non-participants have a problem such as labelling.

Labelling

Some of the non-participants complained about teachers who ill-treat them in front of their class mates. Schools are taken as ladders of success, but they turn to be hurdles. They also indicated that this makes them to hate the teacher, his/her period, feel insecure, feel that they are not loved and see no value of attending the periods or coming to school.

One of them said (NP7):

I hate the period of teacher X. The teacher mocks me in front of other learners. When I gave a wrong answer, the teacher will call me names ,such as I am like my father. Other learners will laugh at me. I see no value of coming to school, as I know that the teacher will make fun of me once I answered incorrectly.

- Personal factors

Tables 3.3 and 3.4 indicate that most respondents are too old to be in those grades. Amongst those who are old to be in the grade, are the ones who absent themselves most. When they are not at school they lag behind with their lessons. This in turn leads to low self-esteem and makes them think that they are incapable and would not make it.

The respondents have indicated that they know the consequences of absenteeism that one will fail at the end of the year. Some have problems with the medium of instruction offered at the two schools. It became difficult for them to follow or understand what is being said. This makes them demotivated and discourages them. There are those who feel embarrassed when they are unable to read because learners who are few years younger laugh at them. This was supported by the second non-participant (NP2) when asked why he absents himself.

He indicated that:

> *I absent myself because I don't know how to read English. It is on reading days that I normally absent myself to avoid the embarrassment of being laughed at .Teacher X will make fun of me. I am twenty-one and doing grade 8.It hurts me when young children are laughing at me while reading.*

4.2.4. Findings from the focus meetings

Some of the results came from the focus group interviews. The group helped in identifying factors that I might have ignored when interviewing the principals, educators, coordinators and youth. The group comprised of all the respondents, the SGB, RCL of both schools. The following were discussed: Love Life programmes and the socio-economic factor of the area.

About the Love Life programmes the following were discussed:

- Views about the Love Life programmes
- Role of the programmes in the reduction of absenteeism
- Inactive participation
- Improvements of the programmes
- Fares

Views about the Love Life programmes

From the responses about how these programmes were useful to youth, the group indicated that some of the youth thought that for one to know places, they have to participate in the programmes. Others thought that the programmes were for those who were actively involved in sports and whose parents could afford to pay for their travelling expenses.

Those who are participating knew the role of these programmes. Mark indicated that Love Life programmes helped him to be away from the streets and encouraged him to take care of himself, abstain and to live a healthy life. He also indicated that the programme enables them to practice safe sex. These mean living positively and avoiding the contraction of the pandemic and wait for the right time to engage in sexual activities.

The role of Love Life in the reduction of absenteeism

The group indicated that youth enjoyed taking part in games which were sanctioned by Love Life and further encouraged them to see the value of coming to school.

Inactive participation

The coordinators complained about the inactive participation of the youth and time allocated for the programme. They indicated that time allocated for the programme is one hour per week, which is used for extra mural activities. Some youth are afraid to participate, because their parents cannot afford extra fees that are required. The coordinators explained that the schools lack funds to sponsor youth when they are to take part in competitions and as such this constitutes a problem to other families.

Improvements of the Love Life programmes

The group indicated that the Love Life programmes should be part of the curriculum that falls under Life Orientation which will include health education, decision making, personal development, life skills, social skills, sex education, communication skills and information about HIV/AIDS and pregnancy. All these aspects prepares youth for the world of interaction. The RCL, pleaded with the group to talk with educators who were belittling other learners in front of their peers.

Fares that are paid

About the fares that youth's are paying when taking part in competitions, they suggested that the school should assist in helping those who were unable to pay. They indicated that fund raising should be done.

- The socio-economic factor

The group only discussed the use of alcohol and drugs as a problem.

The use of alcohol and drugs

The group mentioned the use of drugs and alcohol as a problem in their schools. They indicated that alcohol and drugs are the biggest problems because they affect the wellbeing of the learners. Youth visit shebeens and taverns at early stages of their lives and spend most of their time at such places. The drinking and the use of drugs take place during the week at night and weekends. Some arrive home in the early hours of the morning while the following day they are expected to be at school.

They indicated that the area had shebeens and taverns that do not take into consideration the age of the youth. They expressed their feelings on how these taverns affect absenteeism.

One of them said (ED1):

> *I think these taverns make learners to use or drink alcohol during the week as some come to school intoxicated. These young ones are living next to these taverns which do not give them chance to read and concentrate on their studies. The music is loud from morning till dawn.*

4.3. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have presented

- The portraits of the participant and non participant
- Present factual information of the principals, educators, coordinators, participants and non participants.
- Present views from the principals, educators, coordinators, participants and non participants of the two secondary schools about absenteeism
- Present results from the focus group

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTON

In previous chapters, I was aiming to get insight on the causes of absenteeism and how the Love Life programmes could play its role in the reduction of absenteeism. This chapter is about the conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions give an overview of the most important findings of the research. Furthermore, links will be made with the theoretical framework and Chapter 4.

After the conclusions, the recommendations will be presented on the basis of the factors that were discussed, i.e. the socio economic, school and the personal factors. I will again present recommendations on how absenteeism could be prevented and views about Love Life programmes. Specific recommendation for further research will also be given.

I would draw conclusions on the basis of the research questions presented in Chapter 1.

1. What is the rate of absenteeism?
2. What are reasons for the high level of absenteeism?
3. What are the characteristics of the Love Life programmes?
4. What is the impact of Love Life programmes in the reduction of absenteeism?
5. How can the programmes be improved?

5.2. Conclusions

5.2.1 The rate of absenteeism

The tables in Chapter 4 (i.e. 2.1, 2. 2 and 2. 3) showed the high rate of absenteeism. According to these tables in 2003, grades with the highest number of absentees were 8, 9, 11 and 12 and in 2004, were 7, 8, 9 and 10. In 2003, the most absentees in Tielelo were girls while in Phegelelo were boys.

5.2.2. Causes for absenteeism

In the theoretical framework in Chapter 2, causes for absenteeism were presented. They were divided into three categories namely: socio-economic, school and the personal factors.

The socio-economic factors

At the socio-economic level, the following problems were indicated by the respondents from both schools as causes of absenteeism. They are:

- Poverty
- Parental involvement
- Peer pressure

Some of these were comparable with those studied by Conen and Rutten (2003) in Polokwane and Mahwelereng. It may be assumed that other areas around Limpopo Province are experiencing such problems.

Poverty has an important influence on forcing youth to absent themselves from school. For example, they would not have any lunch boxes or ate nothing at all. Such problems make learners to lack motivation, force them to be away from school and device means of getting money and end up practicing unhealthy living.

Lack of parental involvement has much influence on the prevalence of problems such as teenage pregnancy, lack of motivation, alcohol and drug abuse. These problems lead youth to absent themselves or leave school permanently.

Most families are headed by single parents (See tables 3.3. and 3.4) in Chapter 4. Studies indicated that families headed by single parents were likely to be overcrowded. To such families, usually no child gets attention, as they will be watching television, listening to music, visiting taverns and roaming on streets till the late hours. This leads them to perform badly in class.

Some respondents mentioned that some parents are working as domestic workers or cleaners at shops. Those parents do not get enough time to be with their children and attend parent meetings as requested from schools. This makes them not to motivate their children to go to school and be at home on time. Among the respondents there was a girl who was pregnant, (NP5). She is already a mother at the age of

seventeen (17). When she reaches the age of twenty one (21), she is likely to have had multi sexual partners. It puts her at the risk of contracting the pandemic. Parents should not feel that they will loose their dignity when talking sex issues to their children. It is important, as it will help the youth against the HIV pandemic.

Youth like to play the role that will be rewarded by their mates. As they befriended with non-scholars and those who hang on taverns till dawn, they begin to play the behaviour that will be accepted by their friends.

The school factors

Overcrowding, bad relationship between the youth and educators; and the relationship among youth may force youth to be away from school. Tielelo was and is still experiencing an overcrowded situation. The teacher pupil ratio of 1:63 is not conducive to teaching and learning.

Looking at the temperatures as estimated by the climatologists from the Weather Bureau, Lephalale area experiences high temperatures in summer. Therefore presentations of lessons in the afternoons are difficult. Overcrowding of classes may cause problems such as bullying; where the offended learners are afraid to come to school, as they are afraid to be assaulted.

Educators at school should act *in loco parentis.* They are responsible for the upbringing of a child. If educators turn the school to be hurdles to success, then the learners would not finish the race. The relationship between learners and teachers is sometimes a problem. Some teachers ill-treat learners in front of their class mates. This makes learners to hate the teacher, his/her period, feel insecure, feel that they are not loved and see no value of coming to school.

The personal factors

These factors include the surrounding of the youth. Youth at the two secondary schools in Marapong lack motivation. Motivation in the educational system and from home encourages youth to do better in studies. Youth who lack motivation from the teachers and parents are likely to leave school without completing their studies. This may force some to be away from school. This was explained by one leaner, the second non-participant (N2) when she indicated that she absents herself because teacher X is making fun of her. Such a learner needs to be motivated, encouraged to love reading and to enjoy being

at school. The school and parents have to work together towards the upbringing of the child. If they are not working together, the child will not finish his/her educational race.

Some learners have drug and alcohol problems. The effects of alcohol turn youth to hang on streets, ignore their cultural values and norms. Mwamwenda (1998) emphasised that poor performance of youth could be attributed to the consumption of alcohol. They see to it as the best option to escape their daily life problems hence it has an influence on their performance in class.

The relationships between youth and their parents sometimes cause problems. It was indicated that most parents are not there to look, discipline and monitor the work done by their children. Their children have to look for themselves. These cause problems at the two schools as it affects the results of the school and also absenteeism.

5.2.3. Characteristics of Love Life programmes

Love Life programmes are a broad concept, which covers many aspects such as healthy living, to love oneself, exercise, a choice to delay on sex and the use condoms. Chapter 4 explains the characteristics of the programmes in detail.

5.2.4. Views on the Love Life programmes by youth

According to how the youth viewed the Love Life programmes, only a few knew about them. The few learners, who knew about the objectives of the programmes, wished that other learners could participate. The focus group wished the programmes could be part of the curriculum so that all the learners could achieve the aims and objectives of the programmes.

5.2.5. Presentation of the programmes

There are teachers who do not feel comfortable or free to talk about sex. One coordinator indicated that he sometimes asked lady teachers to tackle sensitive issues.

Love Life programmes were taken as a sporting code in the two schools. Only those who were active in sports participated in the programmes. Non-participation in the programme was caused by lack of motivation from parents and educators. These gave problems to the coordinators. They complained about finance and that if the principal was less interested in the programmes, running this programmes would be difficult.

5.2.6. Improvements that the programme will bring

Youth of school going age are the future leaders. They need to explore programmes that would provide them with the opportunity to think, talk and experience positive ways to live healthy lives as well as to achieve their personal ambitions.

To establish improvements the respondents wished that the Love Life programmes could be part of the curriculum to create an integrated youth HIV/AIDS plan or project. The reason has been shifting youth from the existing high risk of sexual health behaviour. They wished educators could be trained to implement the programmes and also develop best practice in youth leadership and to initiate positive lifestyles.

They indicated that most South Africans are infected or affected by the HIV pandemic. It is important for the youth to practice healthy lifestyles through the Love Life programmes. These programmes will encourage them to stay free from this pandemic, be able to achieve stability and have happy families in future. Another improvement is to involve parents in the programmes. Parents are encouraged to motivate their children towards healthy lifestyles.

5.3. Recommendations

Recommendations are given on the problems given by youth and the school which concern absenteeism and the role of Love Life programmes in the reduction of the problem. The factors that were discussed concerns the socio-economic, school and personal factors. Specific recommendations are described for youth and further research for the Baswa at Risk projects.

5.3.1. Socio-economic

Problems mentioned in relation to the socio-economic factor were mentioned. Such problems as teenage pregnancy, child support grants and parental involvement were described in the theoretical framework.

The problem of teenage pregnancy is discussed in Love Life and Life Skills programmes. Information on how to prevent teenage pregnancy, HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases are given in all schools. Schools should present information on how to prevent pregnancies, HIV and sexual related diseases to the youth.

The youth should also know about developments of their body, feelings and relationships. The relationship that the youth establishes follows this pattern: child-mother, child immediate family members, child neighbours, child-peers and the relationship with opposite sex. It is normal when feelings move to a level of sexual feelings, the danger comes when they are not controlled. An unprotected sex and multi sexual partner puts them at risk of contracting HIV and teenage girls fall pregnant and give birth prematurely because their bodies are not fully developed. This explains that being sexually active and having multiple partners has dire consequences.

Parental involvement is one of the crucial factors in youth educational attainment. Parents need to be given advice in creating a rich educational environment in their homes and to be able to motivate their children to do their homework; as this might make a difference in the educational situation. Most schools in the Province are struggling to get parental involvement. Parental involvement plays a vital role since the approaches of both parents and teachers differ.

Teachers expect outmost performance from a learner whereby failure is associated with either promiscuous behaviour before considering learning problems; meanwhile parents may be sympathetic to a child's situation of poor performance. With this point in mind parental involvement helps ease a child's pressure from school. Alerting the school of the learner's problems will then help the educators to take a different approach.

On the other hand the importance of involvement is made clear by the non-participant (NP4) in this study, who pretended to be going to school while she knew that she was to spend the day with a friend who was a non scholar. She was aware that by the time her parent returned from work she would be at home. If there was involvement between the two parties i.e. the school and the parent, the problem might have long been solved.

5.3.2. The school

Most problems on absenteeism in the school occur because of teachers, who either label learners, ill-treat learners because of personal differences with parents, age or because the child appears unkempt. Teachers should understand different developmental stages of their students. Even though they are teaching in classes that are overcrowded, which are difficult to control especially during summer seasons, they need to have strategies to overcome such problems. For example, the reason for Phegelelo to start lessons as early as seven o'clock, the reason might be to avoid high temperatures.

Supervision is important at schools. Some of the respondents indicated that older boys had the opportunity to bully and steal their properties. This situation happens when teachers do not come to class to teach. And some mentioned that these practices happen when teachers present boring lessons. Boredom afflicts youth at any level. The slow learners become bored and their attention span is affected. They then indulge in unacceptable behaviour in class to busy themselves. They also mentioned the point of unequal treatment from some teachers.

Schools need to be the ladders to success. Youth need to be supported, motivated and nurtured. This explains that educators should foster youth's overall development. The following are important to improve the role of the school:

- Classes should have a period register, to record all learners and teachers that were present during that lesson they attended.
- Teachers should append their signatures after each and every lesson
- For those who were absent, parents should be notified, and if the parent is not responding to the call from the school, the SMT should visit the parent.
- Parents evening, should be conducted and only parents of the problematic youth should be called.
- Parents should be encouraged to visit the school if they have a query or something to tell the teacher concerned.
- The school should encourage parents to take part and participate in school matters.
- The school should encourage team work among learners. Those who were having learning problems would be identified early.
- The school should decide upon positive ways of disciplining those who are troublesome.
- The SMT should solve the problem of teachers who ridicule or make other learners to feel bad about schooling. Teachers should know that they are acting as guardians of these youth. For youth to love the school, they should be taken care of and loved by those who are looking after them.
- With juveniles, there should be a network between the school and other sectors of the department, e.g. the police department should be called to school to give youth moral lectures that crime does not pay. It destroys one's future, as when one is looking for a job his/her criminal record would obstruct him/her in getting the job. They will also assist the school with regard to the noise made at the taverns.

5.3.3. Personal factors

In this study, it became clear that most learners are too old for the grades that they are in. They attend with younger learners. They make them feel ashamed when they are unable to read or answer incorrectly. This in turn destroys their self esteem and regards them as stupid or incompetent. It is important that educators should have sympathy and empathy on learners. That they be considerate to these learners and embrace their situation.

Below follows prevention programmes

5.4. Prevention Programmes

5.4.1. Possible interventions in the fight against absenteeism

As indicated earlier, an unhealthy living habit leads to absenteeism and has detrimental effects. The assumptions were stated in Chapter 2. Some of the causes are not easy to fight as Conen and Rutten (2003:33) have indicated. Most projects for the intervention are heading towards the direction of practising healthy living, which might reduce absenteeism.

Factors that might ensure successful intervention are:

- *The prevention of absenteeism*

It is important for schools to assist youth who have a problem of absenteeism. Regular absenteeism leads to drop out of school before the youth may receive senior certificate. There is a need for schools to identify youth who absent themselves from school. It is important for a school, to introduce remedial classes, to have educators who will be responsible for identifying youth with problems and liaise with the relevant people.

Dryfoos (1990:208) indicated that, youth who absent themselves from school need to be identified, assessed and treated by a Prevention Specialist. The specialist might arrange individual counselling. Dryfoos (1990:109) also emphasised that, for each youth, a staff member from another school might act as an in-school support person. Parents of the concerned individuals need to be involved. This might be done through home visits, school conferences, classes and referrals. The prevention specialist may arrange for in-service training for teachers and acts as a liaison between home and the school.

- *The prevention of child abuse*

Studies on this intervention in Dryfoos (1990:75) have created a Student Assistance Model, which describes intervention programmes for preventing abuse. They indicated that the project has been developed under the auspices of the Wheeler Clinic to address more general problems of low achievement and school discipline problems. It is indicated that, the team elected from the school need to be involved in the administration, guidance, social services and nursing. This might assist youth encountering problems, to feel safe and secure when they are in the schoolyard.

- *Prevention of HIV / AIDS through Love Life programmes*

The San Francisco Chronicle – Wednesday, June (2001) (on www.sfgate.org.) indicated that South African youth were among those at high risk in the World for HIV infection. It is estimated that the pandemic infected ± 4, 7 million South Africans.

It is important for youth to know beforehand what HIV/AIDS is. HIV/AIDS has become a major health problem affecting and or infecting people around the world. It is estimated that a number of 33 million people are currently living with HIV, and 14 million have died of HIV (on www.unaid). Michael Sinclair, who directs South African programmes for Kaiser Family Foundations, urges that youth need to be at the core of a successful prevention strategy (Love Life Pamphlets, 2004).

Youth should know that, if they are already engaged in premarital sex, then it is possible for them to stop, regain control and remain abstinent. They should know that HIV is a disease that is mainly transmitted through blood, semen and vaginal fluid. Perlman (1995: 20) indicated four ways in which humans can contract the disease.

They are:

- Unprotected sex
- Sharing needles or injection drug equipment
- Mother-to-child during pregnancy, childbirth or breast feeding
- Blood transfusion

It is important for the youth to know that HIV/AIDS affects every one i.e. women and men, young and old, poor and rich, black or white. The decision of abstaining may save them from the infection. Knowing about their status is also important, as it will allow them to take the necessary precautions of preventing others from becoming infected too.

Opening more communication about sex to learners

Other studies in Perlman (1995) indicated that parents and educators should talk about life issues to youth. This might help them as they grow, they might remember what they were told and start practicing healthy lifestyles. Perlman (1995:8) indicated that boys at the age of sixteen and seventeen turn to be robbers, become violent, involve themselves in politics and associate themselves with alcohol and drugs. Perlman also emphasised that they are also interested in girls. Therefore it is important for parents and educators to treat them as adults, not as children.

(Perlman, 1995, Love Life pamphlets, 2004, The Department of Health: Khomanani Caring Together pamphlets, 2005) indicated that black parents do not tell their children about sex and HIV. The Love Life programmes, Life Skill programmes tell youth about sex, where babies come from and about the dangerous pandemic HIV/AIDS. Parents, therefore blame schools for over emphasising about sex issues rather than teaching their children. If they are motivated to talk about sex education to their children at an early stage, youth may be aware and take precautions.

Studies in Perlman (1995:8) have stressed that parents and educators should know that youth need their support and help. Once they reach the age of fifteen they are adults. They are old enough to have their own children. It is important for parents and teachers to take the following points into consideration, as they might help in the reduction of youth who practice unhealthy living styles and those who become and fall pregnant or fathers at an early age.

They indicated that parents and the teachers should:

- Listen to what the youth say
- Not shout, beat or treat youth like children
- Discuss rules with them. For example, they need to know how late they may stay out and which safe places to go to.
- Talk to them about sex. Sex education should not only be the baby of the school. Parents should give their children time to question them about issues of life, and they should answer them candidly. They should also give them strategies/ skills to say no to sex, when they are not ready. These skills might be achieved if they can indicate to the youth the dangers of not saying no.

- Know that youth need to be independent and mix with peers. In order to fulfil this, they must be given chance to practice and allow them to make informed choices and face the consequences thereof.
- They need to be forgiven from time to time.
- They should teach youth about the choice of friends. They should know that there are friends in need and those in deed and they must be able to distinguish between the two. For example, if a learner had to complete a task given by parents or teachers after school and a friend invites him/her to accompany him/ her to a place where he/she knows he/she is not suppose to go, he/she have the right to say no. Teachers and parents should teach youth skills of saying "no".
- Parents and teachers should try to talk about advantages and disadvantages of relationships.

5.4.2. Successful prevention programmes

Sabin Russel (on www.lovelife.org.za) concluded that intervention programmes might be more successful if they are started earlier. She/ he stated that the programmes should be interesting and be meaningful to the youth. There is a new Love Life's South Africa's National HIV prevention programme for youth, which was launched in 2004.

The new creative approach tagline "love to be there". The new "love to be there..." deals with the top priorities expressed by young South Africans, namely to get good education and job opportunities, to stay free from HIV and achieve a stable and happy family.

It was stated (on www.lovelife.org.za) that "Love to be there…" took the Love Life campaign to new heights. It was indicated that this media campaign is about openness and responsible youth's sexual behaviour. It also helps to shape the future of young South Africans. In South Africa it was introduced in August 2003. Through the content of the "2010 love to be there……" media campaign, love Life's goals were to:

- *Encourage youth to "talk about it".*

This promotes open discussion about goals and aspirations, relations, sex, sexuality and HIV and encourages discussions between parents and their children.

- *Develop personal esteem, motivation and leadership abilities*

The campaign helps youth to identify clear goals for themselves, promote self-respect, self worth and engender a sense of leadership and social commitment among them.

- *Foster values of dignity, love, respect, shared responsibility and trust*

This promotes personal and societal values that encounter the predictors of high risk behaviour, including sexual coercion, peer pressure, sex for money, high school marks or other goods, pessimism and low self-esteem.

- *Promote sexual behaviour change among teenagers to reduce their risk of HIV*

It encourages youth to wait until they are old to have sex. If they are sexually active, they must have one partner and use condoms consistently with every sexual encounter.

Successful programmes managed to solve many problems. For example, if the programmes are good, they will not only solve the problem of absenteeism and the unhealthy living habits practiced by youth but will solve factors that contribute in making youth to abscond from school.

Conen and Rutten (2003:35) indicated essential characteristics that might prevent absenteeism as:

- The intervention should take place at an early stage
- The attention to youth is intense and individual, so that they can clarify their needs. This explains that more attention should be placed on the affected ones.
- The approach that will be used by the wider community, all stakeholders must be able to co-operate. The school, the media, parents, learners, SGB, peers, etc are involved in the intervention.
- Parents, teachers, learners must be trained to help to prevent the problem, as quoted by Dryfoos in Conen and Rutten (2002).

In addition to the above strategies, Love Life programmes may also be used to help youth. Sabin Russel, (on www.lovelife.org.za) states that Love Life programmes might model ways of preventing HIV/AIDS. He/she also mentioned that Love Life was conceived when AIDS experts in South Africa were convinced, that prevention efforts would go nowhere until teenagers and parents broke the silence about sexual behaviour among young South Africans.

Telephone hotlines, which are now used by many South Africans, were established in order to ease the burden on people infected or affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Clearly and fundamentally, this is about sexual behavioural change. Once there is sexual change, people will be more confident about their lives and share responsibilities with others.

5.4.3. Possible solutions through Love Life programmes

Dr Harrison (on www.lovelife.org.za.) states that Love Life's innovation for 2004 will use a single "foundation" for the year instead of three or four creative of previous year as the backdrop for a series of shorter "blitz campaign" driven through outdoor, radio, TV, and Love Life print platform. The programme had to reposition its outdoor media by giving a greater preference to smaller billboards. Dr Harrison says that Love Life does not only need to try to sustain the big ban of spectaculars but also to maintain more frequent and intimate communication with youth.

5.5. Partnership

Partnership between the schools and the Department of Health, Social and Welfare and South African Police Service is vital. The Department of Health should highlight youth about the pandemic and sexual diseases and the Department of Social and Welfare should give guidance on steps that poor families should take if they experience problems. For example, the department could give food to families that are stricken by poverty.

The Department of Health and Social Development should address issues of HIV and STI's to youth. Issues of the development of the body, feelings and relationships will be discussed as relationships at one point move to the level of sexual feeling. It is important to talk about sex so that they gain all the information. Sex education should be discussed in an open way with the youth so that they feel free to talk without being judged.

The Department of Social and welfare may help schools with learners whose family problems impact their performance resulting in bad behaviour, absence from school, insolence, and disruptive behaviour. Psychologists will assist with the conduct and poor performance of the learner.

The Department of Education and Department of Health should work together to create an integrated Youth HIV/AIDS plan/ project. The reason is to shift youth out of the existing high risk of patterns of

sexual health behaviour. Educators need to be trained as programme implementers to develop best practice in youth leadership and to initiate positive lifestyle.

The Police Department should make some forums that would involve the youth and parents to help and guide them on problems that they encounter in their daily lives. Police may also patrol the streets and all school going teenagers who are playing truancy should be given community work. People who sell alcohol/drugs to the youth must also be tracked down.

Improvements of the programmes

Not all schools are participating in these programmes because of affiliation fee required. The affiliation fee should be withdrawn and the programmes should be part of the curriculum. Some schools have financial problems and less enrolment therefore the affiliation will be costly to those schools.

Schools should invite all the stakeholders in the community, this will help to solve problems and improve lives of the youth in the area.

5.6.Recommendations for further studies

More information and research is needed on Life Skill programmes. To fight the HIV/AIDS problem, it is necessary that all learners in the school know the consequences of unsafe sex, what AIDS is, and what it does and how one can or cannot get infected.

5.7. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I presented conclusions on

- the rate of absenteeism
- reasons for the high level of absenteeism
- the characteristics of the Love Life programmes
- views of the Love Life programmes by the youth
- improvements that the programmes will bring
- the recommendations on:

1. the basis of the following factors: socio-economic, school and personal factors
2. prevention programmes that could assist in the reduction of absenteeism

3. how the two schools could work together with various departments e.g. Department of Health and Social Development and SAPS
4. how the Love Life programmes can be improved

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

List of Acronyms

ABET: Adult Basic Education and Training

AE: Adult Education

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

A& C: Art and Culture

ART: Anti-Retroviral Treatment

CENESA: Co-operation in Education between the Netherlands and South Africa

DoE: Department of Education

ED: Educator

EMS: Economic Management Sciences

FET: Further Education Training

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GET: General Education Training

HI: Human Immune

HIV: Human Immune Virus

HSS: Human Social Sciences

ISCOR: Iron Steel Corporation

LLC: Language Literacy and Communication

LO: Life Orientation

MLMMS: Mathematics Literacy & Mathematical Sciences

NS: Natural Sciences

NGO: Non-Government Organisation

NOF: National Qualification Framework

NP: Non-Participant

P: Principal

PA: Participant

RCL: Representative Council of Leaners

RES: Researcher

RDP: Reconstruction and Development Programmes

RUG: University of Groningen

SADC: Southern African Developing Countries

SANDF: South African National Defence Force

SAPS: South African Police Services

SGB: School Governing Body

SMT: School Management Team

STIs: Sexually Transmitted Infections

TECH: Technology

UL: University of Limpopo

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Introduction for interviews with the secondary schools

Introduction

I am here to do a research on finding the causes for absenteeism and the contribution of Love Life programmes towards the reduction of the problem. My focus is on youth, and the school. The aim of this research is find what caused learners to be away from school, are they aware of the programmes, and how could the programmes help them in life issues and be able to leave a healthy life. You are allowed to use the language of your choice and the tape recorder will be used with your permission.

Central

Questions on appendix 3-7

Conclusion

Thank you for participating in my research. Wish you the best in your exams.

Appendix 3

Interview Questions for the Principals of both schools. (Tielelo Junior and Phegelelo Senior Secondary School)

1. When were you appointed as a principal in this school?

……..

2. How many male educators and female educators do you have in your school?

…….

3. Do you have adequate staffing? Yes No

If yes, how many? ……

If no, what do you suggest? …….

……..

4. How many learners do you have in your school?

……

5. What challenges are you faced with as a school manager?

…….

…….

6. How is parental involvement in your school?

……

……

7. If parental involvement is minimal, what contribute towards the minimal involvement?

…….

8. Do you experience the problem of absenteeism in your school?

……

9. What is the rate of absenteeism?

…….

……...……

10. What are the possible causes for absenteeism?

……..

……

11. How does your school deal with this problem?

……

…….……

12. What are the problems caused by absenteeism in your school?

……

……

13 Do you involve parents in trying to solve the problem of absenteeism?

a. If yes, how? …..……

……...…….

b. If no, why? ……..……..

……..

14. When were the Love Life programmes introduced in your school?

……...……

15. Who introduced them?

……

16. What are the aims of the programmes?

…….……

…….……

17. Is it compulsory for learners to participate in these programmes?

a. If yes, why are they participating? ……

……

b. If no, why are the non participants not taking part? ……

……..……..

18. What contributions do the programmes make in your school?

……..……

……..……

19. Do you think the programmes are efficient/effective in the reducing the problem of absenteeism?

a. If yes, how? ……

b. If no, what do you suggest? ……

…….……

……..……..

20. Besides absenteeism what other problems are you faced with?

…….……

21. What problems are encountered by programme providers in your school?

…….

…….

22. Do you think the programmes need any improvements, if yes what kind?

……

……..……..

23. Can you recommend these programmes to other school and why?

…….

…….

Appendix 4

Interview Questions for the educators of both schools

1. When were you appointed as an educator?

   …….

2. What learning areas do you teach?

   ……..

   ……..

3. How many grades do you teach?

   ……

4. How many learners do you have in your class?

   ……..……

   How many male and female learners are in your class?

   ……..……

5. How is the rate of absenteeism in your class?

   ……..……..

   ……..……..

6. What do you think are the possible causes of absenteeism?

   ……

   ……...…….

7. How absenteeism affect your work?

   ……..……

   ……..…….

8. Between males and females, who often absent themselves from school?

   ……

9. What are the consequences of absenteeism?

……..……..

10. How do you deal with this problem?

…….……

11. Do you involve parents of learners who absent themselves from school?

If yes, how? …….

…….……..

……

12. Do you receive adequate support from parents?

If yes, what type of support? …….……...

…….……..

…….……..

13. What do think should be done to reduce the problem of absenteeism?

……

……

……....

14. Besides absenteeism, what other problems are you faced with? …….

……..…..

…….…...

……

Appendix 5

Interview Questions for the Coordinators of Love Life programmes.

1. When were you appointed as Love Life co-ordinator?

   ……..…..

2. What programmes do you offer?

   ……..…….

3. What are its aims?

   ……..……

   ……..……

   ……..……

4. How many learners do you have in your programmes?

   ……..……

5. How many male learners? ……...….

   How many female learners? ……...…..

6. What is the criterion used to select learners into the programmes?

   ……..…….

   ……..…….

   ……

7. Is participation voluntary or compulsory?

   ……..……..

8. Do you experience the problem of absenteeism during the presentation of the programmes?

   ……

   ……

9. How does absenteeism affect your work?

……..

……..

10. What are the reasons for learners to absent themselves from the programmes and school in general?

……....

……..

……..……

……

11. How do you deal with these problems?

……...

…….……..

…….……..

12. Which methods do you use to present the Love Life programmes to participants?

……..……

……

13. What is the duration of the programme?

……...……...

14. Are the programmes allocated time or periods on school timetable?

Yes, no and why? …….

……..

15. Do you think time allocated for the presentation of programmes is adequate?

If not, how much time do you need? …….……..

…….……

16. Besides absenteeism, what other problems are you faced with?

……

17. What challenges are you faced with when presenting the programmes?

……...

……...

……...

18. Do you receive support from educators? Yes No

What type? ……..

…….……

…….….

19. Do you think the programmes are successful in trying to reduce the problem of absenteeism or achieve its aims?

How? …….….

……..……...

…….

20. Do you collaborate with parents if you experience problems with parents?

If yes how? ……..…...

…….……..

Appendix 6

Interview Questions for the participant learners.

1. What is your name?

   …….

2. How old are you?

   ……..

1. What is your gender?

   …….

4. How many males and females are in your family?

   ……..

   ……..

5. What learning areas are you doing?

   ……..

   ……..

   ……....

6. What are you hoping to do after completing school?

   ……..……..

7. Do you stay with your parents?

   Both parents? ……..……..

   Mother only? ……..…….

   Other, specify ……..…

8. Do you receive enough support from your parents in relation to school in general?

   Both parents? …….

Mothers ……..

Others, specify……..…….

9. What is the source of income in your family?

……..

……

10. Why do you attend Love Life programmes?

……..

……....

11. Who motivated you to attend these programmes?

…….…...

12. Do you think the programmes are interesting?

If not why? ……..

……

If yes, how? ……..……...

……..……..

……..……...

13. Do you encounter any problems during participation?

If yes, what are those problems? …….……

……

……..……..

14. Do you attend regularly?

……...

15. Can you recommend these programmes to other learners who do not attend?

…….……..

……..

16. Why do you often absent yourself from school?

……

……

……

17. What do your parents say about it?

……

……

18. Do you know the consequences of absenteeism?

……

19. What do you think should be done for you to attend regularly?

……

Appendix 7

Interview Questions for the non-participants

1. What is your name?

   ……..

2. How old are you?

   ……

3. What is your gender?

   ……

4. How many females and males are in your family?

   ……

5. What learning areas are you doing?

   ……..…….

   ……..

   ……..

6. What are you hoping to do after completing school?

   ……..……..

7. Do you stay with your parents?

   Both parents. ……..……

   Mothers only. ……..……

   Others specify. ……..…….

8. Do you receive enough support from your parents in relation to school in general?

   ……..……..

   ……..……..

9. What is the source of income in your family?

……..……..

……..……..

10. Why are you not participating in Love Life programmes?

……..……..

……..……..……

11. Do you think the programmes are useful or not?

……

……..……

12. Do you share experience with learners who attend the programmes?

……..……..

If yes, what do you think about them?

……..……..

……..……..

13. Do you wish to join these programmes sometimes?

……

14. Why do you often absent yourself from school?

……..……..

……

15. What do your parents say about it?

……..……..

……..……..

16. Do you know the consequences of absenteeism?

……..……

……..……

……...……..

17. What do you should be done for you to attend regularly?

…….……..

……

…….…….

Appendix 8

Variables	P1	P2	Ed1	Ed2	Ed3
Parental Involvement	It is minimal , because most of them have farming background.	Minimal	Involves parents. Call them to school	Minimal involvement	Sometimes not always
Poverty	The community comes from people who lived and worked on farms		youth device means of getting money by working at the shebeens		For learners to go and take money to their sexual partners is because of poverty
Peer pressure	Peer pressure is dangerous as it influence learners to behave badly	Poverty causes learners to be away from school	Shebeens around pressurises youth to drink as they befriend undergo such places.	Learners befriend with non scholars	Learners befriend with non scholars
Child abuse	Statutory rape. Learners have got sexual relation with older people	Statutory rape. Young girls have sexual relationship with older people	Girls fall pregnant to get grants and receive money from their partners.		Statutory rape
Child Support grants	There are some learners who receive the grants	Some of the girls are receiving support grants	Most girls are receiving support grants	High teenage pregnancy	Ask permission to receive the grants
School		Punish learners but the problem recurs	Bullying, late coming and the adolescent stage	Bigger boys are bullying others	Learners are too many in the class
Personal factors	Poor performance among learners	Poor performance among learners	Poor performance	Poor performance in class	They are not doing well in their studies
Others	alcohol abuse	Learners are drinking and smoking at the shebeens and taverns	Learners drinks too much alcohol,	Girls give their selves to liquor and poor performance in class	Non supportive environment that encourages youth to be involved in criminal activities

PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA5	PA6	NoPA7	PA8
Help in doing homework and check the books	No support in school matters	No support in school matters	Receives support in school matters	No support	No support in school matters	No support from both parents	No support in school matters
Source of income from the mother, working at Standard Bank, father not working		Family of nine, source of income from the mother(domestic worker)		Overcrowded, the mother is unemployed and get little income from the father who works on a farm	Source of income from the mother working at the cafe. Family of ten	Family of seven the source of income from the father.	Father works at ISCOR as a driver and the mother is unemployed
				Friends pressures to steal			
Leaving with his moms' partner makes his life a hell. His mother pays more attention to his man.		receive grants for her first child					Verbal abuse from the teachers
		Receives the support grants					
	Afraid of bully boys. Bad treatment among teachers	Teacher P making fun of her			Teachers call them names	Presentation of the teacher is boring	
		Unable to read.					
				Girls take long times at shebeens			

NP1	NP2	NP3	NP4	NP5	NP6	NP7	NP8
Receive support in school matters	Receives support from teachers	Does not check the books.	No support in school matters	No support in school matters	No support stays with the grandmother	No support in school matters	No support in school matters
All parents are working		Mother is a domestic worker	Single parent with four children, working as a cleaner at Kumba mine	No problem of poverty. Mother is a teacher with the family of three	Depends on the grandma's grants	Depends on the sister who is working at the car wash	
	Spends time with friends till 02h00 in the morning	Mother chase him away	Befriend with non scholars. Play cards during the day	Go to friends place when she is absent	Pressurises by friends to dodge classes and stay in toilets or in the forest.	Plays the behaviour played by age-mates	
				She is pregnant at the age of sixteen.		verbal abuse from the teachers	
			Mother forces her to receive the grants				
Unfairly treatment from teachers	Teacher X is making fun of me			Wishes if the school could understand that she is pregnant	Teacher X mocks her in front of other learners	Presentation of the lesson is boring	Teachers attitude
				Lazy to do work			
		The bus left him while coming to school				Wish if the mother could go to the social workers for her father to support them	

CO1	CO2
Parents lack motivation	Collaborates with parents
Teenage pregnancy will be minimised	
Lack of motivation from educators	Issue of telling youth about sex
Inactive participation among learners	Lack of participation among Learners
Drug abuse will be minimised.	