



# Exploring Teachers' Resilience and Lived Experiences in Special Schools for Learners with Hearing Impairment – A Case Study of Gauteng Province, South Africa

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## ABSTRACT

Teaching learners with a variety of special educational needs presents its own challenges across the globe. This study, therefore, aimed to explore teachers' resilience and their lived experiences in special school settings of learners with hearing impairment. To carry out this qualitative narrative inquiry, nine (9) teachers from a single special school for learners with hearing impairment in Gauteng Province of South Africa were purposely selected. Individual interviews were carried out, followed by a focus group discussion with the teachers. An interpretivist phenomenological approach was employed to analyse data. Four themes: personality traits, perceptions about teachers' experience, challenges related to parental resistance and the need for emotional support emerged. The findings of the study revealed that lack of support not only affects teachers' and parents' relationships but also impacts on learners' academic performance. The results further indicated that teachers in special schools tend to remain in the profession when they receive support and feel fulfilled by their work. Building on findings of previous research, the study emphasized that teachers' job satisfaction is of utmost importance. The study provided some useful recommendations on the benefits of support in building resilience in teaching. There is a need, therefore, to support teachers in special schools in the form of counselling and strengthening teacher-parent relationships. The study contributes to the body of knowledge on teacher resilience and advances teachers' significance.

**Keywords:** *Teacher Resilience, Special School, Hearing Impairment, Teacher Burnout, Self-Efficacy*

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## INTRODUCTION

Teacher resilience is one of the most researched topics in education. It is an international phenomenon that is of great concern as it helps in building strong characters, which are important in sustaining long-term service in teaching. Much of the literature on teachers' resilience in South Africa and globally assumes that at some point in their careers, teachers experience burnout and stress.<sup>1</sup> Globally, teachers

<sup>1</sup> R. Yudkowsky, Y.S. Park, and S.M. Downing, *Assessment in Health Professions Education* (New York: Routledge, 2019); Min Zhang, Yu Bai, and Zhizhuan Li, "Effect of Resilience on the Mental Health of Special Education Teachers: Moderating Effect of Teaching Barriers," *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 2020, 537–44; Carol A Mullen, Lee Brantley Shields, and Christopher H Tienken, "Developing Teacher Resilience and Resilient School Cultures," *Journal of Scholarship & Practice* 18, no. 1 (2021): 8–24.

experience numerous work stressors which may negatively impact their wellbeing and may lead to burnout. Job demands are likely to cause exhaustion, burnout, and stress. Apart from the aforementioned work stressors, how teachers experience their lives is likely to have a major influence on their teaching practices. It is important to highlight that their decision to remain in the job is influenced by their positive outlook on their daily experiences.

Resultantly, much research has been conducted on teacher resilience in special schools.<sup>2</sup> However, there is a knowledge gap in the narratives of teachers about factors that enable them to cope in special schools, hence the need for the current study. In South Africa, Ebersöhn investigated circumstances that make teachers continue to teach and stay in the profession.<sup>3</sup> The findings of the study revealed that teachers stay in the profession because they collaborate with others to share resources, their ability to adapt, and their perseverance. The current study thus, sets out to unpack teachers' lived experiences particularly teachers in a special school for learners with hearing impairment. This focus affords a more rational and comprehensive view of resilient factors that are needed to cope in a special school. In line with Ebersöhn's view, teachers' resilience is important as it is one quality needed by teachers to provide quality education to their learners, hence the need for the current study.<sup>4</sup> Resilient teachers are constantly encouraging their learners to pursue their passion to learn, and they are pedagogically adept.<sup>5</sup> Resilience is dynamic and encompasses the ability to adapt and continue to provide high-quality education.<sup>6</sup> This implies that resilient teachers usually find a way to foster their way forward even when circumstances are not conducive for them.

Documented scholarship reveals that teacher burnout is one of the reasons teachers leave teaching.<sup>7</sup> García-Rivera et al. explain that teacher burnout is related to the high demands placed on teachers because of the demands learners place on their time, mental and emotional attention.<sup>8</sup> There is a belief that special school settings are more stressful for teachers due to learners' special educational needs.<sup>9</sup> Research indicates that apart from teaching, teachers need to take in a lot of learners' problems which include health issues, behaviour problems and learning problems.<sup>10</sup> This, on its own, needs a lot of resilience for teachers to stay on the job. There is a gap in literature on teachers' experiences in special schools, especially in South Africa.<sup>11</sup> It is in this context that this study is undertaken, thereby seeking to provide insight into teacher resilience and their lived experiences in special school settings.

The main question guiding the study is: What resilient factors enable teachers in special school settings to cope and continue to teach? The study further pursues the following supporting questions:

- a. What are teachers' lived experiences of teaching learners with hearing impairment?
- b. What factors influence teachers to cope in a special school?

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth K King et al., "Preschool Teachers' Financial Well-Being and Work Time Supports: Associations with Children's Emotional Expressions and Behaviors in Classrooms," *Early Childhood Education Journal* 44 (2016): 545–53; Caroline Mansfield, Susan Beltman, and Anne Price, "'I'm Coming Back Again!' The Resilience Process of Early Career Teachers," *Teachers and Teaching* 20, no. 5 (2014): 547–67; Marold Wosnitza and Francisco Peixoto, "Resilience in Education: Emerging Trends in Recent Research," *Resilience in Education: Concepts, Contexts and Connections*, 2018, 335–40.

<sup>3</sup> Suzette Ebersohn and A C Bouwer, "A Bio-Ecological Interpretation of the Relationship Challenges in the Context of the Reconstituted Family," *South African Journal of Education* 35, no. 2 (2015): 1039.

<sup>4</sup> Ebersohn and Bouwer, "A Bio-Ecological Interpretation of the Relationship Challenges in the Context of the Reconstituted Family."

<sup>5</sup> Ebersohn and Bouwer, "A Bio-Ecological Interpretation of the Relationship Challenges in the Context of the Reconstituted Family."

<sup>6</sup> Meng-Chuan Lai and Peter Szatmari, "Resilience in Autism: Research and Practice Prospects," *Autism* (SAGE Publications Sage UK: London, England, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> Yudkowsky, Park, and Downing, *Assessment in Health Professions Education*; Zhang, Bai, and Li, "Effect of Resilience on the Mental Health of Special Education Teachers: Moderating Effect of Teaching Barriers"; Mullen, Shields, and Tienken, "Developing Teacher Resilience and Resilient School Cultures."

<sup>8</sup> Blanca Rosa García-Rivera et al., "Influence of Resilience on Burnout Syndrome of Faculty Professors," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 2 (2022): 910.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander-Stamatios Antoniou et al., "Profiles of Teachers' Work Engagement in Special Education: The Impact of Burnout and Job Satisfaction," *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education* 71, no. 4 (2024): 650–67.

<sup>10</sup> Hopolang Lehloa, "Investigating Access to Education for Learners with Hearing Impairment at Secondary Schools" (National University of Lesotho, 2019); Nthabiseng Eugenia Majoro, "Challenges of Using Sign Language Interpreting to Facilitate Teaching and Learning for Learners with Hearing Impairment" (National University of Lesotho, 2021); Kayi Ntinda, S'lungile K Thwala, and Thulile P Dlamini, "Lived Experiences of School-Going Early Mothers in Swaziland," *Journal of Psychology in Africa* 26, no. 6 (2016): 546–50.

<sup>11</sup> Ebersohn and Bouwer, "A Bio-Ecological Interpretation of the Relationship Challenges in the Context of the Reconstituted Family"; Yudkowsky, Park, and Downing, *Assessment in Health Professions Education*.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Resilience

Despite extensive research done on resilience, it is a difficult term to define. Some scholars view it as an internal character while others see it stemming from external factors. Pearce and Morrison define resilience as “the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances.”<sup>12</sup> It can be shared by many ordinary teachers who remain extraordinarily committed to serving the learning and achievement of the learners daily, also over the course of their professional lives. Moreover, Mansfield, Beltman, Price, and McConney express teacher resilience as a dynamic process that entails their personal characteristics and contextual factors which has an impact on their positive response to adverse events.<sup>13</sup> Some scholars view resilience as a personal trait.<sup>14</sup> It is of essence to highlight that some conceptualize resilience as the ability to adapt to stressful life events.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Ebersöhn explains, “Teacher resilience refers to those teachers who withstand the ebbs and flows of the educational sector (such as those described earlier) and who keep on teaching despite all the negative factors.”<sup>16</sup>

As much as there are different views on conceptualizing resilience, it is linked to personality traits that enable teachers to adapt and thrive irrespective of the challenges they encounter. As Oshio et al. indicate, highly resilient individuals are very much reactive in difficult situations, thus, for teachers to be resilient, they must have been exposed to challenges and adapted to them effectively.<sup>17</sup> Masten defines resilience as “the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development.”<sup>18</sup> A system may refer to an individual but it could be “a family, a school, a community, an organisation, an economy, or an ecosystem.” Therefore, it is important to highlight that resilience encompasses the capacity of many systems’ ability to adapt. The current study, therefore, adopts Mansfield’s definition that resilient teachers are described as those teachers who strive to thrive in difficult circumstances, have good classroom management skills, empathetic to their students, able to focus on the positive than negative emotions, proud of their strengths and display a sense of fulfilment and increased commitment to their profession and the schools they serve.<sup>19</sup> Beltman and Mansfield’s definition further articulates that resilience is the process of the capacity to adapt, grow and professional commitment in challenging situations.<sup>20</sup>

The current study is relevant because it highlights the necessity of resilience, which is an important factor that contributes to learners’ success. It is essential to stress that teachers’ success in teaching is dependent on their ability to adapt and overcome the challenges they encounter in their teaching careers. Some of the challenges that teachers face include personal life burdens, changes in policy, parental involvement, and demand for resilience.<sup>21</sup> In a study conducted by Crompton, Chigona and Burke, growth, motivation, self-efficacy, support, resources, and teacher challenges were the themes emphasized as factors that contribute to teacher resilience.<sup>22</sup> These factors are often categorised

<sup>12</sup> Jane Pearce and Chad Morrison, “Teacher Identity and Early Career Resilience: Exploring the Links,” *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)* 36, no. 1 (2011): 48–59. p. 48

<sup>13</sup> Mansfield, Beltman, and Price, “‘I’m Coming Back Again!’ The Resilience Process of Early Career Teachers.”

<sup>14</sup> Atsushi Oshio et al., “Resilience and Big Five Personality Traits: A Meta-Analysis,” *Personality and Individual Differences* 127 (2018): 54–60; Seffetullah Kuldass and Mairéad Foody, “Neither Resiliency-Trait nor Resilience-State: Transactional Resiliency/E,” *Youth & Society* 54, no. 8 (2022): 1352–76.

<sup>15</sup> Qing Gu, “(Re) Conceptualising Teacher Resilience: A Social-Ecological Approach to Understanding Teachers’ Professional Worlds,” *Resilience in Education: Concepts, Contexts and Connections*, 2018, 13–33; Kuldass and Foody, “Neither Resiliency-Trait nor Resilience-State: Transactional Resiliency/E.” 573

<sup>16</sup> Ebersöhn and Bouwer, “A Bio-Ecological Interpretation of the Relationship Challenges in the Context of the Reconstituted Family.”

<sup>17</sup> Oshio et al., “Resilience and Big Five Personality Traits: A Meta-Analysis.”

<sup>18</sup> Ann S. Masten, “Global Perspectives on Resilience in Children and Youth,” *Child Development* 85, no. 1 (January 16, 2014): 6–20, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12205>.

<sup>19</sup> Caroline F Mansfield et al., “Building Resilience in Teacher Education: An Evidenced Informed Framework,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 54 (2016): 77–87.

<sup>20</sup> Caroline F Mansfield et al., “Great Southern Lands: Making Space for Teacher Resilience in South Africa and Australia,” *Resilience in Education: Concepts, Contexts and Connections*, 2018, 53–71.

<sup>21</sup> Karley Brooke Stansfield, “Evaluating the Necessity for Resiliency and Adaptability Skills within Educators through Multiple Case Studies” (Trevecca Nazarene University, 2022).

<sup>22</sup> Stansfield, “Evaluating the Necessity for Resiliency and Adaptability Skills within Educators through Multiple Case Studies.”

as internal and external. Internal factors relate to the character traits or personality of an individual while external factors relate to factors such as relationships established within and outside the family.<sup>23</sup>

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) theory guides the study to understand lived experiences of teachers in one special school in Gauteng.<sup>24</sup> One of the central components of this framework is that job demands diminish individuals and eventually lead to burnout.<sup>25</sup> The framework informed the study in the selection of relevant literature and analysis. The JD-R model stresses that high job demands, workloads, excessive paperwork and burnout impact negatively on workers' health.<sup>26</sup> Current and earlier research indicates that inadequate support for teachers impacts on their teaching quality and passion for teaching.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, through this framework, the current study aims to explore resilience factors that enable teachers in special school settings to cope and continue to teach.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research methodology as the aim was to explore teacher resilience and their lived experiences in special school settings of learners with hearing impairment. The study used a narrative inquiry research design as it investigated the way humans perceive and experience the world. According to Mokala narrative inquiry is subjective in nature.<sup>28</sup> Adding to this, Maree states, "The narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with every history of mankind; it is present in every place and society; and there have never been people without a narrative".<sup>29</sup> As captured in the quotation above, narrative studies are centred around people's stories. This inquiry is therefore benchmarked on understating lived experiences of teachers in one special school in Gauteng. In adopting Briggs et al.'s view, the researcher's interest in this paper was to hear teachers' own accounts of their teaching journey, and how they perceive their own teaching experience as teachers of learners with hearing impairment.<sup>30</sup> To carry out the investigation, nine teachers from one special school of learners with hearing impairment in Gauteng were purposely selected. Purposive sampling was a more convenient sampling technique as the participants were easily accessible and the researcher did not have to travel. As guided by Babbie and Mouton the participants were chosen because they were teachers of learners with hearing impairment and deemed information-rich for the study.<sup>31</sup> The study was conducted in one Centre for Language and Hearing-Impaired Children in Johannesburg, South Africa. The study site was envisaged to achieve the objectives of the study as it is equipped with the relevant staff to teach and provide appropriate support for learners with hearing impairment. Data was generated through individual semi-structured interviews with the teachers who were later brought together into a focus group discussion. The interviews were used because they allowed researchers to understand participants' life experiences, giving details of their own perspectives and perceptions about the topic of discussion.<sup>32</sup> The use of these two research methods helped the

<sup>23</sup> Hüsünür Aslantürk and Aliye Mavili, "The Sense of Family Belonging in University Students from a Single Parent Family Compared with Those from a Two-Biological-Parent Family," *Current Psychology* 39, no. 6 (2020): 2026–39.

<sup>24</sup> Evangelia Demerouti et al., "The Job Demands-Resources Model of Burnout.," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 86, no. 3 (2001): 499.

<sup>25</sup> Chun Lei et al., "Factors Determining Employee Career Success in the Chinese Hotel Industry: A Perspective of Job-Demand Resources Theory," *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 48 (2021): 301–11.

<sup>26</sup> Dudung Abdurachman et al., "Integrating Leadership in Job Demand Resources (JD-R) for Personal Performance in Military Institution," *Sustainability* 15, no. 5 (2023): 4004.

<sup>27</sup> Ntsoaki Teresa Mokala and Maximus Monaheng Sefotho, "'Nothing About Us Without Us' -The Storied Narratives of a Learner with Hearing Impairment," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 4, no. 9 (2023): 2821–94; Ntsoaki Teresa Mokala and Maximus Monaheng Sefotho, "Internal Teacher Support in a Special School for Learners with Hearing Impairment in Gauteng," *African Perspectives of Research in Teaching & Learning (APORTAL)*, no. 2 (2022).

<sup>28</sup> Ntsoaki Teresa Mokala, *Teachers' Narratives of Their Teaching Experiences of Learners with Hearing Impairment in a Special School in Gauteng* (University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2021).

<sup>29</sup> R. Ferreira, "Writing a Research Proposal," in *Complete Your Thesis or Dissertation Successfully: Practical Guidelines*, ed. K. Maree (Cape Town: Juta, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Ann Briggs, Marlene Morrison, and Marianne Coleman, "Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management," 2012.

<sup>31</sup> E. Babbie and J. Mouton, *The Practice of Social Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> David Seetsa Makateng and Ntsoaki Teresa Mokala, "Understanding Qualitative Research Methodology: A Systematic Review," *E-Journal of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences* 6, no. 3 (2025): 327–35.

researcher to understand lived experiences of teachers in a special school setting. Both the interviews and the focus group discussions were digitally recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

### Data Analysis

The data analysis of the study was guided by an interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA). This method was deemed relevant for the study as the focus was on understanding teachers' lived experiences.<sup>33</sup> As such, the researcher was interested in deliberating on teachers' construction of resilience in teaching learners with hearing impairment in a special school. Another strength of IPA that was drawn from this study is that it helps create a bond between the researcher and the participants which helped in getting deeper into teachers' lived experiences in the current study as they narrated their teaching experiences. Therefore, as Mokala notes, this narrative inquiry was interested in giving the participants an account of their lived experiences.<sup>34</sup> Having transcribed the responses, the researcher repeatedly read through them to have a better understanding and establish a pattern. This process was done through coding and categorizing data. Before conducting this study, the researcher applied for ethics clearance, and it was granted by the ethics Committee of the University of Johannesburg with the protocol number SEM1-2021-041. Following this, permission to collect data from the elected school was also granted by Gauteng Department of Education. Once permission to collect data was granted, the researcher contacted the principal of the school, with the information letter detailing the objectives of the study. Following this, information letters were distributed to the teachers and those who were interested in the study signed the consent forms, which detailed that their participation in the study was voluntary, and they may withdraw from the study without being penalized.

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS /FINDINGS

The research questions assisted in identifying the themes. The narratives captured, therefore, helped in understanding teachers' perceptions of their lived experiences. When asked about resilient factors that make them continue teaching in a special school, the participants attributed it to self-efficacy. They described their experiences as positive and fulfilling. This is captured in verbatim extracts below.

*...it's such a lovely opportunity to work here. The kids love it here-when you walk here there is so much love. And passion, you just love the kids (Participant A)*

*Eventually finding my niche in my world... (Participant B)*

*I find it very interesting (Participant C)*

*The space we are working in is very much supportive (Participant D)*

*For me, it is one of the best experiences or part of my job (Participant E)*

*Very rewarding (Participant I)*

The above excerpts bring to the fore yet another insight into resilient factors that contribute to them continuing to teach in a special school. The study revealed a supportive environment, positive attitudes about their experiences as well as the love they receive from the learners as resilient factors attributed to their stay in the field. They describe their experience as positive, supportive, interesting, and very fulfilling.

<sup>33</sup> Abayomi Alase, "The Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA): A Guide to a Good Qualitative Research Approach.," *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies* 5, no. 2 (2017): 9–19.

<sup>34</sup> Mokala, *Teachers' Narratives of Their Teaching Experiences of Learners with Hearing Impairment in a Special School in Gauteng*.

### **a. Need for emotional support**

When explaining their lived experiences in a special school, most of the participants indicated that working with learners with special educational needs can be a daunting task that requires counselling for the teachers. This is supported in verbatim excerpts below.

*The only thing the teachers need is counselling –it's very overwhelming for the parents as well as teachers and I wish we could have at least one session of counselling (Participant C).*

*I would like counselling for the teachers. Because you work in very difficult cases, very difficult parents and you just need to get some things off your chest because you do try to have some distance from the children, but you do get attached to some of them (FG2, PC)*

The verbatim extracts above recommended counselling for teachers. The teachers not only teach and give support to learners but they must also be supportive to the parents. Teachers indicate that this is a difficult aspect of teaching in a special school.

### **b. Teachers' lived experiences with parents**

When narrating their lived experiences with the parents, the participants agreed that parents are not cooperative at times, and this is captured in verbatim excerpts below.

*I think that for me is very challenging sometimes the parents are not cooperative, or parents do not want assistance, to come on board, you know be part of the team, that makes it very difficult and when you give feedback and parents find it hard...I find the most difficult thing is having to get the parents on board. At times the person is still in denial, or they might be offended by what you say, or they always counter-argue (Participant D)*

*I think sometimes one of the lows for me is that even though you can try and give your professional and you know give parents research and do your best, parents often do not listen to recommendations (Participant E).*

*The most difficult thing is the fact – when you teach a child to be able to be independent etc. and now when the parents go home, they do not carry out the same objectives we are trying to achieve at schools (Participant F).*

*On the flip side-Parents are often a very big barrier to their children's learning. They, you know, at times, they may not take your professional advice or don't understand the importance of their involvement in the whole process (Participant H).*

*The problem with the parents is that I feel like sometimes they do not necessarily have realistic expectations (Participant I).*

The findings could reasonably be interpreted to suggest that the teachers attribute parental resistance to their refusal to cooperate and carry over the programmes put in place in the school to the home environment. Another important factor that emerged from the participants' view is parents' inability to take the professional advice offered to them. This impedes the progress of learners, as there is a mismatch between the school and the home activities.

Another theme that emerged from the findings is that, character traits also play a great role in building resilient teachers. This is captured in the excerpts below.

*And passion, you just love the kids. It is not patience, you know people will tell you, you need to be patient (Participant A).*

*You must be a strong person yourself, hold yourself to not fall apart in the smallest little things and this is to just take it one day at a time (Participant C).*

*First, they should really have an interest in children and be open to learning and also have an interest in helping children who have special needs (Participant D).*

*You need to be patient. You need to be very patient with these children. You need to have lots of creative ideas; you need to be creative – you need to be able to be quick to adapt (Participant E).*

*First, you need to have love for kids in general then love for kids with special needs. Do you have the patience, are you going to stand that comes with it? Are you empathetic? You should have such traits. You must be open to learning (Participant F).*

*I think you must have a big passion for it if you need to be hardworking and dedicated. You have got to have good problem-solving skills (Participant I).*

From the above excerpts, it can be concluded that self-efficacy is a contributing factor in building resilient teachers. Teachers revealed that character traits, such as patience, love, passion and dedication are required to survive in special schools.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to examine teachers' resilience and their lived experiences in special school settings. The study contributes to the body of knowledge on the attributes needed to help teachers cope in working with learners with special educational needs. The findings of the study indicate that personality traits build one's ability to adapt to threatening circumstances. Self-efficacy is one of the contributing factors to continuity in teaching and contributes to teacher resilience. A study by Aldridge and Fraser confirms that self-efficacy is one of the variables that bring job satisfaction to teachers.<sup>35</sup> Self-efficacy is associated with positive perceptions of the environment, a positive outlook on life and positive emotions. Those with higher self-efficacy are more likely to perceive the environment positively, leading to positive emotions and increasing the likelihood of task persistence. Teacher resilience is important in education as "Teachers are a crucial part of young people's social ecologies".<sup>36</sup>

The findings further revealed that, working in a special school requires a very strong character which includes the ability to adapt quickly, kind-heartedly and a loving character. The participants of the study pointed to a need for character traits such as compassion, patience, and passion for teaching in general. This finding agrees with the findings of Mullen, Shields, and Tienken (2021) who revealed that personal traits such as optimism, perseverance, motivation, and coping mechanisms contribute to teacher resilience.<sup>37</sup> Data analysis in the current study foregrounds that the demands and pressure brought by dealing with learners with hearing impairment can have tremendous effects on teachers' mental state and wellbeing. A study by Lamb confirms the findings of the current study by indicating that self-efficacy is attributed to building resilience in individuals.<sup>38</sup> Evidence from the findings of the study also points to emotional support for teachers needing. In line with this, Mokala and Sefotho agree that teaching learners with hearing impairment is challenging, and it requires support in the form of counselling.<sup>39</sup> Findings from Neil's study confirm that some personality traits are attributed to the development of resilience as they help individuals to cope in difficult situations and learn and develop

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<sup>35</sup> Jill M Aldridge and Katrina McChesney, "The Relationships between School Climate and Adolescent Mental Health and Wellbeing: A Systematic Literature Review," *International Journal of Educational Research* 88 (2018): 121–45.

<sup>36</sup> Ismail Davids and Francois Theron, *Development, the State and Civil Society in South Africa* (Van Schaik, 2014). p. 297

<sup>37</sup> T. Mansfield, *Church Leadership and Governance: Historical Perspectives and Modern Practices* (Harvard University Press, 2020).

<sup>38</sup> Shannon Lamb, "Personality Traits and Resilience as Predictors of Job Stress and Burnout among Call Centre Employees" (University of the Free State, 2009).

<sup>39</sup> Mokala and Sefotho, "Nothing About Us Without Us' -The Storied Narratives of a Learner with Hearing Impairment."

opportunities.<sup>40</sup> Bakker and De Vries concur that personal resources such as confidence in communication and empathy reduce the pressure of job demands and burnout.<sup>41</sup>

The teachers have a positive attitude about their teaching experiences. The findings contradict previous research which revealed that teachers who teach learners with hearing impairment are not supported.<sup>42</sup> According to Lehloa, teachers did not work collaboratively with the sign language interpreters, had limited time, and did not receive adequate support.<sup>43</sup> In the same vein, Majoro points out that teachers feel overwhelmed and unsupported as there is a shortage of teachers with sign language skills.<sup>44</sup> It is important to highlight the findings of Chake which are in contradiction to the findings of the current study.<sup>45</sup>

The results of this study are consistent with the guiding framework, as it lays emphasis on the importance of access to resources and support. Therefore, the teachers seem to have a positive attitude about their teaching experiences, as they have support in the form of training, available resources, and therapists. In retrospect, the teachers in the current study revealed that the school has a lot of resources, and they find this a driving force for them to feel motivated and positive about their teaching experiences. These findings, however, refute Coertzee et al.'s study findings that a resource-constrained teaching environment is one of the contributing factors that push teachers to leave their teaching jobs.<sup>46</sup> It is important to highlight that Crompton et al.'s study found that resource-constrained settings in South Africa have built strong resilient teachers.<sup>47</sup> Another study by Phohleli articulates that resilient teachers produce resilient learners.<sup>48</sup> According to Crompton et al. regardless of limited resources, teachers in South Africa reported a high level of resilience as they have learned to make things work.<sup>49</sup> Lack of resources as a challenge in their teaching does not push them out of the system. Rather, they have taken it upon themselves to "contribute to the welfare of their schools" Crompton et al. The conviction is that "the South African culture is one of community, necessitating the need for highly developed social skills for success".<sup>50</sup>

To this end, the teachers in this study indicated how their emotional involvement in the learners' and parents' affairs affects their emotional well-being. As a result, they pointed out the need to persevere and adapt accordingly. Ebersöhn concurs that "the lifeline chain of teacher resilience depicts how teachers maintain vigor, dedication, and absorption through unrelenting resilience processes built on their work engagement state, traits, and adaptive behaviors."<sup>51</sup> To add to this, Mokala points out that teachers have articulated their need for emotional support.<sup>52</sup> This aspect is important as emotional stress can lead to exhaustion and mental breakdown. Mokala and Sefotho are supportive of this idea as "dealing with learners with hearing impairment can be very demanding and stressful on their part."<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, Konstantopoulou et al. explain that the need for emotional support arises because teachers

<sup>40</sup> W. Neil Adger, "Vulnerability," *Global Environmental Change* 16, no. 3 (2006): 268–81.

<sup>41</sup> Arnold B. Bakker and Juriena D. de Vries, "Job Demands–Resources Theory and Self-Regulation: New Explanations and Remedies for Job Burnout," *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping* 34, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10615806.2020.1797695>.

<sup>42</sup> Christian, et al. Tsekpoe, "A Research Work on the Integration and Assimilation of the Northern Outreach Ministry of The Church Of Pentecost," *A Research Report Presented to the Executive Council of The Church of Pentecost*, April 2019; Lehloa, "Investigating Access to Education for Learners with Hearing Impairment at Secondary Schools"; Majoro, "Challenges of Using Sign Language Interpreting to Facilitate Teaching and Learning for Learners with Hearing Impairment"; Ntinda, Thwala, and Dlamini, "Lived Experiences of School-Going Early Mothers in Swaziland."

<sup>43</sup> Lehloa, "Investigating Access to Education for Learners with Hearing Impairment at Secondary Schools."

<sup>44</sup> Majoro, "Challenges of Using Sign Language Interpreting to Facilitate Teaching and Learning for Learners with Hearing Impairment."

<sup>45</sup> Nkhululeko Chake, "Evaluation of Support and Training Sign Language Services at Setotolwane Secondary School" (University of Limpopo, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Sonja Coetzee, "Sustaining Teacher Career Resilience in a Resource-Constrained Rural Education Setting: A Retrospective Study" (University of Pretoria, 2013).

<sup>47</sup> Helen Crompton and Diane Burke, "Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: The State of the Field," *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* 20, no. 1 (April 24, 2023): 22, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00392-8>.

<sup>48</sup> Maphohleli Baptista Phohleli, "Exploring Teacher Professional Resilience: A Case of Selected Rural and Remote Schools in Lesotho" (University of the Free State, 2020).

<sup>49</sup> Crompton and Burke, "Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: The State of the Field."

<sup>50</sup> Crompton and Burke, "Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: The State of the Field."

<sup>51</sup> Ebersohn and Bouwer, "A Bio-Ecological Interpretation of the Relationship Challenges in the Context of the Reconstituted Family." P. 591

<sup>52</sup> Mokala, *Teachers' Narratives of Their Teaching Experiences of Learners with Hearing Impairment in a Special School in Gauteng*.

<sup>53</sup> Mokala and Sefotho, "Nothing About Us Without Us' -The Storied Narratives of a Learner with Hearing Impairment."

" are in charge of extra responsibilities, and they compile themselves therapeutically – educational programmes and are constantly modifying objectives, techniques, and teaching methods to meet her needs personalized intervention."<sup>54</sup> It is evident that teachers in special schools not only need support in the form of resources but also require emotional support to avoid burnout. Mokala and Sefotho are supportive of this idea as their study revealed that teachers need psychosocial support in the form of counselling.<sup>55</sup> "Working in special schools is characterised by significant emotional investment and frequent frustrations".<sup>56</sup> This finding is confirmed by Chake's study, which affirms the need for counselling as it helps teachers deal with their mental breakdown when they face challenges with work or even personal problems.<sup>57</sup>

Parental involvement must not be underestimated as it is one of the important factors attributing to success in education, teachers were forthcoming in articulating their perceptions about the challenges they face with parents.<sup>58</sup> According to the teachers, lack of support from parents not only contributes to negative tension between teachers and parents, but it also "reverberates within the academic success of learners".<sup>59</sup> The findings of the study indicated that the major challenge that teachers face is parents who are resisting and not taking professional advice. This creates a great challenge for learners' progress as parents sometimes do not carry over the planned programmes to the home environment. This finding mirrors Okeke and Mazibuko's research findings where parents were reported to be less supportive of their children's educational activities.<sup>60</sup> Accounts of the teachers in this study revealed that parents are a major hindrance to the successful implementation of school programmes. Ntinda, Thwala and Tfsu observe "parental involvement in their deaf and hard-of-hearing children's school-based education programmes can certainly contribute to positive academic outcomes."<sup>61</sup> The conviction is that parental involvement creates empowerment opportunities for parents as they get involved in decision-making. The findings of the study indicate that the teachers firmly believe that parents are valuable resources as they have more knowledge background on learners' lives. Parents play a greater role in the education of their children. This is because they know their children better and can inform the teachers about their children's learning problems and background. Therefore, the teachers recommend more involvement of the parents in all school programmes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It seems that parental involvement is one of the outstanding challenges teachers pointed out. As such, future research should focus on understanding parental conceptions of their experiences and how their involvement in schools can coordinate their children's education and positive learning experiences. The study further recommends counselling support for teachers. Based on the findings from the study, the recommendation is that special schools should strive to build teachers' traits in the form of provision of workshops on life coaching and counselling to support them emotionally as well.

## CONCLUSION

The main objective of the current study was to explore the resilience of teachers and their lived experiences in special schools for learners with hearing impairment in Gauteng. The study further investigated personality traits needed to cope when teaching in special schools for learners with hearing impairment. In this study, data was collected from interviews with nine teachers in a special school in Gauteng. The findings of the study point to teachers possessing character traits such as patience, creativity, and a strong character contributing to teacher resilience. The findings in this study further

<sup>54</sup> Georgia Konstantopoulou et al., "The Mental Resilience of Employees in Special Education during the Pandemic Covid-19," *Advances in Mobile Learning Educational Research* 2, no. 1 (2022): 246–50. P. 47

<sup>55</sup> Mokala and Sefotho, "Internal Teacher Support in a Special School for Learners with Hearing Impairment in Gauteng."

<sup>56</sup> Konstantopoulou et al., "The Mental Resilience of Employees in Special Education during the Pandemic Covid-19." p. 247

<sup>57</sup> Chake, "Evaluation of Support and Training Sign Language Services at Setotolwane Secondary School."

<sup>58</sup> Mokala and Sefotho, "'Nothing About Us Without Us' -The Storied Narratives of a Learner with Hearing Impairment."

<sup>59</sup> Rose-Lee Wheeler, *Experiences of Teachers in a Full-Service School in Gauteng: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2019). . 54

<sup>60</sup> C I O Okeke and G F Mazibuko, "The Experiences of Parents of School Children with Special Education Needs: An Empirical Study," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 5, no. 15 (2014): 227–40.

<sup>61</sup> Ntinda, Thwala, and Dlamini, "Lived Experiences of School-Going Early Mothers in Swaziland." P.85

contribute to teacher resilience literature, especially within special school settings in South Africa and then Global South in general. The findings of the study also revealed that when supported, teachers can build resilient characters when working in special schools. The study has confirmed findings from previous studies which indicate that self-efficacy brings satisfaction to the job, as such, the current study concludes that access to resources enhances self-efficacy and satisfaction in the job for teachers in special schools.

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