

**Exploring rural youth livelihood opportunities: A case study of a youth centre in
Bizana**

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by

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Abstract

Throughout South Africa, youth that are not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) continue to face many socio-economic challenges, including unemployment. Bizana, a small rural town in the Eastern Cape, is no exception. This study explores rural youth livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana. There is limited research done to understand the role of youth centres in providing accessing to rural youth livelihood opportunities. As a result, this study sought to understand the role of youth centres in re-integrating youth NEET into the labour market, as well as into education and training institutions. It utilizes the case study of the Bizana Love Life youth centre by looking at the programmes they offer, and whether they enhance livelihood opportunities for youth NEET. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) was used as a theoretical lens in understanding rural youth livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana, by identifying the challenges they face and the assets they use to enhance their livelihoods. Against this backdrop, the study adopted a qualitative research approach and an explorative case study design and was supplemented by purposive and snowball sampling methods. Data was obtained using semi-structured interviews with twelve youth NEET participants who are part of the programmes of the youth centre, and two staff members of the youth centre. Findings were analysed using open coding and thematic analysis in line with the objectives of the study. The findings of the study revealed that in attempting to gain employment, extended family support, parenthood, financial reasons, household chores, poor academic performance and lack of work experience were some of the challenges facing rural youth NEET in Bizana. The findings indicate that a combination of human and social capital can be used to support youth NEET in gaining confidence and in preparing them for the workplace. With these findings, the study indicates the need to strengthen existing youth programmes that cater for youth NEET, who are the most vulnerable in the labour market, through skills development and broadening of their social networks. As a policy recommendation, the national and provincial government must work with youth centres and other stakeholders to establish policies that cater for the development of youth NEET.

Keywords

Rural youth

Livelihood Opportunities

Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

Youth Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

Youth Centres

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AGIR	Apoio A Geração E Incremento Da Renda
BB	Building Blocks
BBBS	Big Brothers Big Sisters
CBYSO	Community Based Youth Serving Organization
CEEC	Central and Eastern European Countries
CBO	Community Based Organization
CV	Curriculum Vitae
CYS	Comprehensive Youth Services
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CWP	Community Works Programme
DFID	Department for International Development
DWYPD	Department of Women, Youth, and People with Disabilities
ECC	El Centro de Comunidad
EDP	Energias de Portugal
FET	Further Education and Training
FYP	Flying Youth Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Growth Employment and Redistribution
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
KSD	King Sabatha Dalindyebo
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NDP	National Development Plan
NGDS	National Growth Development Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGP	New Growth Path
NPO	Non-Profit Organization
NYC	National Youth Commission
NYDPF	National Youth Development Policy Framework
NYP	National Youth Policy
NREP	National Rural Employment Programme
QLFS	Quarterly Labour Force Survey

RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RUESC	Rhodes University Ethics Standard Committee
SEETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
SMMEs	Small Medium and Micro Enterprises
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UK	United Kingdom
WHO	World Health Organization
WMMLM	Winnie Madikizela-Mandela Local Municipality
YARHP	Youth and Adolescent Reproductive Health Programme
YC	Youth Contract
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative
YEP	Youth Employability Programmes
YES	Youth Empowerment Services
YG	Youth Guarantee

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“The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still” - **Exodus 14:14**.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

This study explores rural youth livelihood opportunities for youth not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) in Bizana, and factors affecting their employability and being in education. It looks explicitly at sustainable rural youth livelihood opportunities and the role that youth centres play in enhancing these. This chapter starts by introducing the contextual background of the study, the problem statement, and the goals and objectives of the research, as well as providing a thesis chapter outline.

1.2. Contextual background

Globally, rural communities are the most marginalized as they are characterised by food insecurity, poverty, unemployment, lack of socio-economic activities and inequality, yet they contribute to the total economic growth by producing jobs, supplying labour, food, and raw materials to other growing sectors of the economy, and helping to generate foreign exchange (Alemu, 2012). International literature points to a growing concern of various agricultural activities contributing to household survival strategies, especially in cases whereby they do not have access to other forms of capital. In South Africa, despite long-standing patterns of agrarian change, most people still live in rural areas (Carter and May, 1999; Trading Economics, 2021). Present-day rural livelihoods in South Africa are characterised by widespread poverty and vulnerability (Neves and Du Toit, 2013) and inequalities in terms of access to resources that contribute to livelihood security such as human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital (Mtshali, 2002). South Africa, for example, has limited rural youth livelihood opportunities and depends primarily on social networks and services that enable youth to enter the workplace. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS, transport and mobility and climate change have a negative impact on the livelihoods of rural households in South Africa (Porter *et al.*, 2007: 421).

Rural youth unemployment is a major problem in South Africa, particularly in the Eastern Cape (EC), as they are faced with the scourge of unemployment due to supply-side factors such as lack of relevant skills to enter the job market, low levels of education, high dropout rates at secondary and high school due to personal, family and financial reasons, and having little or no work experience (Tele, 2017; Mtengwana, 2019; Msi, 2019). The demand-side factors such as capital-intensive industrialisation, the fourth industrial revolution, and employers chasing

short-term gains at the expense of long-term investments in their employees, arguably play an even more significant role in South Africa's youth unemployment crisis. Despite this rapid urbanisation, having access to decent employment is crucial for youth to accelerate economic growth and development in rural economies. Collins, Augsberger and Gecker (2016; 2018) argue that youth engagement and active participation is one of the keys to bringing innovations and service improvements to government, through fostering efficient and effective policies that are responsive to the concerns of the youth. Often, young people are considered the future of their communities, and their involvement in rural community development initiatives is crucial in ensuring the sustainable development of these rural spaces.

Compounding the problem of not being employed, the youth are also not in education and training institutions and fall into the category of being defined as Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET). Although some studies have focused on NEETs generally, there is limited literature on the role youth centres play in catering for the needs of youth NEET. This study therefore seeks to analyse the socio-economic challenges facing youth NEET in Bizana and provide a way forward in overcoming these challenges. International and national literature show that youth NEET dislike agricultural activities, are disconnected from the labour market and education and training systems, have limited skills, that governments are failing them, and that they do not have access to job-training programmes.

A study done by Chen (2011) in Taiwan focused on the experiences of youth in a job-training programme that seeks to address the NEET issue. The Flying Young Program (FYP) aimed to provide youth who have not completed their senior high school, have no intention of pursuing higher education, and are currently unemployed, with vocational and interpersonal skills that will increase their occupational competencies (Chen, 2011: 34). The results revealed that even though this was a job-training programme, the participants had little to say about the skills learnt from the programme; they cared more about the money, and the connections they built with people in the programme (Chen, 2011: 40). Moreover, a study conducted in Portugal by Simões (2018), which focused on how to involve rural youth NEET in agriculture, revealed that there is a need for network-based projects to be implemented to promote rural youth NEET's integration and training in agricultural activities (Simões, 2018: 557).

A study conducted by Maguire (2015b: 122-128) in the United Kingdom focused on the high numbers of young people who are detached from the labour market and the education and

training system, and suggested that policy interventions in place that address the NEET issue are highly problematic due to lack of clarity in the definition of the NEET group, inadequacies in determining how many under-18s are in this group and the misguided stereotyping and assumptions about the characteristics of being NEET. Another, similar, study was conducted in Britain by Maguire (2015a), which explored Youth Contract (YC), a government-led policy intervention that aimed at tackling the NEET issue. The findings revealed that the implementation of YC through the Department of Education to support youth NEET failed to meet the needs of the youth due to flaws in its programme design, as it was implemented without any prior testing or piloting (Maguire, 2015a: 533).

Akinyemi and Mushunje (2017) conducted research on rural youth NEET participation in agricultural activities in four districts in the EC. The findings revealed that the participation of rural youth NEET in agricultural activities is low, the majority of youth view agriculture as old-fashioned, reserved for the elderly, and offering little monetary opportunities (Akinyemi and Mushunje, 2017: 521). Moreover, Kavese and Mbali (2021) explored the composition and characteristics of youth NEET in the EC labour market and revealed that there is a growing number of youth NEET in the province, which has adverse effects on the provincial fiscus, labour, economic growth, and other developmental indicators.

A study by Mtengwana (2019) on youth NEET in the King Sabatha Dalindyebo (KSD) Municipality, EC found that youth NEET faced challenges such as lack of financial support from family, poor school performance, lack of awareness of skills development programmes, lack of recreational facilities, and lack of work opportunities that require post-matric qualifications (Mtengwana, 2019: 39-41). A similar study done by Tele (2016) in a rural community of Engcobo, EC focused on the perceptions of rural youth NEET and the factors that affect their employability. The study findings revealed that social networks amongst this group play a big role in helping youth find information about employment (Tele, 2016: 56).

Graham *et al.* (2019) conducted a study of existing policies from various South African government departments which assessed their support of youth NEET. The findings revealed that there is a clear focus on addressing the needs of the youth across departments; however, very few policies identify NEET youth specifically (Graham *et al.*, 2019: 52). A study conducted by Kraak (2013) on South Africa's state failure to address the NEET issue revealed that Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been successful in addressing the NEET

issue where the state has failed (Kraak, 2013: 77). As a result of this, my study seeks to understand the role of the Love Life youth centre in Bizana, EC to understand whether its programmes help youth NEET to access jobs or not, and if so, how.

This study draws from the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) to understand rural livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana. SLA is concerned with livelihood resources, which refer to the basic material and social, tangible, and intangible assets that people use to construct and achieve their livelihoods (Scoones, 2009: 177). For my study, SLA helped to understand how youth NEET in Bizana access human and social capital to achieve their livelihoods objectives to access skills, education, and employment.

1.3. Problem Statement/context of the research

The sociological relevance for undertaking this study is informed by the reality that youth make up a significant proportion of the world's population and are a major human resource for development. The strategies that are adopted to prevent youth unemployment are not reported in a manner that outlines their effectiveness and efficiency. This is particularly true for rural youths, and those with low levels of education as these factors limit their ability to participate in the labour market. Moreover, a holistic approach for interventions targeted at youth empowerment and promoting youth participation in the economy is recommended. Young people can use their voices to call for policy changes and hold governments and other stakeholders accountable for their actions (Ginwright, and James, 2002; Geza, Ngidi, Slotow and Mabhaudhi, 2022). This can be done through connecting them to support services such as local employment programmes and youth involvement in policy formulation processes that are tailored to their knowledge and skill sets (Geza, Ngidi, Slotow and Mabhaudhi, 2022).

South Africa as a case study, arguably, is one of the most advanced countries on the African continent; however, youth still face high levels of unemployment where they find themselves having to find ways to construct and sustain their livelihoods. Through the study's in-depth analysis of examining rural youth NEET and their experiences, development practitioners can benefit from my study if their focus is channelled towards sustained livelihoods and developing the capacity of youth NEET in rural areas. There is an abundance of studies on youth livelihoods, but very little research exists on youth unemployment and the livelihood opportunities, especially in small rural towns like Bizana in the Eastern Cape. In doing so, my study uses the case study of the Bizana Love Life youth centre to understand the role it plays

in enhancing and contributing to sustainable livelihood opportunities for youth NEET, by looking at the programmes they offer. Studies conducted by Tele, 2017; Mtengwana, 2019 and Meyers-Mashamba, 2021 seem to suggest youth intervention programmes that build upon the strengths of youth are key to the development of youth NEET.

The rationale for this study stems from both personal and academic reasons. As a young person who was born and raised in one of the smallest rural areas in the Eastern Cape, namely Bizana, I am interested in the development of youth especially those living in rural areas. Through exploring rural youth livelihood opportunities, my study aims to contribute to the NEET group; the challenges they face, how they access employment and educational opportunities and who or what is there to support them as they make these transitions. Furthermore, my study aimed to provide insights into ways of improving their employability and re-integrating them into education and training institutions through the fostering of their development.

1.4 Methods, procedure & techniques

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, to obtain in-depth meaning and people's subjective experiences when it comes to the collection and analysis of data (Leavy, 2017: 124). This is a suitable approach that helped to provide a deeper understanding of the role that youth centres play in enhancing livelihood opportunities for rural youth NEET in Bizana.

This study was philosophically guided by the interpretivist research paradigm. Interpretivism aims to draw on people's experiences by developing a better understanding of their social lives, and how they construct meanings in their natural settings (Neuman, 2014: 104). The researcher wanted to know what is meaningful or relevant to the research participants, and their feelings, interpretations, and experiences of everyday life through their eyes (Ponterroto, 2005: 129).

An explorative case study was employed as a strategy of inquiry for this research. The case study was one youth centre in Bizana as it is the only youth centre that has youth programs that aim to address the youth NEET problem. The researcher sampled qualitatively through purposive and snowball sampling. The study sampled purposively one youth centre in Bizana to gain insight of the programs that they have, and what, or who they cater for. This was supplemented by snowball sampling which helped the researcher to locate youth NEET that were recommended by employees of the youth centre. The entire sample for this study is shown

on the table below. It consisted of fourteen (14) participants; two (2) officials from the youth centre, and twelve (12) youth participants who have benefited from the youth centre. More discussion of the sampling is discussed in chapter three.

Pseudonym name	Gender	Age	Occupation	Highest level of education
1. Mrs. Simon	F	Not disclosed	Youth centre Coordinator Assistant	Not disclosed
2. Miss Abrahams	F	Not disclosed	Youth centre staff member (Ground breaker)	Not disclosed
3. Lola	F	21	Works for an NPO	Grade 12 (University drop-out)
4. Sally	F	23	Sales lady at a furniture shop	Grade 12
5. Simon	M	24	Electrician	TVET qualification
6. Lizzy	F	21	Unemployed	(Didn't want to disclose)
7. Nicole	F	20	Nanny	Grade 9
8. Anna	F	21	Works for an internet cafe	Grade 12
9. Bianca	F	19	Works for an internet cafe	Grade 12
10. Tyra	F	18	Cashier at a spaza shop	Grade 11
11. Ziggy	F	24	Unemployed	Grade 10
12. Lucy	F	23	Clerk at a local clinic	Grade 12
13. Yandy	F	23	Unemployed	Grade 11
14. Tom	M	24	Unemployed	Grade 11

Table 1 Sample of the participants

Data was collected qualitatively through face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews, and virtual interviews due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Semi-structured interviews provided the researcher with insights into how the research participants view their subjective world of not being in employment, education, or training. The thematic analysis method was used to analyse the collected data. This analysis method helped to draw on people's views, opinions and experiences through the construction of central themes and sub-themes on data that emerges from the interview transcripts (Bryman, 2012: 579).

1.5. Goals of the research

This study sought to understand the role that youth centres play to enhance livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana. This goal was achieved through the following objectives:

- To understand the challenges facing rural youth NEET in Bizana.
- To understand how youth NEET in Bizana access capabilities, knowledge, skills and jobs.
- To understand how youth NEET access social networks and connections to acquire their livelihood opportunities.
- To understand how Bizana youth centres contribute to the lives of youth NEET.

1.6. Thesis chapter outline

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the contextual background of the study. Secondly, it outlines the problem statement by stating why this research is of sociological and developmental significance. Lastly, it provides the research aim and objectives of the study and outlines the remaining chapters of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews literature on rural youth livelihood opportunities for youth NEET and the role of youth centres. The second part presents the theoretical framework guiding the study, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approaches used in conducting the study.

Chapter 4 presents the data analysis and presentation of findings in relation to the aim and objectives of the study.

Lastly, Chapter 5 provides the conclusion, summary of empirical findings, concluding remarks, recommendations, and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: RURAL YOUTH LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES, THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH ON YOUTH NEET, AND THE ROLE OF YOUTH CENTRES

2.1. Introduction

The exceedingly high numbers of young people who are not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) is a major problem internationally and nationally. These young people are disengaged from work and education. As a result, there is scholarly research on youth NEET around the world to understand the consequences that being NEET may have on their future employment opportunities and experiences (DHET, 2017: 2). This chapter presents a review of literature on rural youth livelihoods and the role that youth centres play in enhancing livelihood opportunities for youth NEET. It begins by defining the concept of livelihoods to better understand how rural livelihoods came about from a global perspective and national perspective. Secondly, international, and national literature on rural youth livelihoods for youth NEET will be reviewed. Nationally, this will be followed by a discussion on the effect of youth unemployment on youth NEET in South Africa, which will lead to the discussion on the role of youth centres for youth NEET. The central argument here is that youth centres enhance livelihood opportunities for rural youth NEET. Finally, this chapter will use the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) as a theoretical lens to understand and explore rural youth livelihood strategies and opportunities for youth NEET.

2.2. Understanding Livelihoods

Chambers and Conway (1992: 6) provides us with a commonly known definition of the concept defining livelihoods as “comprising the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living”. They further state that “a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base” (Chambers and Conway, 1992: 6). From these quotes, livelihoods can be better understood as how individuals develop and maintain their lives, the assets they draw upon as well as the strategies they develop, to make a living. Capabilities are defined as people’s abilities to access and use their opportunities, whereas assets are defined as tangible and intangible resources that may be used by individuals to engage themselves in productive activities that help them to make a living (Chambers and Conway, 1992: 7). For these

capabilities, assets, and activities to be sustainable, they need to be maintained and enhanced for present and future use (Serrat, 2008: 1).

Research on Livelihoods was brought to the forefront of development studies in the late 1990s when the SLA was extensively promoted by the Department for International Development (DFID) (De Haan, 2012: 346). The concept of livelihoods therefore gained prominence and was widely recognized as providing the most comprehensive framework for understanding how people organise their lives and make a living instead of concentrating on their impoverishment (Scoones, 1998; Chambers and Conway, 1992; DFID, 1999; De Haan, 2012). It placed strong emphasis on people-centeredness and sustainable approaches whereby poor people stood at the centre of the approach to examine their coping and survival livelihood strategies (UN, 1987; UNDP, 1990; Kaag *et al.*, 2004; De Haan, 2012). Additionally, the livelihoods concept was appealing during the 1990s as it considered the larger context in which poor people organized their livelihood strategies, where it acknowledged that their strategies were embedded in structures and governed by institutions (De Haan, 2012: 347). The wider context of this concept was also strongly motivated by the desire to create more effective poverty alleviation policies and interventions that would decrease vulnerability in the poor, and increase sustainability and well-being (De Haan, 2012: 346-347).

Since the mid-1990s, due to the increasing numbers of people in rural areas, livelihoods research and studies were all about opting for a development path that would be characterised by income diversification and multitasking (Bryceson, 2000; Ellis, 2000). This was referred to as livelihood diversification, where households were involved in constructing different activities to survive and improve their standard of living (Bryceson, 2000; Ellis, 2000). Securing their standard of living and livelihood no longer originated from agricultural activities, crop, and livestock production; people engaged in a broad range of multiple income sources in the face of adverse social, economic, and political circumstances (Desai and Potter, 2013: 151). These multiple income sources include off-farm income and non-farm income. Off-farm income refers to wage work income generated within agriculture and exchange of labour on other farms, labour payments such as harvest share systems, and income coming from local environmental resources such as charcoal, firewood, and house building material (Ellis, 2000: 11). Non-farm income refers to non-agricultural income sources such as non-farm rural self-employment, rental incomes from leasing out land or property, transfer, and exchange of consumption items between households in rural communities, urban-to-rural remittances,

and international remittances from household members (Ellis, 2000: 12). With this Ellis (2000: 3-8) therefore concludes that engagements in these diverse activities are meant to nurture human and social capital. This will be done through higher incomes because of greater skills set, as well as social networks of kin in rural communities through community organisations such as village committees and farmer associations (Ellis, 2000: 3-8).

The expansion of research into livelihoods in the 1990s led to the concept of livelihoods being defined from two perspectives. The first one involved a narrow economical focus on production, household income, and employment; the second was a more holistic one that focused on economic-based development, which reduces vulnerability and builds on the strengths of the rural poor (De Satgé *et al.*, 2002: 3). For my study, the holistic definition was adopted, as it helps to identify the most pressing constraints faced by individuals and supports people in addressing and realizing their livelihood opportunities (DFID, 1999: 5). This holistic definition of livelihoods focuses on the realities of the lives of poor and vulnerable groups in society to identify how they make a living in the context of risk and stress (Sakdapolrak, 2014: 20).

According to the holistic definition by De Haan (2017: 25), the concept of livelihoods is based on the understanding that rural dwellers combine their activities by drawing on their assets and other opportunities to sustain and improve their wellbeing. When it comes to an individual, a livelihood is referred to as the person's ability to access the fundamental essentials of life such as shelter, water, food, clothing, and other necessities that are required for human survival at individual and household level (Mphande, 2016: 17). As a result of this, assets are considered key in the livelihoods approach, especially when the poor have access to them, and can use them in practice. These include natural capital (land, water, biodiversity), human capital (labour, health, skills, experience, knowledge), social capital (kinship, social networks, organizations, connections), physical capital (housing, infrastructure, livestock) and financial capital such as cash flow or money in a savings account (Scoones, 1998; DFID, 1999; De Haan, 2012).

The capacity to meet people's needs and livelihoods is dependent on these capitals and will be discussed later in the chapter. Moreover, Gaillard *et al.* (2009: 121) states that it is also important to note that the concept of livelihoods rarely refers to a single activity. It encompasses complex, contextual, diverse, and dynamic strategies that are developed by individuals to acquire their livelihood (Chambers, 1995; Scoones, 1998; 2009). Acharya (2004: 237) refers

to these factors as entitlements of livelihoods that individuals adopt for gaining and acquiring their livelihoods. The first one is production-based entitlements whereby individuals acquire and gain livelihoods through production on small pieces of land (Acharya, 2004: 237). Second is labour-based entitlements where assetless individuals sell their labour in demand for wage (Acharya, 2004: 237). Third is exchange or market-based entitlements where individuals earn their livelihoods by selling surplus food and non-farm goods in the market (Acharya, 2004: 237). Fourth is transfer-based entitlements where individuals without any income are dependent on government social security programmes (Acharya, 2004: 237). These livelihood entitlements therefore reveal that a rural household that has diverse sources of income-earning activities has better chances of sustaining their livelihoods and surviving financially, than a household that is dependent on one source of income-earning activity.

This section has provided a definition of livelihoods and conceptualized livelihoods as being formed within social, economic, and political contexts, which involves households engaging in a set of activities to make a living, and to mitigate risk and vulnerability. The next section will discuss rural livelihoods from a global perspective.

2.3. Rural livelihoods: A global perspective

Rural areas are regarded as the economic backbone of most developing countries because they contribute to the total economic growth by producing jobs, supplying labour, food, and raw materials to other growing sectors of the economy, and helping to generate foreign exchange (Alemu, 2012: 3). Rural communities, despite their considerable contributions, are the most marginalized as they are characterised by food insecurity, poverty, unemployment, lack of socio-economic activities and inequality (Alemu, 2012: 2-3). As a result, in poor countries, most people living in rural areas and in urban areas are engaged in an unremitting struggle to secure a livelihood in the face of harsh social, economic, and political conditions (Murray, 2001: 2). Rural areas in most of the Central and Eastern European countries (hereafter, the CEECs) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) continue to be marked by a stagnating and decreasing agricultural production which results in increased rural poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity (Thomas, 2006: 226). In the late 1800s, the rural population in the United States continued to rise (Library of Congress, n.d.). The urban population grew at a considerably faster rate with most of its population living on farms in small villages and towns, even though in the 1900s most Americans still lived in rural areas (Library of Congress, n.d.). Much of this rural population relied and is still reliant on stable farming; however, today

fewer than one in ten people living in rural America have a job related to agriculture or farming (Vias and Nelson, 2006: 75).

At the first United Nations conference on human environment in 1972 in Stockholm, a global consciousness on poverty and environment was brought to centre stage during discussions on sustainable rural development (Acharya, 2004: 235). In 1987, the Brundtland Commission Report provided a conceptual breakthrough on sustainable development where rural development, as well as poverty eradication, was important for the social, economic, and environmental viability of all countries (Acharya, 2004: 235). By the early 1990s, following the Brundtland report, the first Human Development Report from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1990, the 1992 United Nation Environmental Conference in Rio, the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, and the 1996 World Food Summit all shared much of the same analysis, where they aimed to address rural development through focusing on the needs of poor people, ecological constraint, emphasis on self-reliance and sustainability, and the importance of citizen participation (Solesbury, 2003: 5).

In China, since the beginning of market reforms in the late 1970s, rural livelihoods have changed dramatically, shifting from a reliance on grain farming to a highly diversified agricultural production marked by an enlarged scale of production and cooperation between off-farm and non-farm activities (Xiaoquan-Zhang, 2015: 1). While China's largely urban economy has grown, its rural areas have become more marginalized and have faced serious development challenges, due to the *san nong* crisis, which was particularly severe between the 1990s and 2000s, and continues to some extent today (Xiaoquan-Zhang, 2015: 2). The *san nong* crisis refers to three issues relating to rural development in China: the crisis of low productivity in agriculture, the need to focus on rural sustainability due to undeveloped infrastructure in the countryside, and the crisis of low income of peasants or farmers (Huang, 2006; Tiejun, 2015). As a result of this crisis, today rural people in China are still involved in a wide range of socioeconomic activities that include mixing grains with a variety of other crops, aquaculture, and meat and dairy production to secure their livelihoods (Xiaoquan-Zhang, 2015: 1-2). Additionally, the Chinese government implemented a series of poverty alleviation policies such as the "Grain for Green" or "Sloping Land Conversion" programme where rural households participated in green revolution, and farmers were paid to plant trees on their land and to convert their farmlands into forests (Wang, 2018: 2). The Grain for Green programme

has not only improved China's rural ecological environment, but it has also improved the earning opportunities for many rural people and farmers (Wang, 2018: 2).

Rural livelihoods in Brazil are marked by the historical development in agriculture, which was characterised by production for self-provision, where rural households were engaged in agriculture only for family consumption, which was developed by the German immigrants that colonised the region at the beginning of the twentieth century (Schneider and Niederle, 2010). Due to technological advancements that occurred in the 1970s, rural areas in Brazil, such as the Missoes region located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, were much affected by these technological transformations and state policies of modernisation under the premises of the so-called 'green revolution' (Schneider and Niederle, 2010: 393). Influenced by the need to make money, rural households, and farmers in the Missoes region started farming for commercial purposes, by specialising in soy production for the international market, to sustain themselves (Schneider and Niederle, 2010). Today, entrepreneurship training and support in the rural areas of Brazil is seen as improving livelihoods by helping people to start their own businesses (TechnoServe, 2021). In 2018 two companies, TechnoServe and the Vale Foundation, launched programmes in rural areas of Brazil offering entrepreneurship training and support in the fight against poverty (TechnoServe, 2021). The two companies partnered to launch the AGIR programme (Apoio e Geração e Incremento de Renda) which aimed at strengthening rural local economies, providing entrepreneurship training where the rural dwellers were able to start a spice production business producing fresh garlic and condiments such as crushed peppers and seasoned salt (TechnoServe, 2021). Additionally, the rural dwellers gained training on good manufacturing practices such as the correct way to clean raw materials, how to improve their soil quality and how to control the level of humidity in their soil, and irrigation control, as well as how to maximize soil fertility by adding organic matter such as cow manure (TechnoServe, 2021).

In another part of the world, Mexico is the world's centre for maize, and maize production is the most significant source for livelihoods amongst rural households and farmers (Poole, Gauthier, and Mizrahi, 2007; Wise, 2007; Hellin, Groenewald & Keleman, 2012). However, traditional maize farmers and small-scale farmers in Mexico have encountered severe economic conditions since the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 (Wise, 2007: 1-2). NAFTA was an agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico, which was implemented to promote and encourage trade between the

three countries; numerous tariffs were reduced because of the agreement, particularly those on agricultural and textile products (Kenton, n.d.). As a result of this agreement, millions of farmers in Mexico were out of business; many left their land due to environmental degradation and rapid industrialisation and migrated out of rural areas, and some could not compete with the subsidized prices of rising imports (Wise, 2007: 1). These environmental and economic losses therefore raised concerns on farmers' livelihoods (Wise, 2007: 2). Today, over 60% of people residing in rural areas of Mexico are still dependent on subsistence agriculture (USAID, 2017; Barkin, 2019; Novotny *et al.*, 2021).

In India, rural markets are a significant component of the Indian market; almost two-thirds of India's population live in rural areas and generate slightly more than half of the country's income (Khan and Saluja, 2007: 3). However, rural India faces the difficult burden of providing a stable source of income and employment to a large portion of the population, particularly low-income families in rural areas (Khan and Saluja, 2007: 3). In a study conducted in a poor agricultural village with 400 households, it was found that rural households continue to suffer from lack of infrastructure which limits their livelihood opportunities (Khan and Saluja, 2007: 3). The absence of infrastructure facilities makes it difficult for this rural population to engage in agricultural activities that will bring world markets to local areas (Khan and Saluja, 2007: 3). This is evidenced by studies conducted by Keshab (2001) and Rodríguez-Pose and Hardy (2015), which found that investing in rural infrastructure has been identified as one of the most effective instruments that governments can employ to boost rural growth and employment and eliminate poverty in rural areas. This includes investments in tele-communications, roads, power supplies, schools, health care facilities and drinking water facilities, that all have a positive effect on the quality of life in rural households (Keshab, 2001; Khan and Saluja, 2007; Rodríguez-Pose and Hardy, 2015). The implementation of the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) was launched in India in 2005 to provide social and employment security, and to construct rural infrastructure in rural areas (Khan and Saluja, 2007). Through the establishment of the NREP in India, rural households were provided with employment opportunities through projects such as constructing irrigation wells, afforestation work, school buildings, railway lines, and the construction of rural roads (Khan and Saluja, 2007).

In Africa, studies have revealed that rural livelihoods are influenced by several factors such as agricultural production, climate change, transport and mobility issues, remittances from migrants working in South Africa, and the impact of AIDS on young people's livelihoods

(Bryant *et al.*, 2000; Maphosa, 2005; Porter *et al.*, 2007; Van Blerk, *et al.*, 2008; Akudugu *et al.*, 2012). In Ghana, agricultural production is seen as the most staple food source at national level, and it is solely dependent on climate for survival (Akudugu, *et al.*, 2012: 23-24). However, due to unfavourable climate changes, rural communities in Ghana are faced with the realities of food security and their households' livelihoods are at risk in guaranteeing access to sufficient food at household level (Akudugu, *et al.*, 2012: 22). Bryant *et al.* (2000) and Smith *et al.* (2000) argue that the effects of climate change on agriculture, food security, and rural livelihoods should be a main concern for governments globally if they want to achieve food security and secure rural livelihoods. This is the case because agriculture is sensitive to climate change such as rise in temperature, drought, and floods; it is also vulnerable to external shocks such as economic crises, pests, and disease outbreaks (which reduce food availability), and increases in food prices (Akudugu, *et al.*, 2012: 24-25). Secondly, climate change in Ghanaian rural areas has been shown to affect the different types of capitals: natural, physical, financial, human, and social capital, from which rural households draw to build their livelihoods (Akudugu, *et al.*, 2012: 26). Floods and destruction of trees through bushfires triggered by higher temperatures, are serious depletions of natural capital because of climate change (Akudugu, *et al.*, 2012: 26). When it comes to physical capital, various types of infrastructure such as water supply not only affect water levels in rivers and dams for irrigation, but also affect hydroelectricity generation, which has adverse effects on power generation such as more frequent power outages (Akudugu, *et al.*, 2012: 26). Human capital is affected in the sense that employment opportunities in towns and cities of Ghana decreased due to the vast movement of people from rural areas to urban areas (Akudugu, *et al.*, 2012: 26). Lastly, because of this rural-urban migration, social safety networks were not well maintained as people who once lived, worked, and ate together were separated by migration (Akudugu, *et al.*, 2012: 27).

Historically, a large proportion of Africa's rural youth have made a living by supporting their families' businesses or working for themselves in agriculture, trade-related businesses, and the industries. While still in full-time study, many young people are required to contribute to family income or support themselves through long hours of work, before and after school (Porter *et al.*, 2007: 422). A study conducted in Ghana and Nigeria by Porter *et al.* (2007) explored the linkages between youth mobility and livelihood patterns and potential, by drawing attention to the role of transport as a livelihood strategy. Rural youth livelihood opportunities are often limited and dependent on services and social networks that enable youth to enter the workplace; and transport and mobility are key components for attaining sustainable livelihoods (Porter *et*

al., 2007: 421). Mobility for this study is referred to as the agency through which people move themselves or their goods (Porter *et al.*, 2007: 421). Even though agricultural activities are conducted within the village and may not require transport, many other livelihood opportunities such as the sale of agricultural produce may require travel beyond the village boundary (Porter *et al.*, 2007: 423). The findings revealed that mobility affects the livelihoods of youth in terms of accessing jobs, education, healthcare, and strong social networks (Porter *et al.*, 2007: 428), as schools, hospitals and clinics are much more easily accessed in places with transport that enable mobility (Porter *et al.*, 2007: 428). In terms of social networks, these are also dependent on transport and mobility since they are normally attained through participating in a range of activities that cement networks such as attendance at church and funerals (Porter *et al.*, 2007: 428). Additionally, the findings revealed that young boys and girls play a role as transporters which in turn has another negative effect on their livelihoods, especially girls (Porter *et al.*, 2007: 426). Girls are often seen as head loaders or carriers, and the impact of such load carrying may result in health-related problems such as the deformation of the spine, backache, and head and chest pain, as well as miscarriages and the reduced quality and quantity of breast milk for breastfeeding mothers (Porter *et al.*, 2007: 426). The study has also shown that subsequent attendance at school, health-care centres and social functions or gatherings with the intention of forming social networks to find employment is likely to be influenced in some way by access to transportation and mobility (Porter *et al.*, 2007: 428).

A study conducted in Mangwe District, Matabeleland South Province of Zimbabwe, explored the impact of remittances from Zimbabweans working in South Africa as a rural livelihood opportunity. The findings revealed that many households in Zimbabwe's southern districts rely on remittances from Zimbabwean migrants working in South Africa, in the form of money (cash remittances) or non-cash remittances such as foodstuffs, consumer goods, agricultural inputs and building material, as their primary source of income (Maphosa, 2005: 9). The study highlights that the main reasons why Zimbabweans migrate to South Africa is because of unemployment due to lack of income from agriculture because of drought (Maphosa, 2005: 7). These remittances are therefore an important source of income for rural households in Zimbabwe, especially as an investment in human, social, natural, and financial capital as they are used mainly to provide the basic needs of a household such as food, shelter, education, health care, buying livestock, building houses, purchasing consumer goods, payment of debts, contributions to burial societies, funeral expenses and wages for workers (Maphosa, 2005: 13-15). This study has therefore shown that remittances from migrants working in South Africa

account for a considerable share of household income and have a big impact on communities in rural Zimbabwe's southern regions (Maphosa, 2005: 16). Even though a major number of remittances are utilized for basic requirements, remittances help to raise the standard of living of remittance recipients' households (Maphosa, 2005: 16).

The prevalence of AIDS in Southern Africa is another factor impacting the livelihood activities and opportunities of young people, and their future ability to secure livelihoods (Van Blerk *et al.*, 2008: 709). Within the household, AIDS causes youth to take on heavy burdens of responsibilities such as caring for the sick, assisting with home chores, and taking on paid employment (Van Blerk *et al.*, 2008: 709). However, this load of responsibilities may have further consequences for young people's future livelihoods, such as restricted access to schools, peer interaction and a breakdown in intergenerational knowledge transfer, which is crucial for agricultural production sustainability (Van Blerk *et al.*, 2008: 709). For example, studies have shown that young people's school attendance may have been disrupted or they may have been withdrawn from school to assist in the household or to care for sick relatives (Robson and Ansell 2000; Robson 2000, 2004; Robson *et al.*, 2006). Secondly, once infected, youth's physical capacity is diminished as the illness impairs their productivity and can lead to irregular attendance at school or college, affecting future employment chances (Van Blerk *et al.*, 2008: 712). Furthermore, while availability to antiretroviral drugs has increased, many of the rural poor in Southern Africa still do not have easy access to them (Van Blerk *et al.*, 2008: 712). The AIDS prevalence in Southern Africa not only affects young people by the impoverishment of their own households, but it also exacerbates poverty where rural families may find their households swollen by large numbers of children who are sent to be cared for when their parents fall sick (Young and Ansell 2003; Ghosh and Kalipeni 2004; Negin, 2005). From the above, it is therefore evident that the effects of AIDS on rural youth's livelihoods illustrates that by placing extra burdens on youth, their ability to secure future livelihoods may be constrained (Van Blerk *et al.*, 2008: 716).

This section has shown that at an international level, engaging in agricultural production, farming for commercial purposes, entrepreneurship training and support to help rural people start their own businesses, and investing in rural infrastructure such as tele-communications, roads, power supplies, schools, and health care facilities, can all have a positive effect on the quality of life in rural households. This section further showed that in Africa, rural livelihoods are influenced by several factors such as transport and mobility issues, the prevalence of

HIV/AIDS and climate change; however, rural households rely on agricultural production and remittances as their main source of income to secure their livelihoods. The following section will discuss rural livelihoods in a South African context, and how households derive their livelihoods by drawing on their capabilities and assets.

2.4. Rural livelihoods: A South African perspective

Even though South Africa is a middle-income country with a per-capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) last recorded at 5864.82 US dollars in 2021, most people still live-in poverty and are disproportionately found in rural areas (Carter and May, 1999; Trading Economics, 2021). Present-day rural livelihoods in South Africa are marked by the enduring racialised and spatial legacies of poverty (Neves and Du Toit, 2013: 94). Mtshali (2002: 4) argues that the impoverishment of this rural population stems from the fundamental inequalities in terms of access to resources that contribute to livelihood security such as human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital. To secure their livelihoods, several activities and livelihood strategies are undertaken by these rural dwellers to generate an income through agricultural and non-agricultural activities (Carter and May, 1999; Desai and Potter, 2002; 2008; Mtero, 2014; 2017). This is referred to as livelihood diversification whereby rural households are engaged in a diverse portfolio of activities to survive and improve their standard of living (Ellis, 2000; Mtero, 2014). These includes activities like wage labour, remittances from household workers who work in urban areas, claims from the state (pensions and grants), and unpaid domestic and farm labour, as well as illegitimate activities either in the legal sense or against the norms and standards of society such as crime, drug trafficking and prostitution (Carter and May, 1999; Desai and Potter, 2002; 2008; Mtero, 2014; 2017). Moreover, other environmental effects of poverty such as soil erosion, deforestation, declining land productivity, and global climate change lead to the decline in the provision of multiple ecosystem services that has severe effects on rural livelihoods (Elliot, 2012; Sigwela *et al.*, 2017). As a result of the disproportionate access to natural resources, rural dwellers therefore become deprived of essentials that are needed for a minimum standard of living (Sigwela *et al.*, 2017: 272; Wegenast and Beck, 2020).

The heightened vulnerability of poverty and the impact of HIV and AIDS on rural livelihoods is a major concern in South Africa, especially in the Eastern Cape province (McGarry and Shackleton, 2009; Shackleton and Luckert, 2015). A study by McGarry and Shackleton (2009) in three villages in the Eastern Cape, Mount Frere, Mount Ayliff, and Mabehana, explored the

role of wild foods on rural children who are prone to poverty and vulnerable to HIV and AIDS (as a staple food that supplements their diets). Examples of these wild foods included herbs, mushrooms, fruits, honey, birds, fish, reptiles, insects, and other small mammals which are seen as providing essential nutrients for rural children coping with the adverse effects of HIV and AIDS (Barany *et al.*, 2003; Takasaki *et al.*, 2004; McGarry 2008; McGarry and Shackleton, 2009). The findings revealed that wild food supplementation was a common practice amongst children who were not attending school as they were highly vulnerable (McGarry and Shackleton, 2009: 25). Furthermore, the study revealed that the commercialisation of wild foods was found to contribute to the livelihoods of selected vulnerable children by increasing their financial capital, where rural children were involved in the trade of wild foods, selling to traditional healers and local tourists (McGarry and Shackleton, 2009: 31).

Shackleton and Luckert (2015) conducted a study in two marginalized rural areas in the Eastern Cape province, Gatyana and Lesseyton, which explored the decline in agricultural production driven by livelihood stressors such as abandonment of fields, and the decline in livestock production because of climate change, unemployment, declining remittances and the impact of HIV and AIDS. For both rural communities, the decline in agriculture was because of unpredictable weather conditions, exhausted soils, lack of access to markets and labour, crop destruction by cattle and wild animals, and poor infrastructure particularly fencing and roads, as well as a decline in farming knowledge (Shackleton and Luckert, 2015: 1068). The findings on the decline in agricultural production affecting local livelihoods are like the findings of the study conducted by Rogan (2018) who explored small scale agriculture as a livelihood source for many rural farming households in the Eastern Cape, where households who are not engaged in household production bear the brunt of poverty. In this study, there was clear evidence that in the absence of wage income, small-scale agriculture for household production was correlated with lower levels of hunger in farming households, and vice versa; hunger levels were found to be higher among non-farming households in the Eastern Cape Province (Rogan, 2018: 102).

In the Gatyana study site, the decline in cultivated fields led to an increase in woodlands because of the thorny pioneer species called *acacia karroo*, which acted as a barrier to their cultivation (Shackleton and Luckert, 2015: 1068). The decline in livestock production was attributed locally to diseases (Shackleton and Luckert, 2015: 1068). Further findings revealed that the decline in remittances was because of the impact of HIV and AIDS as the sick return home to be cared for, while some pass away, as well as the process of more permanent

relocation to urban regions, leaving little money to send back home (Shackleton and Luckert, 2015: 1071). As a result of these livelihood stressors, in both study areas, social grants account for the biggest percentage of livelihood income and are frequently the only source of income for households as they contribute to food security, children's education and reducing the negative impacts of HIV and AIDS (Shackleton and Luckert, 2015: 1071-1072).

As a result of these livelihood stressors, other studies advocate for a shift from field cultivation to home garden cultivation as a viable livelihood option in rural areas of South Africa, which would increase a household's access to food (Monde *et al.*, 2006; Musotsi *et al.*, 2008; Maroyi, 2009; Shackleton and Luckert, 2015). The findings of Monde *et al.* (2006) in two villages in the Eastern Cape, Guquka and Khayaalethu, revealed that home gardening is more than just for food security reasons; it also enables people to earn an income and have access to social capital through maintaining their social networks (Monde *et al.*, 2006). The participants from the two villages highlighted that a portion of the income from their garden produce is used to buy other food products they do not have or produce in their gardens, as well as attending to other pressing needs such as paying their children's school fees (Monde *et al.*, 2006). Additionally, the participants highlighted that through home gardening they have managed to establish good relationship networks with other people in the village (Monde *et al.*, 2006). Another portion of the food that they produce is donated to friends, neighbours, and relatives in the village (Monde *et al.*, 2006). This donation therefore acts as an insurance for the donating household to ask for favours or help when in need, and the household being donated feels obligated to return the favour or to donate food items when requested (Monde *et al.*, 2006). In this way, relationships between the households have become stronger as there is always a will to help each other out in times of need (Monde *et al.*, 2006).

Poultry farming or production plays an important role in rural livelihoods in many developing countries especially on the African continent, through the provision of animal protein and cash income, the satisfying of religious and socio-cultural needs, and the alleviation of poverty and unemployment, as well as providing food security (Guèye, 2001; Swatson *et al.* 2001; Bounds and Zinyemba, 2002; 2018; Mwale and Masika, 2009; Akinola and Essien, 2011). A survey conducted by Mwale and Masika (2009) in two villages, Qolora and Nontshinga, within Mnquma Local Municipality, revealed that rural farmers in the area practiced diversified farming where women own poultry and men own livestock. Most of the chicken farmers used them for home consumption and food security as they regarded chicken meat as important in

their households, whereas 28% of the chicken farmers sold their chickens for income (Mwale and Masika, 2009: 1688). The main role of chickens in this study as provision of meat for home consumption is different from the study conducted by Swatson *et al.* (2001) whose findings revealed that chickens were mainly used in rituals.

Small businesses often referred as Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs), known in South Africa as Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs), are considered to be the backbone of many developing countries as they play a major role in rural livelihoods through poverty alleviation, job creation, a source of income and improving living conditions especially in rural areas (Mnenwa and Maliti, 2008; Akinwale, 2014; Oladapo *et al.*, 2019). A study conducted by Akinwale (2014) examined the impact of small businesses on poverty alleviation in Alice in the Eastern Cape Province. By the time the study was conducted, Eastern Cape had one of the highest unemployment rates in the country - 29.4% - in the third term of 2014 (ECSECC, 2014: 11). This high unemployment rate in Eastern Cape resulted in high levels of poverty in Alice, and because of this, Alice residents including youth NEET ventured into small businesses to cope with the pressure of the unemployment crisis (Akinwale, 2014: 158). The findings of the study revealed that small businesses like salons, shops for Pakistan nationals, cell phone sellers, clothes, shoes, and jewellery traders go beyond being a survival strategy for households in Alice; they are also a poverty reduction strategy to achieve their livelihoods during the socio-economic crises they find themselves in (Akinwale, 2014: 160-162). The study has also shown that there has been an improvement in the households' participants' food security, health, incomes, and education for their children (Akinwale, 2014: 160). Most of the participants claimed that their reason for starting small businesses was as a means of survival to get out of poverty; they emphasized that they cannot just fold their arms whilst their loved ones die in poverty as their town has few official jobs (Akinwale, 2014: 162). Participants who were doing formal jobs claimed that they cannot rely on their salaries alone as the cost of living is too high, therefore through their small businesses they are able to generate more income (Akinwale, 2014: 162). Those participants who were in tertiary institutions claimed that there were no funding opportunities for them, therefore with the profits they made from their small business they were able to finance their studies, pay school fees for their children, siblings, and extended family members, as well as send some of the money back home (Akinwale, 2014: 163).

Furthermore, the results of Akinwale's (2014) study were like those done by Tshuma and Jari (2013) in Alice a year earlier, on the role of the informal sector as a source of household

income. The study considered the informal sector to serve a variety of purposes in addition to providing an income to the less educated and unskilled, such as the creation of jobs, alleviating poverty, helping to diversify the economic activity, and supplying raw materials to local producers (Tshuma and Jari, 2013: 252). The study sampled 42 participants who were mechanics, welders, hairdressers, street food vendors, and traders in clothes, jewellery, and cell phones (Tshuma and Jari, 2013: 254). Based on Aswani's (2007) argument and on Tshuma and Jari's (2013) study, findings revealed that the informal sector can accommodate those less educated and unskilled, especially youth NEET, displaced workers or workers with income generation opportunities who had been retrenched.

Another substantial body of research on livelihoods is that of the significance of physical mobility in shaping the livelihoods of young rural people (Porter, Hampshire, Mashiri, Dube and Maponya, 2010). A study conducted by Porter *et al.* (2010) examined the economic and political exclusions faced by rural children because of physical mobility in two rural villages in the Eastern Cape outside Port St Johns, Mtambalala and Bolani. The argument made in this study is twofold; the first one is based on the ability to travel to the nearest town on a regular basis, to trade, learn, or perform service work such as sewing, taxi driving, or hairdressing, which enable young people to accrue profits and earn a living (Porter *et al.*, 2010: 1091). The second one is because physical mobility has other implications for rural livelihoods amongst young people, especially in terms of access to education and social networks that are important for future independence (Porter *et al.*, 2010: 1091). For the purposes of my study, I will focus on the second argument which has dire implications for rural youth. Findings of the study revealed that in both study sites, pedestrian youth mobility as early as the ages of six and seven was key for the survival of the family (Porter *et al.*, 2010: 1092). These children were found to be participating significantly in family and domestic labour such as doing household chores before they go to school, travelling long distances to collect wood and fetch water from the river, as well as travelling long distances to school (Porter *et al.*, 2010: 1092-1093). An 18-year-old girl that was interviewed stated that "*When I think about school my heart becomes bitter for the distance I travel to school is very long for me, at times I think about dropping out of school like other children in my location*" (Porter *et al.*, 2010: 1094). Reports from children and teachers interviewed in this study further highlighted that children are exhausted even before the start of the school day and are unable to concentrate as a result of the heavy workload that they do before coming to school, and the long distances they have to travel to go to school was likely to contribute to poor performance at school (Porter *et al.*, 2010: 1095). The study

therefore concluded that from the research participants' point of view (rural youth), migration to town appeared to be the ultimate escape, where schools are closer; however, parents of daughters were averse to their migration as they were perceived to be likely to get pregnant (Porter *et al.*, 2010: 1098-1099).

This section has shown that the heightened vulnerability of poverty, the impact of HIV/AIDS and the decline in agricultural production due to livelihood stressors have a negative impact on the livelihoods of rural households in South Africa. Furthermore, for rural children who are prone to poverty and HIV/AIDS, wild foods collection, poultry farming, home gardening cultivation, SMMEs and the role of the informal sector are viable options for rural households to achieve their livelihoods. The following section will discuss policy provisions that guide rural livelihoods in South Africa, to improve the socio-economic well-being of people living in rural communities.

2.5. Policy provisions that guide rural livelihoods in South Africa

To try and reduce these injustices, the South African government since 1994 has undertaken and implemented massive reforms aimed at addressing rural development, alleviating rural poverty and other inequalities that are inherited from the apartheid era (Perret *et al.*, 2005; Sigwela, *et al.*, 2017). These include the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of 1994 which was designed to address land restitution, health facilities, housing, water and sanitation, the National Growth and Development Strategy (NGDS) in 1996, and the adoption of the 1997 Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), which aimed at addressing poverty and inequality through addressing structural weaknesses that inhibit economic growth and empowerment (Alemu, 2012; Perret *et al.*, 2005). More recent policies include the 2010 New Growth Path (NGP) document which sets job creation and reducing levels of unemployment as its primary mandate through green economy, agriculture, mining, manufacturing, tourism, and other high-level services (Zarenda, 2013: 1). In 2012 and 2013, the South African government adopted the National Development Plan (NDP) which offers a long-term perspective of the country's development as it aims to ensure that all South Africans have a decent standard of living through the reduction of inequality and elimination of poverty by 2030 (Zarenda, 2013; NPC, 2014). The improvement of the quality of public services, adequate nutrition, employment, quality education and skills development are mentioned as core elements of a decent standard of living by the NDP; however, this requires local governments to fulfil their developmental roles and duties (NPC, 2013; Zarenda, 2013). In

chapter 6 of the NDP, an integrated and inclusive rural economy is mentioned as one of the proposals that needs to be implemented for the achievement of the 2030 vision to become a reality, through land reform, infrastructure development, agricultural development that ensures job opportunities, as well as greater social, economic, and political opportunities to overcome poverty (NPC, 2013: 217-218). Even though these strategies were well articulated, their implementation has not been fully effective due to the lack and failure of policy implementation such as legislation gaps, lack of practical guidelines, lack of skills and experienced staff by local government, as well as the ongoing introduction of new policies in every new administration (Davids, 2001; Perret *et al.*, 2004; Diako, 2018).

This section has pointed to a few policy provisions for the eradication of rural deprivation and marginalisation of the rural people in South Africa, however, various challenges remain. The following section will explore livelihood opportunities for rural youth NEET in an international context.

2.6. Rural livelihoods for youth NEET: International context

Due to rapidly changing socio-economic and environmental factors, livelihoods in rural communities have grown increasingly complex, with varying impacts on youth as they face many hurdles in trying to earn a livelihood (FAO, 2014; Buechler, 2020). These include globalisation, high levels of unemployment, inadequate access to financial services, low levels of education, lack of appropriate resources, marginalisation, limited access to land and other imbalances that stem from the vast socio-economic changes taking place (Korkeaoja, 2001; FAO, 2014). This is particularly true in central and eastern European countries where young people are facing an uncertain future as rural areas across the continent are going through a period of transition, resulting in fewer job opportunities in the primary sector (Korkeaoja, 2001). In the late 1980s to mid-1990s, the acronym NEET was first coined in the United Kingdom (UK) with the intention of providing a new approach to categorize the youth population (Istance *et al.*, 1994; Furlong, 2006). This portion of youth was then formerly defined by the United Kingdom government as those 16 to 18-year-olds who are not in full time education or training places, are long-term unemployed, temporarily sick or disabled, or those taking a break from work or education (Furlong, 2006; ILO, 2020).

Early adulthood is a significant period for developing human capital through school or work, and it is also the time when young people begin to make decisions regarding their careers and

form relationships that can be crucial for future labour-market success, as early work experience can provide essential skills and experience for future employment (Loprest *et al.*, 2019: 221). In the United States, Canon *et al.* (2015) and Loprest *et al.* (2019) argue that being disconnected from work and schooling during the ages of 16 to 24 can have dire consequences on future labour-market success and other outcomes. These include increased criminal activity and drug use, likelihood of growing up in poverty, and low levels of educational attainment, especially for young parents (Canon *et al.*, 2015; NIDA, 2016; Loprest *et al.*, 2019).

Youth that are involved in crime often have difficulties transitioning to adulthood as their involvement in criminal activities interrupts connections to school, work, and family, and further increases their likelihood to engage in criminal activities in the future (Scott and Steinberg, 2008; Loprest *et al.*, 2019). The increased use of drugs amongst this youth may lead to job loss due to reduced hours in productive employment and household activities (Florence *et al.*, 2016: 903). Young people who are from low-income and racially segregated communities are disconnected from work and school because of poverty and social isolation, which may affect their employment prospects and access to employment networks (Rawlings, 2015; Spaulding, Lerman, Holzer and Eyster, 2015; Granovetter 2018). Additionally, young people who are parents may be disconnected from work and education as parenthood creates challenges to completing school and diminishes economic activity due to lack of childcare, which results in them staying at home and looking after their children (Loprest *et al.*, 2019: 227-228). Loprest *et al.* (2019: 229) concludes that it is evident that work and school can have positive effects on youth as they provide connections, build work readiness skills, job related skills and labour knowledge for future work (Loprest *et al.*, 2019: 229). Therefore, improving their human capital such as soft skills, their educational levels (completing secondary, high school and tertiary education) and work readiness skills may open new opportunities that increase their chances of being in the labour market (Loprest *et al.*, 2019: 227).

A study conducted by Maguire (2015b: 122-128) in the UK focused on the high numbers of young people who are detached from the labour market and the education and training system. The study suggests that policy interventions in place that address the NEET issue are highly problematic due to lack of clarity in the definition of the NEET group, inadequacies in determining how many under-18s are in this group and the misguided stereotyping and assumptions about the characteristics of being NEET. In seeking to provide an explanation for this, the study argued that nearly half of the 16 to 24-year-old youth NEET in the UK are

classified as being inactive, and about 70% were young girls whose inactivity was attributed to pregnancy and parenthood (Maguire, 2015b: 124). The assigning of this large number of youths as being inactive effectively removes them from the active labour market and education and training systems (Maguire, 2015b: 124). Furthermore, the other share of youth NEET have low socio-economic status and poor educational performances which caused them to be detached from the education and training systems (Maguire, 2015b: 127). Another concern of the study was that the NEET label stigmatizes young people by giving the wrong idea about their attitudes towards work and employment, where their disengagement is associated with their unwillingness or laziness to be in the labour market (Maguire, 2015b: 127).

Maguire's (2015b) study found that this marginalizes many young people in the UK, especially young women who are NEET between the ages of 16 and 24, from targeted support and good quality re-engagement programmes such as work experience programmes, mentoring, and wider skills development programmes (Maguire, 2015b: 127). Policy interventions analysed in this study such as the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), Youth Guarantee (YG), and Youth Contract (YC) across Europe and the UK aimed to support youth NEET by increasing their participation in education, employment and training through apprenticeship programmes, traineeships, job placements and continued education (Maguire, 2015b: 128). Even though these interventions were well implemented, the evaluation of the intake of the YC programme was slower than anticipated as providers were unable to identify the eligible population of youth, and further highlighted that the programme was underfunded (Maguire, 2015b: 128). Apprenticeships programmes in England also achieved little in terms of addressing youth unemployment between 2009 and 2013 as the proportion of youth who participated in these programmes fell from 42% to 23% for those under the age of 19, and from 41% to 33% for 19 to 24-year-olds (Maguire, 2015b: 128).

As much as Maguire's (2015b) study highlights the alarming rise of youth NEET between the ages of 16 and 24, the detachment from the labour market and the education and training system, as well as the development of policy and practice targeted at NEET prevention, the study also needs to acknowledge that youth NEET are a diverse group, and that the problems they face differ, and so will the policies and interventions required to tackle these issues (ILO, 2020: 38). As Elder and Kring (2016: 47-49) point out, the detachment of youth from the labour market owing to household, parenting and care responsibilities makes it difficult for youth to find decent employment in the future, which may also reflect cultural attitudes towards young

women. Therefore, increasing young people's human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital to meet the needs of different groups of disconnected youth is a key part of the solution to ensure that those who are not in school and in employment re-engage and acquire the skills set necessary to access future and available employment (Loprest *et al.*, 2019: 283).

A study conducted in Britain by Maguire (2015a) explored Youth Contract (YC), a government-led policy intervention that aimed at tackling the NEET issue with a particular focus on the growing profile and involvement of the private sector in designing and leading NEET programs. This study asserts that the NEET issue is because of some eligible categories of young people being left out of England's NEET population estimates, particularly those classified as "inactive" within the NEET group, as they are often disregarded when determining eligibility program interventions for youth NEET (Maguire, 2015a: 526). This was exemplified in the delivery of YC which supports youth NEET between the ages of 16 and 24 to re-engage them in education, employment and training through apprenticeship payment incentives, work experience and subsidised jobs (Maguire, 2015a: 529). The study findings revealed that the implementation of YC through the Department of Education to support youth NEET failed to meet the needs of the youth due to flaws in its programme design, as it was implemented without any prior testing or piloting (Maguire, 2015a: 533).

One of the most significant risks of social exclusion for young people is being lost in the transition from education to work, which can lead to anti-social behaviour and criminal activity (Bynner and Parsons 2002; Yates and Payne 2007; Finlay *et al.*, 2010). This has therefore led to the NEET phenomenon to strive for job training programmes that may assist NEET youth to develop vocational skills that will help them get jobs in the future (Redfering and Cook, 1980; Oyeneye, 1986). Based on this proposition, a study done by Chen (2011) in Taiwan focused on the experiences of youth in a job-training programme, the Flying Youth Programme (FYP) which seeks to address and fulfil the needs of youth NEET, especially those coming from disadvantaged families. The FYP aimed to provide youth NEET between the ages of 14 and 19 who have not completed their senior high school, have no intention of pursuing higher education, and are currently unemployed, with vocational and interpersonal skills that will increase their occupational competencies (Chen, 2011: 34). To further encourage the youth to take part in the programme, the FYP offered each participant a monthly allowance (Chen, 2011: 35). The study results revealed that even though this was a job-training programme, the participants had little to say about the skills learnt from the programme; they cared more about

the money, and the connections they built with people in the programme, as well as the field trips to different workplaces (Chen, 2011: 40). In relation to my study, these interpersonal relationships and connections of network and trust are important for NEET youth, as it is through these connections that they acquire work placements, career mentors, a wide range of jobs available to them as well as proper perceptions, attitudes, and behaviour regarding work (Oyeneye, 1986; Yates and Payne, 2007; Chen, 2011; Miller *et al.*, 2015).

Agriculture is regarded as the main source of income in rural areas, however its labour force across Europe is declining as it remains a profession unattractive to young people (White, 2012; Simões, 2018; Unay-Gailhard, 2019; Simões and do Rio, 2020; Mujčinović *et al.*, 2021). As a result of this, in 2017, agricultural activities for upper-middle developed countries across Europe accounted for 16% of employment, whereas in developed countries it accounted for only 3%, and vulnerable and less qualified youth between the ages of 15 and 34 were most affected (ILO, 2018; Simões and do Rio, 2020). This is mostly due to the sector's low wage earnings, intense physical labour which can be arduous, hazardous and uncertain, have limited access to land for farming, and lacks substantial capital investments to support modern technology advancements, as well as lacking in background knowledge in the primary sector among young people (White, 2012; Jean-Philippe *et al.*, 2017; Nag *et al.*, 2018; Mujčinović *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, much research on agriculture and youth participation in developing countries also points to the growing number of youth NEET and their dislike for agriculture, with its activities seen as offering opportunities for large-scale employment and training opportunities (Simmons and Thompson, 2013; Swarts and Aliber, 2013; Kuhmonen, Kuhmonen and Luoto, 2016; Widiyanti, Setyowati and Ardianto, 2018).

A study conducted in Portugal by Simões (2018) which focused on how to involve rural youth NEET in agriculture, revealed that there is a need for network-based projects to be implemented to promote rural NEET's integration and training in agricultural activities (Simões, 2018: 557). At the core of this study, it highlights that youth training programmes fail to involve youth and promote rural youth NEET in agricultural activities, and based on this proposition, a Portuguese network-based project called Terra Nostra carried out between 2013 and 2015 was examined to address the issue of involving rural youth NEET in agriculture (Simões, 2018: 556-558). The Terra Nostra project loosely translated to "Our Land" began because of the global economic crisis that hit Europe in January 2013, where in Portugal it led to high unemployment rates especially among youth (Simões, 2018: 561).

The first phase of the project encouraged learning through practice by allowing youth NEET to freely participate in agricultural tasks such as cleaning fields (Simões, 2018: 563). Project preparation was the second phase, where the project was partnered with a local eco-agriculture cooperative, and a project proposal was submitted to Energias de Portugal (EDP), formerly known as Electricidade, an electricity company which awards grants to projects and programmes that aim at improving employment prospects and rural NEET youths' involvement and training in agriculture (Simões, 2018: 562-563). The third stage was training, which aimed at providing participants with a basic understanding of Eco agriculture techniques such as learning how to harvest crops, through hours of apprenticeships in the fields with locally certified farmers (Simões, 2018: 563). The fourth stage was aimed at increasing and developing the youth's network and projects outreach capacity and social visibility through contacting the community, local producers, and private companies to ease the transitioning into the labour market (Simões, 2018: 563). Since the time that the project was implemented in 2013 to the time this study was conducted in 2018, results reveal that the EDP has funded 180 projects of Terra Nostra, of which 6 of these projects were aimed at supporting youth's involvement in agriculture where Terra Nostra was the only project targeting NEETs (Simões, 2018: 565).

While there is some evidence that rural youth are not attracted to agricultural activities, the above study has highlighted that greater cooperation in the agricultural sector between youth NEET as well as private and public stakeholders can result in a win-win situation where rural youth are finding other alternatives to employment, and producers are increasing their labour force participation in agriculture (Simões, 2018: 571). Drawing from this evidence base, skills development programmes and initiatives in agriculture seem to offer solutions to youth unemployment, and future research needs to promote and acknowledge this.

International literature has revealed that rural youth NEET are disconnected from the labour market and education and training systems, governments are failing them, they do not have access to job training programmes that seek to address the NEET issue and they dislike agricultural work (Chen, 2011; Maguire, 2015a; Maguire, 2015b; Simões, 2018; Loprest, Spaulding and Nightingale, 2019). Therefore, based on the above literature findings, improving the employment outcomes for youth NEET will require implementing programs and changing systems and policies to specifically target their needs. Only then can it be ensured that those who are not working and not in school re-engage and acquire the skills needed to access

available and future jobs. Additionally, the above literature has shown that increasing young people's human, social and natural capital through education and training is a key part of the solution. The following section will explore rural youth livelihoods for youth NEET in South Africa

2.7. Rural livelihoods for youth NEET: South African context

Youth in South Africa is defined as persons between the ages of 14 and 35 (NYP, 2020: 2). Amongst this youth is the most vulnerable group in the labour market, referred to as the not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) group between the ages of 15 and 24 (StatsSA, 2021: 14). Khuluvhe and Negogogo (2021: 5) categorizes NEETs into two groups: inactive NEETs and unemployed NEETs. Inactive NEETs refer to those individuals who are neither in employment, education nor training and not looking for work (Khuluvhe and Negogogo, 2021: 4). Unemployed NEETs refer to those individuals who are neither in employment, education nor training but are actively seeking employment, and are available to start work (Khuluvhe and Negogogo, 2021: 4). The Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the second quarter of 2022 revealed that South Africa had a total of 10.2 million young people aged 15 to 24, and 35.7% were NEET (StatsSA, 2022: 10).

The high number of youth NEET in South Africa is because of underlying problems in the education system and the labour market, which limits opportunities for youth to study further or to secure jobs (StatsSA, 2021). Low quality education & incomplete education represents what is termed the “supply-side” drivers of youth unemployment, whereby youth lack the necessary skills and work-related competencies and capabilities to be employable or to start successful businesses of their own (Cassim and Oosthuizen, 2014; Timaeus and Moultrie, 2015). The “demand-side” drivers of youth unemployment such as shortage of jobs or self-employment, capital-intensive industrialisation, and employers chasing short-term gains at the expense of long-term investments in their employees, arguably play an even more significant role in South Africa's unemployment crisis, where the youth struggle to make the transition from education to work (Timaeus and Moultrie, 2015; Rapanyane and Sethole, 2020).

A study was conducted by Kavese and Mbali (2021) to explore the composition and characteristics of youth NEET in the Eastern Cape labour market, so that their various needs and traits can be considered when designing labour and youth policies. The study identified individual and family circumstances, provincial education systems and infrastructure, and

labour market conditions as risk factors that increase the probability of youth becoming NEETs (Kavese and Mbali, 2021: 6). This is illustrated by a high prevalence of adolescent pregnancy in the province, teenage-headed households, a high proportion of youth not living with either parent, and a decline in the labour absorption rate, as well as most schools having no proper sanitation, electricity, and infrastructure (OECD, 2016; StatsSA, 2020; 2021; Kavese and Mbali, 2021). Additionally, lack of working experience, lack of higher education and funding for studies, limited access to information on available work or study opportunities, limited social networking to acquire skills, loss of motivation and limited support structures are other underlying reasons that keep young people out of education, training, and employment (OECD, 2016; StatsSA, 2020; 2021; Kavese and Mbali, 2021). The findings of Kavese and Mbali's (2021) study revealed that there is a growing number of youth NEET in the province, which has adverse effects on the provincial fiscus, labour, economic growth, and other developmental indicators (Kavese and Mbali, 2021: 24). The study also revealed that the EC Province had the highest number of unemployed and vulnerable youth in the country (Kavese and Mbali, 2021: 24). In the third quarter of 2020, the Eastern Cape had about 1.1 million youth NEET (Kavese and Mbali, 2021; Stats SA, 2020). Further findings revealed that the majority of youth NEET in the province are unemployed females, black or African, with secondary school level not completed (Kavese and Mbali, 2021: 24). Of the 1.1 million youth NEET in the province, 53.5% were female, 91.5% were Black/African, and more than half of them (53.1%) had not completed secondary education (Kavese and Mbali, 2021). These findings therefore imply that the South African government needs to invest more in human and social capital through high-quality vocational education and training which will prepare young people for the labour market and skills set required for the workplace (OECD, 2016; ILO, 2020). This is also outlined by the ILO (2020: 32); investing in young people's skills and education is key in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

A high number of youth NEET face many socio-economic challenges. A study done by Mtengwana (2019) on youth NEET in three townships of the King Sabatha Dalindyebo (KSD) Municipality, namely, Waterfall Park, Ngangelizwe and Mdlekeza, focused on the socio-economic challenges experienced by youth NEET as well as solutions on how to address these challenges. A sample of 15 NEETs were purposively selected between the ages of 18 and 35, and findings revealed that lack of financial support from family, poor school performance, lack of awareness of skills training programs and lack of recreational facilities are some of the

reasons that youth are not in employment and do not further their education (Mtengwana, 2019: 39-41).

A similar study was done by Tele (2016) at a rural community of Engcobo, Eastern Cape which focused on the perceptions of rural youth that are NEET, and the factors that affect their employability. The findings of the study revealed that low levels of educational attainment and skills amongst this group play a role in the factors that affect their employability (Tele, 2016: 56). Additionally, Tele's findings revealed that social networks play a major role in helping young people to find information about employment; however rural youth do not have access to information platforms, such as information centres with free internet access (Tele, 2016: 65). This therefore puts youth NEET at a disadvantage in terms of accessing livelihood opportunities as they have limited access to information platforms.

Akinyemi and Mushunje (2017) conducted research on rural youth NEET in four districts in the Eastern Cape Province: Amathole, Chris Hani, Joe Gqabi and OR Tambo, to determine factors that influence their participation in agricultural activities, as well as factors that hinder their participation. The study found that participation and non-participation of youth NEET in agricultural activities is because of socio-economic factors such as age, marital status, the number of children they have, and parent participation in agricultural activities (Akinyemi and Mushunje, 2017: 524-525). The results of the socio-economic characteristics revealed that the older the participants were, the more they were likely to participate in agricultural activities (Akinyemi and Mushunje, 2017: 524-530). The young population is attracted to well-paying jobs and view agriculture as reserved for the elderly (Dube, 2013; Akinyemi and Mushunje, 2017). In terms of marital status, married female respondents were less likely to participate in agricultural activities as compared to their counterparts who are not married, and this was because of marital responsibilities that hinder their participation (Akinyemi and Mushunje, 2017: 530). Respondents with several children were also less likely to participate in agricultural activities because they are receiving and relying on child support and foster grants, which discourages their participation (Akinyemi and Mushunje, 2017: 30). The second discovery was that having more children meant more childcare responsibilities, therefore, a decreasing likelihood of participating in agriculture as compared to men who had no parenting responsibilities (Akinyemi and Mushunje, 2017: 30). In relation to parent's participation in agriculture, the study revealed that most of the participants whose parents are involved in agricultural activities were more likely to engage in agricultural activities than their

counterparts whose parents were not involved (Akinyemi and Mushunje, 2017: 531). Therefore, based on the findings by Amegnaglo *et al.* (2014), encouraging young people's parents and guardians to engage and support their children can go a long way in encouraging youth participation in agricultural activities (Akinyemi and Mushunje, 2017: 531).

This section has discussed how youth NEET in South Africa continue to be disadvantaged in the labour market and education and training systems due to individual and family circumstances, labour market conditions such as lack of work experience, a family's economic status, low levels of education and lack of access to social networks that help them to find the right information about jobs. It also noted the relative success of investing in human, social and financial capital to decrease the probability of youth becoming NEET. The following section will provide a discussion on the current youth unemployment among youth NEET in South Africa.

2.8. Youth unemployment on youth NEET in South Africa

Following the end of the apartheid era in South Africa, rural youth continue to be faced by the scourge of unemployment due to, amongst other issues, a lack of relevant skills with which to enter the job market, low levels of education, high dropout rate at school level, and having little or no work experience (Cassim and Oosthuizen, 2014). The current unemployment rate in South Africa as of the second quarter of 2022 was 33.9%, which is down from 35.3% in the last quarter of 2021 (StatsSA, 2022: 9). The current unemployment rate for Eastern Cape is 51.8% (StatsSA, 2022: 9). This percentage includes discouraged work-seekers, who are only counted in the expanded definition of unemployment (StatsSA, 2022: 9). Youth aged 15-34 in South Africa continue to be disadvantaged in the labour market with an unemployment rate of 61.4% higher than the national average (Trading Economics, 2022). More worrying is the youth NEET aged 15-24 which is the most vulnerable in the labour market, whose unemployment rate is 35.7% (StatsSA, 2022: 10).

Consistent with the national trend, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela Local Municipality (WMMLM), where Bizana is located, is characterised by a youth population of 261 824 constituting 81,9% of the population (StatsSA: CS, 2016:94-95). The educational profile of WMMLM, which looked at youth who are in primary, secondary, and tertiary education, shows that this group totalled 135 380 (Stats SA, 2016: 104). The NEET group constituted 98 336 (72.6%) of the total of 135 380 (Stats SA, 2016: 104). These statistics reveal that the Eastern

Cape government and WMMLM must develop programs that will respond to the needs of the diverse youth. According to the 2021/2022 Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for the WMMLM, they currently have youth programs that focus on youth in high school, tertiary institutions, and those with tertiary qualifications seeking employment, while youth that is NEET is not catered for (WMMLM, 2021/2022: 157-158). Moreover, the township of Bizana also has youth interventions in the form of youth centres, NGOs, and CBOs on the ground; however, their role and the programmes they offer to assist in addressing the NEET problem is not clear, due to the high percentage of youth that is NEET in the area (WMMLM, 2021/2022: 158).

Quality education and skills development are mentioned as one of the core elements of a decent standard of living by the NDP (NDP, 2013: 294-297). In its mandate of improving education, training and innovation by 2030 through early-child development, basic education, adult education, post-school, national research and innovation system, not much is said about improving the human and social capital of youth that is NEET (NDP, 2013: 296-328) Even though the NDP proposes Sector Training and Education Authorities (SETAs) on the delivery of sector-specific skills needed by employees, they do not seem to be keeping up with the pace of the growing number of youth NEET in the country (NDP, 2013: 323). The next section will discuss the role of youth centres for youth NEET in an international context.

2.9. The role of youth centres for youth NEET internationally

Evidence from the above literature and studies seems to suggest that one of the most significant threats to social exclusion for young people is being lost in the transition from school to work, which can lead to youth entering the NEET category. Yates and Payne (2006: 329) suggests that one of the main focuses for addressing this exclusion is through youth policy measures designed to combat social exclusion for young people in Europe and elsewhere. Empowering young people through establishing favourable conditions for them can develop their talents, enhance their skills, reintegrate them into education and enable them to actively participate in the labour market (European Commission, 2010; Mascherini, 2017). Since the launch of YG policy in 2013 as previously discussed in 2.6, by the end of 2020 close to 725 000 young people between the ages of 15 and 29 were NEET across Europe, and the share of inactive NEETs was twice as much as that of unemployed NEETs (Konle-Seidl and Picarella, 2021: 8). The ILO (n.d: 2) therefore suggests that the YG programme requires countries of the EU to go beyond established labour market policies aimed at unemployed youth and start implementing

strategies which also target youth that is detached from the labour market and the education and training system, with the aim of bringing them towards mainstream services and programmes.

International literature on the role of youth centres also seems to suggest that community-based programmes tend to be better at improving youth's non-cognitive and social skills through mentoring programmes - they provide a safe haven where youth at risk can comfortably express themselves and receive guidance, improve their literacy skills as well as increase their social capital (Rodríguez-Planas, 2014; Miller *et al.*, 2015; Thériault, 2016; Visser, 2018; Morgan, Parker and Marturano, 2020). A study conducted by Rodríguez-Planas (2014) looked at mentoring and counselling programmes as one type of intervention that seeks to help disadvantaged youth or at-risk youth. This study looked at a youth community-based mentoring programme in America, Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS). In this mentoring programme, there is an experienced person (the mentor) who assists the disadvantaged or at-risk person (mentee) in developing their skills, knowledge, and other non-cognitive skills that prevent them from enhancing their personal and professional growth (Rodríguez-Planas, 2014: 2-3). Two other independent random-assignment evaluations of BBBS found that youth facing adversity (often those coming from low-income families, engaged in violent behaviour, single parents, or those detached from the labour market, education and training system) joined the mentoring programme, and with the support of their one-on-one mentors, had higher levels of confidence, reduced substance abuse and risky behaviours, and improved parent and peer relationships as well as school attendance and performance (Grossman and Tierney, 1998; Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman and McMaken, 2007).

Other Community Based Youth Serving Organizations (CBYSOs) and community-based interventions in rural America and the UK are recognizing and responding to the social reproduction needs of disconnected youth through social levers and concepts of social capital (Visser, 2018; Morgan *et al.*, 2020). Based on case studies of three CBYSOs in an article by Visser (2018) in the San Joaquin Valley of California, they examined how El Centro de Comunidad (ECC), Comprehensive Youth Services (CYS) and Building Blocks (BB) programmes provide a basis for acquisition of social capital for marginalised youth in environments that have restricted opportunities. The youth at the centre of all three case studies are referred to as “disconnected youth” as they have experienced periods of unemployment and non-enrolment in school and are between the ages of 16 and 24 (Visser, 2018: 474). The ECC

programme primarily serves disconnected youth by providing sports activities, food pantries and assistance with probation and social services (Visser, 2018: 478). The CYS programme provides transitional houses for disconnected homeless youth, those from the LGBTQIA community, and those with mental illnesses or substance abuse conditions (Visser, 2018: 478). The BB programme provides health related services and youth support programmes, such as reproductive and sexual health, as well as youth empowerment and career development programmes (Visser, 2018: 478). The results from all 3 case studies revealed that CBYSOs are not only physical spaces, but also social spaces where disconnected youth can obtain resources that will enhance their livelihoods, as well as develop appropriate services to the problems that they face (Visser, 2018: 479-480). These include helping them find jobs, emergency shelters, accessing public benefits and workforce development (Visser, 2018: 480). Homelessness was considered one of the predicting factors of long-term disconnection from education or work in all three case studies, and the CYS programme's mandate was to provide temporary transitional housing to the homeless youth up until they were back on their feet (Visser, 2018: 479-481). The food pantry from the ECC programme not only provided basic food necessities, but next to the food parcels there were also pamphlets that were advertising education and workforce development training initiatives offered by the ECC programme (Visser, 2018: 481). The BB programme offered free child-care services to unemployed teenage parents who were actively looking for jobs and attending interviews as well as outside training as part of the programme (Visser, 2018: 482). Further findings from the CYS and BB case studies revealed that disconnected youth often suffer from severe health conditions, substance abuse, and mental illnesses as well as high levels of HIV/AIDS (Visser, 2018: 482). Given this, both CBYSOs were found to be successful in this regard as they serve as referral agencies and connect the youth to treatment centres within their programmes, as they have onsite social workers and counsellors (Visser, 2018: 482).

Community-based interventions in the UK have also been seen as mechanisms that reach out to marginalised youth through programmes that tackle social exclusion, such as participation in sport and performing arts, to access wider support networks (Nicholson and Hoye, 2008; Coalter, 2017; Morgan and Parker, 2017; Morgan *et al.*, 2020). Morgan *et al.* (2020) conducted a study evaluating a community-based intervention referred to as Future Stars in a city in North-West England for marginalised young people aged between 11 and 25 years, particularly those who were at risk, such as involvement in violent gang related crimes. To break the cycles of poverty, crime, and marginalisation (long term unemployment and being out of school), Future

Stars engages these young people in a variety of sports, media, and arts-based activities, and thereafter moves them into work, education, and other training opportunities (Morgan *et al.*, 2020: 328). As a charitable community-based intervention, Future Stars worked with corporate business partners and highly skilled people from the sports, arts, entertainment, and education sectors to develop a range of work skills and ensure that the services they offered met the needs of the youth (Morgan *et al.*, 2020: 332-333). This was also done through accredited and non-accredited vocational training, volunteering opportunities, mentoring programmes, and personal development opportunities as well as apprenticeship and work placements (Morgan *et al.*, 2020: 333). However, against this backdrop, much of the work done by Future Stars was also concentrated on creating an environment wherein the youth would be able to form strong interpersonal relationships with the staff members and the partners that they worked with (Morgan and Parker, 2017; Morgan *et al.*, 2020).

Survey results from the Future Stars case study revealed that it was the accumulation of social and human capital that had the greatest impact on developing youth's employability prospects (Morgan *et al.*, 2020: 337). Much of the youth who became part of the programmes of Future Stars initially had few social connections and small networks of people, and because of these increased connections, there was a positive shift in several local businesses and employer attitudes towards them (Morgan *et al.*, 2020: 337-339). In relation to human capital, access to employment opportunities, job application processes such as writing Curriculum Vitae's (CVs) and interview preparation were some of the skills the project staff members helped the youth with (Morgan *et al.*, 2020: 336). As a result of these forms of human and social capital, 98.7% of the project participants strongly agreed that taking part in the programmes of Future Stars increased their self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as their social networks and communication skills (Morgan *et al.*, 2020: 335). Central to these study findings is the recognition of the effort and potential of the project staff to positively impact the youth, which is also a key part of my study.

Another similar study by Miller *et al.* (2015) on youth NEET in one rural area and one urban area in Scotland explored the generation of social capital to re-engage youth in education and employment opportunities through a community-led youth work project. The main aim of this study was to compare a community-based youth project in a rural community on the West Coast with one in an urban community in Glasgow, on whether the generation of social capital amongst youth (16 years and above deemed to be socially excluded or marginalised) increased

their motivation towards engaging in wider forms of education, employment, training or voluntary work (Miller *et al.*, 2015: 471). The programmes of the urban community-led youth project were focused on media skills, music, and arts, where activities involved improving their literacy and communication skills through script writing of songs, as well as acting, which boosted their confidence and created friendships (Miller *et al.*, 2015: 472). On the other hand, the programmes of the rural community-led youth project centred on activities around sports such as football which aimed at increasing their confidence and communication skills through working as a team (Miller *et al.*, 2015: 472). In addition to these, at both study sites, the youth workers also assisted with CV writing, job searches, locating job opportunities and making sure that the programme participants had the means to attend interviews and other opportunities (Miller *et al.*, 2015: 472).

From the above study, it was expected that there would be differences between the rural and urban community-led youth work projects; however, no significant differences were found between the type of engagement (media or sports) and the geographical context (rural or urban) of the study (Miller *et al.*, 2015: 473). What was significant about both study sites was that project participants reported overwhelming feelings of negativity that were directed at them from formal and informal structures in their communities such as libraries, the education system, sport centres, police, and local shops (Miller *et al.*, 2015: 473). This was because there were widespread beliefs that youth coming from their socially excluded and marginalised communities were looked down upon, which in turn affected their beliefs in equal opportunities (Miller *et al.*, 2015: 473). However, a key finding was that both youth work projects helped to diminish those feelings, and gave project participants a sense of empowerment, enabled them to secure voluntary or paid work, developing soft and hard skills as well as providing places for them to form and create positive social interactions with themselves, other members of their communities and their own created micro communities (Miller *et al.*, 2015: 473-375). In addition, the connections of trust they created with the youth workers further encouraged them to consider doing community engagement, which led to the accumulation of more social networks (Miller *et al.*, 2015: 478).

Low levels and a lack of literacy skills amongst youth NEET can be seen as a way of increasing their chances of reporting long-term NEET statuses (Iwatsuki, 2019; Jongbloed and Giret, 2021). As conceptualised by the OECD (2013: 59), literacy skills refer to the ability to read, write, understand, evaluate, and engage with written texts to participate in society, attain goals

and develop one's knowledge and potential. From this definition I therefore argue that literacy skills are of utmost importance when one is looking for a job, and due to low education levels of youth NEET, they can be at a disadvantage when looking for jobs. Based on this argument, two studies were conducted by Thériault (2016) in Canada, Quebec and by Iwatsuki (2019) in Japan which looked at literacy skills development for young people considered to be in precarious situations or in social difficulties.

The first study looked at two community-based organisations (Le Bercaïl and L'Envol) which act as literacy mediators on young people between the ages of 16 and 30 who are in situations of precarity or live-in precarious situations (Thériault, 2016: 164). The study however focuses on bureaucratic literacies which include registration forms, contracts and leases, and letters from the government and school (Thériault, 2016: 165). The young people who were part of these organisations were referred to as being "in situations of precarity" as they were either school dropouts or unemployed with low or no literacy levels (Thériault, 2016: 159). The study findings revealed that the literacy mediation from youth workers of the two organisations offered an alternative to ignoring the bureaucratic literacies, and with the assistance of the youth workers they were also able to appeal against an unfair decision, or contact the institution to seek clarity (Thériault, 2016: 167). The second study looked at a literacy class programme in Osaka, Japan supporting youth aged 16 to 23 (Iwatsuki, 2019: 469). The study findings revealed that due to the youth's low educational levels, they had difficulties with reading and writing, and making up their CVs for employment opportunities; to accomplish these, they received help from members of the literacy class programme (Iwatsuki, 2019: 475). Evidence from these literacy mediators seems to reveal that poor educational attainments, especially in basic literacy, leave youth NEET at a disadvantage in the labour market and when applying for jobs. Lack of these literacy skills therefore acts as a barrier to employment as they are basic skills that may be needed by most employers, and literacy mediators or bridging programmes may be an answer to prevent these backlogs.

International literature on the role of youth centres for youth NEET seem to suggest that community-based interventions that tackle social exclusion amongst youth NEET can enhance their livelihoods. This is done through programmes that are aimed at developing their skills, knowledge, and other non-cognitive skills. The following section will discuss the role of youth centres on youth NEET in South Africa.

2.10. The role of youth centres on youth NEET in South Africa

Historically, in South Africa, services to young people and other groups in the community were rehabilitative and welfare-oriented, which might be linked to a disadvantaged past for most people owing to the apartheid era (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Hilfinger-Messias and McLoughlin, 2006). For a long time, the primary function of youth centres and youth programmes was to focus solely on rehabilitation, where services to young people were mostly for those who were in trouble with the law or who were abusing substances (Jennings, *et al.*, 2006: 35). The increasing attention of youth centres also focused on the recognition of reproductive health as one of its many services (Erulkar, Beksinska and Cebekhulu, 2001; Janowitz, Cuthbertson, Beksinska and Cebekhulu, 2003). This was because the HIV/AIDS crisis and rates of sexual violence in South Africa were of great concern and were among the highest in the world, especially amongst the youth (Erulkar *et al.*, 2001; Janowitz *et al.*, 2003). At the same time, there was also a lot of interest in developing youth centre programmes in South Africa, especially in the NGO sector, to go beyond providing clinical and health care services (Erulkar *et al.*, 2001: 1). As a result of this, agencies in South Africa were then interested in examining the effectiveness and success of youth centres in reaching the youth with information, life skills and other services (Erulkar *et al.*, 2001: 2). Additionally, while furthering education remains difficult for many young people, youth centres may offer opportunities such as employability programmes that young people can take advantage of (Graham, Patel, Chowa, Masa, Khan, Williams and Mthembu, 2016, Graham *et al.*, 2019). These include bridging programmes that are aimed at preparing youth with education and employment opportunities which are at low cost or no cost (Graham *et al.*, 2016, Graham *et al.*, 2019). Examples of these programmes often consist of skills training (personal, interpersonal, and technical skills), work experience and opportunities such as apprenticeships, learnerships and volunteering (Graham *et al.*, 2016, Graham *et al.*, 2019).

A study conducted by Kraak (2013) on the failure of the state in South Africa to address the NEET issue, revealed that NGOs have been successful in addressing the NEET issue where the state has failed to place unemployed youth in work. The study highlights that NGOs have been successful in building the human and social capital of youth NEET as they often have a limited skills set as well as social networks which help them in accessing the right information on career advice, educational and employment opportunities (Kraak, 2013: 86-87). Examples of these include appropriate internship programmes for youth NEET and mentoring programmes that help with writing CVs, acceptance letters and preparing for job interviews

(Kraak, 2013: 85-86). Additionally, the NGO staff also play an intermediate and go-between role where they approach prospective employers to offer internships as well as short-term or long-term employment for youth NEET (Kraak, 2013: 92). Further findings revealed that state interventions in the post school sector through programmes offered by the Further Education and Training Institutions (FETs) and the Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs) have been developed and implemented to address the NEET problem; however, their success rate is very low (Kraak, 2013: 93). Kraak (2013: 93) argues that these state interventions such as the programmes offered through FETs and SETAs “appear ignorant of the real employment requirements of local businesses” as they operate at a significant distance from the daily life experiences of unemployed youth.

In developing youth assets for employability, Graham *et al.* (2019) conducted a study on 8 Youth Employability Programmes (YEPs) and their role in offering technical and human capacity skills training for youth (aged 18 to 35) trying to access post-secondary education and the labour market. Characteristics of the youth who participated in these programmes were: from poor socio-economic backgrounds, little or no work experience, limited access to social networks about job opportunities and lack of information about how to effectively look for and apply for jobs (Graham *et al.*, 2019: 9). Findings of the study revealed that all the YEPs played a positive role in helping the youth to be in the labour market; they provided easily accessible and low-cost programmes through which youth NEET could increase their skills and access information on employment opportunities (Graham *et al.*, 2019: 10). This was done through most of the programmes matching the youth with potential employers who were looking for the skills that they had, as well as exposure to human capacity skills such as soft skills (Graham *et al.*, 2019: 9-10).

In the same light, to better understand the role of youth centres in meeting the needs of youth in South Africa, Erulkar *et al.* (2001) conducted a study of 12 youth centres; four that are run by Love Life, six by UNFPA-DfID Youth and Adolescent Reproductive Health Programme (YARHP), and two by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health. Given that two centres from the study focus exclusively on reproductive health and clinical related services, the focus of the examination of this study will rather be on the Love Life centres, which have a wider set of objectives that focus on clinical services and reproductive health education, vocational services, sports facilities, computer training, community radio, life skills and counselling, which are key for my study (Erulkar *et al.*, 2000: 12). Youth who were using services of the

Love Life youth centres (i.e., Sakhulutsha Y-Centre in EC, Orange Farm Y-Centre in Gauteng, Acornhoek Y-Centre in Northern Province, and Kutloanong Love Life Y-Centre in Free State) revealed that they visited the youth centres primarily for reproductive health information, life skills and participation in their recreation programmes (Erulkar *et al.*, 2000: 7-13). Further findings revealed that their vocational training activities such as computer classes do not reach many young people, and this is due to the limit on the number and age of youth that Love Life youth centres accommodate (Erulkar *et al.*, 2000: 15).

One major component of these Love Life youth centres in relation to my study is that their programmes are centred around life skills and skills-based health education. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines life skills as “abilities for adaptive positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (WHO, 1999: 3). These may include a set of interpersonal skills and psychosocial competencies that enable people to make informed decisions, communicate effectively, solve problems, and think critically and creatively, as well as coping and managing their lives in a healthy and productive way (WHO, 1999: 3). Skills-based health education on the other hand refers to ways of promoting or sustaining a healthy lifestyle and environment by fostering the development of information, attitudes, and skills through a range of learning experiences (WHO, 1999: 3).

Based on the above, there seems to be an interest in youth centres and the role that they play in reaching young people with information and services. In the South African context, literature has shown that youth centres and their programmes have played a significantly big role in developing the human and social capital of youth NEET, by investing in their skills and broadening their social networks, thus increasing their chances of employment, and re-integrating them into education and training institutions. This includes sharing of information about jobs, basic computer skills, CV writing skills, career guidance, health and wellbeing, entrepreneurial skills, mentorship and coaching as well as the development of life skills and job market preparedness. The following section will discuss policy provisions that guide youth NEET in South Africa.

2.11. Policy provisions for youth NEET in South Africa

Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, the South African government has made efforts to include historically marginalized South Africans, including youth, into the country's mainstream economy. This was done through the development of legislations and policies

which were set out as a means of addressing the challenges facing the youth in the country. These include the National Youth Commission (NYC) Act of 1996, the National Youth Policy (NYP) of 2000, the 2002–2007 National Youth Development Policy Framework (NYDPF) and the 2009–2014 and 2015–2020 National Youth Policies (NYP, 2009; 2015). At the end of 2020, the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) introduced the presentation on the NYP 2020–2030 that will be aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (NYP, 2020).

In relation to my study, the first NYP (2009–2014) frames its discussion on the needs of targeted groups such as unemployed youth, youth in rural areas, school-aged-out-of-school youth, and youth at risk (NYP, 2009: 12). For unemployed and out-of-school youth, the policy frames its discussion on predominantly skilled youth and those with a matric certificate and beyond, and suggests that for those young people who are mostly unskilled, and lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, second-chance opportunities are available for them through Further Education and Training Colleges (FETCs), as well as Government and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) that will equip them with the necessary skills for the labour market and exposure to employment opportunities (NYP, 2009: 14-15).

In the second NYP (2015–2020), youth unemployment also receives greater attention. Much of the policy's solutions for addressing unemployment build on existing initiatives, and it proposes that the government should expand its current programmes to cater for the diverse needs of youth through economic participation and transformation, education, skills and second chances, health care, combating substance abuse as well as nation-building and social cohesion (NYP, 2015: 16-25). These include growing young entrepreneurs, providing work exposure opportunities, supporting youth-owned businesses, rural development, and land reform for young people, providing youth with career information and guidance, second chances to complete education and the transition to higher education, alternative pathways to attain training and skills, as well as promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights (NYP, 2015: 16-24).

The latest NYP 2020–2030 was developed amidst the COVID-19 pandemic which created chaos all over the world, threatening the lives and livelihoods of many, including young people (NYP, 2020: 1). In assessing the progress that was made against the previous youth policies with regards to youth NEET, the NYP 2020–2030 highlights that the government has

implemented several public employment programmes targeting unemployed youth such as Community Works Programmes (CWP), National Youth Service Programme, and Youth Employment Services (YES), as well as skills training through learnerships funded by SETAs (NYP, 2020: 5-6). Arguably, the policy further contends that quality education, skills development, second chance programmes, economic transformation, entrepreneurship, and job creation are one of the policy's priority areas that can help youth and youth NEET to build on their human, social and natural capital to reach their full potential and enhance their livelihoods (NYP, 2020: 15-23).

While these are with no doubt essential considerations, they however seem to not be keeping up with the pace of the growing number of youth NEET in the country, as South Africa continues to face an ever-increasing number of youths who are NEET. In the second quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate of youth NEET (aged 15-24) was 35.7%, which is 2.7% higher than the NEET rate in the second quarter of 2021 (StatsSA, 2022: 10).

2.12. The Theoretical Framework: Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA)

Given the country's high youth unemployment rate especially in youth that is NEET, it is therefore clear that a person's employability cannot be determined just by their individual attributes. For this reason, this study draws from the SLA as a theoretical lens to understand and explore livelihood opportunities for rural youth NEET as shown above.

Many development practitioners in the 1970s were worried about the famines that were occurring in Africa and Asia, and therefore made efforts to put in more resources that would increase food supply in Africa and the rest of the world (Tham-Agyekum, 2015: 1). Even with the significant national-level surplus of food, many households were still not getting adequate amounts of food to sustain their lives (Tham-Agyekum, 2015: 1). Development practitioners and researchers therefore began to widen their perspective from food security to a livelihood perspective that focused on enhancing people's skills and capacities to secure their own livelihoods (Tham-Agyekum, 2015: 1-2).

In the early 1990s, the term sustainable livelihoods became popular as a development concept, owing to the breakthroughs of famine and food insecurity of the 1970s and 1980s (Scoones, 2009:4). From being developed as a strategy to alleviate poverty, SLA was then later used as an all-inclusive model to assess how they make a living in the context of deep vulnerability

and to create sustainable livelihoods for poor people in rural areas (Sakdapolrak, 2014: 19). This call for an emphasis on sustainable livelihoods was set out in the 1997 White Paper on International Development as follows: “refocus our international development efforts on the elimination of poverty and encouragement of economic growth which benefits the poor. We will do this through support for international sustainable development targets and policies which create sustainable livelihoods for poor people, promote human development and conserve the environment” (White Paper on International Development, 1997: 6). From this quotation, Krantz (2001: 2) argues that SLA should go beyond the narrow conventional definition of poverty eradication which focuses on certain manifestations of poverty, such as low income, as this definition does not consider other vital aspects such as vulnerability, illiteracy, lack of social services, skills development and building on the strengths of the rural poor.

For my study, youth NEETs are situated in the context of the SLA as they are in a vulnerable situation due to their unemployment status, not in education and not in sustainable training. Therefore, in navigating this vulnerability context, SLA was understood in the context of youth NEET as having to use assets that are available to them such as human and social capital to enhance their livelihood opportunities, which will be discussed below.

2.12.1. Livelihoods Assets

The focus of the livelihoods approach posits that there is a logical relationship between a household’s assets and activities, and the way in which people use their resources and capabilities to make up their livelihood strategies (DFID, 1999: 16). In line with SLA, livelihood strategies refer to the combination of activities, assets, and choices that people undertake for them to improve their standards of living and achieve their livelihood goals (Serrat, 2008: 3). For this study, the livelihoods approach aims to get a clear and realistic understanding of rural youth NEET strengths (capital) and how they try to turn these into positive livelihood outcomes (DFID, 1999: 16). These may include their skills, knowledge and capacity, resources, technologies, access to education, and their networks of social support (Mensah, 2014: 14). At the core of SLA are the five livelihood capital assets which comprise of access to human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital that people need to achieve their livelihoods (DFID, 1999; Conway, Moser, Norton, and Farrington, 2002; De Satgé *et al.*, 2002; Serrat, 2008; Scoones, 2009).

Human capital refers to the capabilities, skills, knowledge, capacity to work, good health, education, and employment opportunities from which individuals can make a living (Scoones, 1998; DFID, 1999). Human capital plays a very important role in terms of how individuals equip themselves to engage in productive activities in acquiring an income (Scoones, 1998: 9). In most circumstances, an improvement in the basic components of human capital (i.e., skills, knowledge, and capabilities) may result in the likelihood of an improved livelihood outcome (DFID, 1999: 17). For example, higher levels of education and skills sets are often associated with higher levels of income, therefore without empowering human capital through skills training or education, chances of employment are greatly reduced (Filmer and Fox, 2014: 10).

Social capital refers to social networks, organisations and connections of trust, mutual understanding, and support upon which people rely to construct their livelihoods (Scoones, 1998; De Satgé *et al.*, 2002). According to the DFID (1999), social capital comes in three forms. The first form of social capital includes networks and connections that occur at a level where individuals have shared interests that will increase the likelihood of people working together and expanding their access to wider institutions (DFID, 1999: 19). The second form of social capital is made up of networks within formalized groups that have common interests or commonly accepted rules, norms, and sanctions that strive towards a common objective (DFID, 1999: 19). The last form of social capital involves informal relationships of trust, reciprocity, and exchange that facilitate cooperation in the attainment of common goals (DFID, 1999: 19).

Natural capital plays an important part of the asset pentagon in rural areas as it refers to the natural resource stocks (i.e., water, forests, land, air, minerals, biodiversity) from which households engage in agricultural pursuits or collection of natural resources to sustain their lives (Scoones, 1998; DFID, 1999). Within the SLA framework, there is a close relationship between natural capital and the vulnerability context (Scoones, 1998; DFID, 1999). The vulnerability context refers to the seasonality, trends, and shocks that affect people's livelihoods such as droughts, fires, floods, and earthquakes; and how they can cope with the impacts of the hazards (Scoones, 1998; DFID, 1999). The relationship therefore between the two is that many of the shocks that destroy the livelihoods of the poor are natural processes that destroy natural capital such as fires, droughts, earthquakes, and floods (Scoones, 1998; DFID, 1999).

Physical capital refers to basic infrastructure, water supply and sanitation, roads, telecommunications, public transport, shelter, and producer goods that people use to make a living (Scoones, 1998; DFID, 1999). Access to these commodities is important because a lack of infrastructure can be a key dimension of poverty, for example when it comes to farmers, transport infrastructure is a necessity so that they are able to transport, produce, and distribute fertilizer, as well as having access to markets (DFID, 1999: 23).

Financial capital refers to financial resources that are available to people (i.e., cash flow, savings, investments, remittances, transfers from the state) that people use to attain their livelihood objectives and strategies (Scoones, 1998; DFID, 1999). According to the DFID (1999: 25), there are two main sources of financial capital: available stocks and regular inflows of money. Available stocks refer to savings which are the preferred types of financial capital as they are free of liabilities and do not entail reliance on others, such as cash, bank deposits, or liquid assets such as livestock and jewellery (DFID, 1999: 25). Regular inflows of money refer to transfers from the state, pensions, and remittances that need to be reliable to contribute positively to financial capital (DFID, 1999: 25).

2.12.2. Applying SLA in the study

The framework is suitable for this study firstly because of its priority on rural areas. To be more precise, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela Local Municipality (WMMLM), where Bizana is located is one of the smallest rural towns in the Eastern Cape Province with a rural population of 319 943 (WMMLM, 2021/2022: 7). Using the lens of SLA, Bizana has rural youth NEET that are in a vulnerable state, because they are unemployed, out-of-school and not part of any formal training. For people to navigate this vulnerability, they need to use resources that are available to them (Arkoh, 2019: 18). For this study, SLA helped to understand how youth NEET in Bizana access human and social capital to achieve their livelihood objectives, as they are currently disconnected from government opportunities to access skills and education. With this, Arkoh (2019: 18) argues that the extent and depth of capitals or assets that people have access to will certainly influence their capabilities and abilities to seek employment or productivity. An example of this is that a person's level of education, knowledge and skills set (human capital) as well as social networks and connections (social capital) may be influential in a person getting a job or having access to relevant education and training (Arkoh, 2019: 18). This is relevant for the rural poor who tend to have limited access to assets, and as a result must find ways of nurturing and combining their assets in innovative ways to ensure their survival

through agriculture, wage employment, farm labour and small-scale enterprise (Scoones, 2009: 172).

The strengths of the SLA are that it links capitals and livelihood strategies to livelihood outcomes, whereby individuals and households use their capital assets with the intentions of seeking positive livelihood outcomes (Scoones, 2009: 177). Secondly, it considers the context in which people live (i.e., socio-economic, demographic, political and technological context) together with their access to resources (i.e., natural, human, social, physical, and financial capitals) and how they put these to use (Helliker, Chiweshe and Bhatasara, 2018: 3). Thirdly, it is a suitable framework for this study, as it helps to examine the current livelihoods of youth NEET in Bizana.

Even though the SLA has proved to be beneficial in livelihoods research and in this study, there have been criticisms that have been raised regarding sustainable livelihoods. Sakdapolrak argues that one of the criticisms that have been levelled against the SLA is that of the agency-structure debate where there is an imbalance between the two (Sakdapolrak, 2014: 20). The structure and agency debate refers to the relative power of whether an individual acts as a free agent or in a way that is shaped by the social structures, they find themselves in, in society (Dowding, 2008: 21). With this, Sakdapolrak (2014: 20) therefore argues that the SLA puts too much emphasis on an individual's agency at the expense of structure to understand how these actors make a living in contexts of deep vulnerabilities and does not fully appreciate how social structures condition our lives, and the livelihoods of households. Additionally, the "people-centeredness mantra" of this framework fails to view individuals as whole entities that can make choices that are rational for the attainment of sustainable livelihoods (Kaag *et al.*, 2004: 54). What Kaag argues in this case is that for an individual to be considered as a whole, their ideas, perceptions, norms, and values need to be taken into consideration (Kaag *et al.*, 2004: 54).

SLA has also been largely criticized by scholars and development practitioners as they view it as a problematic tool for analysing rural livelihoods because of its rigid notion of assets (Moser, 1998; Kaag *et al.*, 2004; Sakdapolrak, 2014; Helliker *et al.*, 2018). For SLA, assets are tools or resources that households or individuals use to overcome deep vulnerability in reaching clear ends and maximising their utilities (Sakdapolrak, 2014: 20). In this study, rural youth NEET need these resources to survive, which may include land, livestock, cash savings, skills, or employment opportunities. With this, Moser (1998: 3) argued that the more assets an individual

or household has, the more it is for them to overcome vulnerability. Mdee (2002: 7) suggests that assets within this framework should be measured so that they may not be exploited. An example of this is that for a household that depends on agriculture, it may be difficult to determine the exact size of land that will sufficiently sustain their lives, and as a result, power relations of conflict, domination, and exploitation may arise as people will be competing for scarce resources to improve their livelihoods at the expense of others (Helliker *et al.*, 2018: 6-7).

Even though the above criticisms of the SLA hold substantial ground, the use of this approach is relevant and significant for this study on how low-income individuals and communities make use of their assets to make a livelihood. In my study, specifically in Chapter four, SLA helped to identify how rural youth NEET in Bizana are coping with unemployment, low levels of education, lack of skills and networks. Additionally, SLA places them at the centre of development by building on their strengths and enhancing existing livelihood strategies.

2.13. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed literature on rural livelihoods from a global and South African perspective, rural youth livelihood opportunities for youth NEET internationally and in the South African context, the role of youth centres on youth NEET internationally and in South Africa. I have also conceptualized youth unemployment by identifying challenges faced by rural youth NEET, livelihood strategies that are employed by unemployed youth in rural areas, as well as providing a theoretical framework for the study through analysing the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach which related well with the literature review discussions. The literature pointed to several causes and consequences of rural youth unemployment both at an international and national level.

In South Africa, since the end of apartheid in 1994, the South African government, private sector and the civil society has made significant investments, interventions and programmes that are aimed at assisting and supporting young people's transition from childhood to adulthood, with a focus on education and unemployment. However, given that the youth NEET rate in South Africa is still very high, it appears that these efforts and interventions have been ineffective. The findings in the literature have therefore highlighted that South African youth NEET are a diverse group experiencing a multitude of deprivations such as poor and long-term

labour market prospects, low levels of education, and high levels of household poverty. These deprivations have shown to intersect as income levels of a household influence educational levels, which in turn affects employment prospects of youth, making NEET youth vulnerable in the labour market. The literature reviewed has also shown how access to livelihoods assets (i.e., human, social, natural, and financial capital) have a substantial degree of influence on the employability and livelihoods of rural people and youth NEET.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS, PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES

3.1. Introduction

Prior to undertaking research, it is important for the researcher to have a plan that will help guide the research process. Sileyew (2020: 27) refers to this plan as a research methodology through which researchers need to conduct their research and explains how the final research results will be obtained in accordance with the study's goal and objectives. The objectives of the study include a) understanding the challenges facing rural youth NEET in Bizana b) to understand how youth NEET in Bizana access capabilities, knowledge, skills, and jobs c) to understand how youth NEET access social networks and connections to acquire their livelihood opportunities d) to understand how Bizana youth centres contribute to the lives of youth NEET. This chapter outlines the research methods, procedures and techniques that were employed during the study to sample and collect data that achieve the above objectives of the research. This discussion begins with the research design and a suitable research tradition that informs the study. It is followed by the research strategy adopted which is an explorative case study. Next, the discussion focuses on how I have sampled, including the sampling techniques, followed by how the sample size was arrived at. I then discuss the data collection process and the chosen research method. Additionally, I discuss how data was analysed and the data analysis method guiding this process. Lastly, I outline the ethical considerations which guided this study.

3.2. Research design

A research design refers to the overall approach that a researcher chooses to integrate the different components of a study in a coherent and logical way, by analysing how they collect, measure, and analyse their data (Thakur, 2021: 1). This study adopted a qualitative research approach because it helps to obtain in-depth meaning and people's subjective experiences when it comes to the collection and analysis of data (Leavy, 2017: 124). This research approach allows one to build a sound understanding of a topic by unpacking the meanings that people ascribe to their lives, situations, and activities (Leavy, 2017: 124). Neuman (2006: 89) argues that the primary focus of qualitative research is emphasizing the social context for understanding the social world. In this way, qualitative researchers hold that the meaning of a social action depends on the context in which it appears; where individuals can make sense of their lives, experiences and the structures that surround them (Neuman, 2006: 89). The reason for using a qualitative approach for this study was to get a deeper understanding of the role that

the Bizana Love Life youth centre plays in enhancing livelihood opportunities for rural youth NEET in Bizana. The rationale of using this research approach was to gain in-depth understanding of participants' views and experiences of being NEET, whether the programmes of the identified centre have developed their human and social capital, and if so, how. This therefore allowed me as the researcher to assess the thoughts and feelings of the research participants, as well as to understand their lived experiences, from their perspective.

3.3. Research tradition

All research is dependent on some underlying philosophical assumptions about what constitutes 'valid' research and which research methods are appropriate for the development of new knowledge (Myers and Avison, 2002: 5). It is therefore necessary to understand these assumptions to conduct and evaluate research. A research tradition or research paradigm is a system of beliefs and assumptions about the way in which data about a particular phenomenon should be gathered, analysed, and used (Galliers, 1991; Kivunja and Kuyin, 2017). This study was philosophically guided by the interpretivist research paradigm, which belongs to the philosophical doctrine of idealism. One of the key tenets of this paradigm is that reality is socially constructed; therefore, understanding an individual and their interpretation of the world around them is emphasized (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Bogdan and Biklen, 1998).

Interpretivism aims at drawing on people's experiences, by developing a better understanding of their social lives, and how they construct meanings in their natural settings (Neuman, 2014: 104). To this end, I wanted to know what was meaningful and relevant to the research participants, their feelings, interpretations, and experiences of everyday life through their eyes (Ponterroto, 2005: 129). To understand the realities of the research participants, qualitative researchers need to understand the lived experiences of the participants by interacting with them and exchanging ideas, as it is through these interactions that meaning is created (Schwandt, 2000: 191). This is the case as interpretivists believe that most of our knowledge is gained through social constructions such as shared meanings, language, consciousness, documents, and other artefacts that have meaning in people's lives (Schwandt, 2000; Bryman and Bell, 2007).

In this study, I was interested in understanding the role that the Bizana Love Life youth centre plays to enhance livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana. Interpretivism was

therefore a suitable research paradigm for this study as it allowed me to get inside the world of the research participants to learn how they perceive and experience their reality of being NEET, by gathering all the relevant information that relates to their lived experiences (Blaikie and Priest, 2017: 100). Additionally, interpretivism helped me to understand and gain in-depth insights into the role that the Bizana Love Life youth centre plays in enhancing their livelihood opportunities, by allowing me to understand what the participants had to say about the skills, knowledge, social networks, and connections of trust they acquired from the youth centre, that helped them access employment.

3.4. Research Strategy

A strategy of inquiry informs how the researcher proceeds with their research by learning the various techniques that can be used in conducting research, such as tests, experiments, surveys and critical studies (Newman and Benz, 1998: 21). In explaining what a case study is, Creswell (2009: 13) defines it as “a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a programme, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals”. It provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena and real-life events within their natural setting using multiple sources of evidence, through detailed contextual analysis (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2003; 2013). An explorative case study was employed for this research due to its nature of providing an extensive and in-depth description of a social phenomenon by seeking to answer the ‘what’ or ‘how’ question where there is no single set of outcomes in the intervention being evaluated (Yin, 2003: 9). Yin (2013; 2014) posited that explorative case studies are used to explore presumed causal links that are too complex for a survey or experiment.

The case study was one youth centre in Bizana, namely Bizana Love Life youth centre, as it is the only youth centre that has youth programmes that aim to address the youth NEET problem. Other youth centres, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) and Non-government Organisations (NGOs) have youth programmes that either cater for youth in high school, tertiary institutions or those with tertiary qualifications currently seeking employment. Given the interpretive research paradigm adopted in this study, an explorative case study was considered the most appropriate due to its nature of seeking to answer a question that sought to link programme implementation with programme effects (Baxter and Jack, 2008: 547). This was true as it helped me to understand the role played by

the Bizana Love Life Youth Centre in enhancing livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana, which involved in-depth conversations with youth centre staff and youth who participated in the programmes of the centre.

3.5. Study Site, Participants, Sampling Methods, and Process

3.5.1 Study site

The research participants were drawn from youth at the Love Life Youth Centre, in the rural town of Bizana, Eastern Cape Province. The youth centre is a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) that acts as a multipurpose hub for youth aged 15-24 in Bizana (Assistant Coordinator, 30 September 2021). The research participants were youth who were engaged in the programmes of the centre. Bizana falls under the Winnie Madikizela-Mandela Local Municipality (WMMLM) which has a total population of 319 948 (StatsSA: CS. 2016: 92), 98% of whom are living in rural communities (WMMLM, 2021/2022: 9). Youth aged 15-34 are the second largest group with a population of 123 567 constituting 38.6% of the overall population (StatsSA: CS, 2016: 95).

3.5.2. Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting certain groups of people who either possess characteristics or live in circumstances that are relevant to the phenomenon being studied (Neuman, 2014: 248). Qualitative sampling involves sampling aspects or features of the social world that will provide rich data to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Neuman, 2014: 247). The benefits of qualitative sampling for my study were that it provided me with clarity, insights, and understanding of livelihood opportunities for rural youth NEET in Bizana. The sample for this study was fourteen participants; two staff members of the Bizana Love Life Youth Centre and twelve rural youth participants who have been part of the programmes of the youth centre. According to Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe and Young (2018: 2), the minimum number of participants used for a study is selected by virtue of its capacity to provide richly textured information that will be relevant for the phenomenon under investigation. Participants' contact details were obtained from the youth centre's database that the centre staff has access to, and I contacted them telephonically using calls, WhatsApp, and messages.

The fourteen study participants presented above were selected through employing purposive sampling and supplemented by snowball methods. The purposive sampling method places the

researcher’s research question at the centre of the sampling considerations by giving an indication of which units ought to be sampled (Bryman, 2012: 419). It does this by selecting a sample based on knowledge of a population and its elements, whereby a researcher chooses a sample with certain characteristics that suit the needs of the study (Babbie, 2020: 193). The snowball sampling method was also used to supplement the purposive sampling method. Snowball sampling involves collecting data on a few members of a population, and then asking those individuals to suggest other people who meet the same criteria (Babbie, 2020: 193). The study first purposively sampled the Bizana Love Life youth centre staff to gain insights into the programmes that they run, and who they cater for, as well as two youth NEET participants. Secondly, the remaining youth NEET participants were sampled using snowball sampling. Snowball sampling helped me in locating youth that are NEET and are part of the programmes run by the youth centre, which were recommended by the first two youth NEET participants that I interviewed.

3.5.3. Study participants

As introduced in chapter one, the table below shows the details of study participants: their pseudonym name, gender, age, occupation, and their highest level of qualification. The importance of having this table, and the different categories, particularly occupation and highest level of education, is to show whether the programmes of the youth centre help youth NEET to access jobs, despite their level of education.

Pseudonym name	Gender	Age	Occupation	Highest level of education
1. Mrs. Simon	F	Not disclosed	Youth centre Coordinator Assistant	Not disclosed
2. Miss Abrahams	F	Not disclosed	Youth centre staff member (Ground breaker)	Not disclosed
3. Lola	F	21	Works for an NPO	Grade 12 (University drop- out)
4. Sally	F	23	Sales lady at a furniture shop	Grade 12

5. Simon	M	24	Electrician	TVET qualification
6. Lizzy	F	21	Unemployed	(Didn't want to disclose)
7. Nicole	F	20	Nanny	Grade 9
8. Anna	F	21	Works for an internet café	Grade 12
9. Bianca	F	19	Works for an internet café	Grade 12
10. Tyra	F	18	Cashier at a spaza shop	Grade 11
11. Ziggy	F	24	Unemployed	Grade 10
12. Lucy	F	23	Clerk at a local clinic	Grade 12
13. Yandy	F	23	Unemployed	Grade 11
14. Tom	M	24	Unemployed	Grade 11

Table 2 Details of study participants

3.6. Data Collection Method and Process

Data was collected qualitatively through face-to-face and virtual semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured in-depth interview is a conversational and informal interaction that makes use of open-ended questions between the researcher and the research participants (Bryman, 2012: 471). This is done using spoken words, whereby the researcher has a list of questions that need to be answered (Longhurst, 2010:105). Semi-structured in-depth interviews provided me with insights of how my research participants view their reality of being NEET, as well as understanding how they access human and social capital from the programmes of the Love Life Youth Centre.

The in-depth interviews firstly involved the staff of the youth centre to find out about the programmes that the centre has and which programmes focus on youth NEET, challenges facing youth NEET in Bizana, and how the centre has contributed to the lives of rural youth NEET in Bizana. Secondly, the in-depths interviews involved rural youth NEET participants to find out whether they benefited from the programmes offered by the centre, and if so how, what strategies they used to maintain their livelihoods before becoming part of the programmes offered by the youth centre, and how their livelihood strategies have changed since they got

involved in the programmes of the youth centre. These interviews were useful in achieving my research objectives, as through the experiences of the youth centre staff and youth NEET, I was able to understand the role played by the youth centre in enhancing livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana.

The data collection occurred over a period of four weeks (September-October 2022). As the study took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, face-to-face interactions carried the risk of infection. I mitigated this risk by doing telephonic interviews, which were recorded, and using WhatsApp voice notes. Only two face-to-face interviews were able to take place, and Covid-19 regulations and restrictions were adhered to, such as the wearing of masks, sanitizing of hands, and maintaining social distance with the research participants. I conducted the semi-structured interviews within this period at a time that suited the participants. The duration of the interviews was 30-40 minutes per individual, however, this varied based on how much information a participant was giving out. The duration of the interview was suitable for this study as it allowed me to establish rapport with the research participants and allowed research participants to share their opinions by providing rich and expressive data without bias and manipulation from others. The interview questions for the research participants (youth NEET) were written in English. To ensure that there was no breakdown in communication, the interview process was conducted in isiXhosa and isiMpondo. IsiMpondo is the dominant dialect in Bizana. An audio recording device was used for face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews, and consent to record the interviews was requested in advance for transcription purposes.

3.7. Qualitative Data Analysis

Parahoo (2006: 375) defines data analysis as an “integrated part of the research design” which makes sense of data before presenting it in an understandable manner. This study followed a qualitative data analysis which is a non-numerical assessment and interpretation of data, for the intention of finding underlying meanings and patterns (Babbie, 2011: 391). Open coding and the thematic analysis methods were used to analyse the collected data. Open coding is a process of creating and assigning codes to categorise data extracts that relate to the research aim and objectives, while thematic analysis refers to identifying central patterns or themes that relate to the research aim and objectives (Bryman, 2012; 2013) According to Braun and Clarke (2006) and Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017), a six-phase framework should be utilized

for establishing a trustworthy thematic analysis. I first became familiar with the data. Secondly, I generated initial codes by organizing data in a meaningful and systematic way, as well as reducing data into smaller chunks of meaning. Thirdly, I searched for central themes. Fourth, I reviewed, modified, and developed themes. Fifth, I defined and named themes by identifying the essence of what each theme was about. Lastly, I produced the report of the themes by providing information on the data analysis method, themes identified, and presentation and interpretation of findings.

The advantage of using these qualitative data analysis methods was their flexibility in producing trustworthy and insightful findings of participants' views, opinions, and experiences. This was done through highlighting similarities and differences between them, and generating unanticipated insights emerging from the interview transcripts to provide a data set that was rich in detail. Using open coding and thematic analysis simultaneously was also useful as the process of labelling and grouping similar data together made the generation of themes and analysing the data more manageable.

3.8. Ethical considerations

One of the most important considerations to be made by a researcher before and while carrying out a study are ethical considerations. Kavanga and Makau (2016: 2) refer to research ethics as established rules and guidelines that are used in protecting the dignity of research participants. I applied for ethical clearance from the Rhodes University Ethics Standard Committee (RUESC). The application was then reviewed and approved by the RUESC (please see appendix E). In conducting the research, participants were provided with consent forms and an information letter so that they had a clear understanding of the research before the commencement of data collection (see appendix A and D). The consent forms and information letter were written in English and translated orally to the research participants into isiXhosa and isiMpondo. The consent forms were given to the participants prior to the interviews taking place, and some were sent to the participants virtually, through emails and WhatsApp for those with cell phones.

To protect participants' rights to privacy, anonymity and to preserve confidentiality, I informed the participants about their rights, that they can refuse to take part in the study, and that they can withdraw from the study at any time. Anonymity of the participants' responses to the

interview questions was ensured using pseudonyms to identify participants, as well as the use of password-encrypted files. Another way I preserved the participants' right to privacy and dignity was to ensure their confidentiality and thus avoid the stigma attached to being NEET. Their responses to the interview questions were treated with utmost confidentiality by not disclosing any information that may enable them to be traced and identified. I was also sensitive during the interview process to ensure that I did not embarrass the participants. After requesting their permission to use an audio-recording device during the interviews, I saved the interview recordings in a password-encrypted file on my laptop and uploaded them to my Google Drive as back-up.

Other ethical considerations that were considered in this study were that youth participants who benefited or those who did not benefit from the youth centre may fear being identified. To mitigate this risk, I made use of pseudonyms instead of participants' names. The youth centre staff was also assured at the beginning of the study that the study was not an evaluation of their own roles in the centre, rather, it serves to identify ways that the centre may improve to accommodate youth NEET in Bizana, and other groups involved in the programmes of the youth centre.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the way the study approaches, methodology and the philosophical tradition guided the research. The qualitative research approach was a useful method to help me collect data that would respond to my study aim and objectives, which were to a) understanding the challenges facing rural youth NEET in Bizana b) to understand how youth NEET in Bizana access capabilities, knowledge, skills, and jobs c) to understand how youth NEET access social networks and connections to acquire their livelihood opportunities d) and to understand how Bizana youth centres contribute to the lives of youth NEET. Through interacting with the research participants, I was able to understand their lived experiences of being NEET. Using an explorative case study was appropriate for my study as the Love Life youth centre was the only youth centre in Bizana that has youth programmes that cater for NEET youth. This therefore informed my research paradigm where interpretivism helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the role of the Love Life Youth Centre in enhancing livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana, through interpreting their lived experiences. Moreover, the chapter further outlined the sampling approach and how study

participants were sampled. Purposive sampling was useful as I was able to select the right people who would provide in-depth and detailed information about the programmes of the youth centre. Snowball sampling was useful as it helped me to identify potential subjects that were referred to me by the first interviewees, this therefore ensured valid and reliable findings as the youth centre staff did not pick the participants themselves.

This chapter concluded with the method employed in the collection and analysis of data, as well as how ethical considerations were taken into consideration in the study. Semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed for a more confidential space with the research participants and allowed me as the researcher to probe more deeply some of the insights and details emerging from the programmes offered by the youth centre. The combination of open coding and thematic analysis methods allowed me to group similar ideas into codes, from data that was emerging on how participants access human and social capital from the programmes of the youth centre to enhance their livelihood opportunities. The patterns in the data were important as I was able to identify themes that were addressing my research objectives. All these research methods were helpful in acquiring information that would respond to my study aim and objectives as I got a deeper insight on the role that the Bizana Love Life youth centre plays to enhance livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana. This was achieved through asking study participants about their feelings, opinions, and experiences. The following chapter presents the analysis of the research findings and data generated during the period of data collection, based on the analytical processes described above.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research design and methodology that was employed in this study. This chapter presents an analysis of the findings of the data collected from the Bizana Love Life youth centre staff and youth NEET who were part of the programmes of the youth centre. The research findings are presented in line with the main research goal and respond to the objectives. The study aimed to understand the role that youth centres play in enhancing livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana. The study objectives were to (a) understand the challenges facing rural youth NEET in Bizana; (b) understand how youth NEET in Bizana access capabilities, knowledge, skills, and jobs; (c) understand how youth NEET access social networks and connections to acquire their livelihood opportunities; (d) understand how Bizana youth centres contribute to the lives of youth NEET; and (e) find out what youth NEET in Bizana think should be done to meet their socio-economic needs. The literature reviewed and the chosen theoretical framework, Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, are used to interpret the study findings.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part (4.2 to 4.5) provides the background of the Bizana Love Life youth centre and the demographic profile of the research participants (youth NEET). The second part (4.6 to 4.9) will thematically discuss the study findings in line with the objectives of the study, the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework, SLA.

4.2. Case study area

The Bizana Love Life youth centre is a multipurpose hub that was established on August 2, 2002 (Assistant Coordinator, 30 September 2021). The youth centre is situated in the heart of the Bizana town. This study focused on the rural youth surrounding the town that are serviced by the youth centre. At its emergence, what was worrying in Bizana was the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy (Assistant Coordinator, 30 September 2021). The centre's primary focus was on educating the youth about sexual health and clinical care, all in one setting (Assistant Coordinator, 30 September 2021). However, as the years progressed, there was a need to focus on other aspects that were affecting the youth, such as gender-based violence, substance abuse and youth unemployment for youth aged 15 to 24 years (Assistant Coordinator, 30 September 2021).

4.3. Demographic profile of the participants

4.3.1. Age and Gender of participants

The age of the youth NEET participants was between 18 and 24 years. Moreover, out of 14 participants that were interviewed, 2 were staff members of the youth centre, and 12 were youth who have been part of the programmes of the youth centre in the past five years. The 2 staff members selected were the most relevant for the interview as they are directly involved in the youth NEET programmes; one was the youth centre assistant programme coordinator, and another was a ground breaker/youth leader who delivers and facilitates Love Life programmes to the youth. Ten of the participants (youth NEET) were females (83%), while 2 were males (17%). All participants were black South Africans who speak IsiXhosa and IsiMpondo. A table that summarises the demographic profile of the youth NEET respondents can be found in Chapter 3, table 2.

4.4. Type of school attended

According to Brewer (2013:14) secondary schools are an important avenue for young people to acquire skills that will boost their employment prospects. This however did not seem to be the case with the participants in my study. This was evidenced by one participant when he stated that:

“Both the secondary and high school that I went to did not contribute to any skills or training that helped me to get a job” (Simon, 24-year-old male).

Three out of 12 participants indicated they had attended a township school, while 9 participants attended rural schools. When asked about the type of school attended and whether it contributed to any skills that helped them to access jobs, they did not provide concrete responses. For example, this was how they responded:

“No, I can’t really say much, we only did sports” (Tom, 24-year-old male). Another participant added the following: *“We were not taught anything else that prepared us for the workplace” (Nicole, 20-year-old female).*

Two other participants highlighted how their schools only focused on the school curriculum when they responded:

“The school I went to only focused on teaching and learning” (Nicole, 20-year-old-female). Another one added that *“Besides what we were taught in Life Orientation and*

Business Studies, I can't really say the school contributed to any skills" (Tyra, 18-year-old female).

Based on these responses, the type of school attended by all 12 rural youth NEET participants did not seem to have any impact on the participants' NEET status in acquiring skills for employability. Only one participant outlined a form of a practical artisan skill when he stated that:

"The only practical skill that I learnt was from the TVET college that I attended, where I did electrical engineering" (Simon, 24-year-old male).

The above findings in the rural South African context relate to those of other studies that focused on secondary and high schools, which state that learners were not exposed to vocational skills (CDE, 2012: 3). Vocational skills training mainly forms part of Further Education and Training (FET) colleges only (CDE, 2012: 3). This is a worrying factor for my study as Brewer (2013) and Akyeampong (2014) argue that many African countries have embarked on measures to reform secondary education so that it contributes to the development of skills for employment in youth, as well as navigating the labour market. These include technical, vocational, and soft skills that enhance young people's chances of obtaining paid work or starting their own business after finishing school (Akyeampong, 2014: 219). Without these sets of skills introduced at an earlier age, the assumption is that with globalisation and the rapid changes in technological advancements that are difficult to predict, youth NEET are at a disadvantage as they might have difficulties in finding employment opportunities. Secondary education should therefore concentrate on providing young people with these sets of skills and competencies that will meet the evolving demands of the labour market (Akyeampong, 2014: 220; African Union, 2006: 10).

4.5. Level of education of participants

The lowest level of education amongst the youth NEET participants was grade 9, and the highest was a TVET qualification. One person had completed grade 9, another one had completed grade 10, three had completed grade 11, five had completed grade 12, one had a TVET qualification in electrical engineering and one asked not to disclose their highest level of education. Low levels of educational attainment can be linked to a lack of human capital amongst this group, as higher levels of education can lead to the creation of skills which improve productivity and increase the chances of obtaining employment.

Several studies have shown that lower levels of education especially in secondary and high school are one of the major contributions to the NEET problem in South Africa, which later affects their employability (De Lannoy and Mudiriza, 2019; Holte *et al.* 2019; Kavese and Mbali, 2021; Tele, 2016). These findings therefore suggest that there may be some major barriers that drive young people to drop out of school and not continue with their education. There were several reasons for leaving school that were cited by the research participants, which will be discussed in the section to follow.

4.6. Challenges facing rural youth NEET in Bizana

To determine the NEET status, the study participants were asked why they did not further their education. By the time the interviews were conducted between September and October 2021, 4 of the rural youth NEET participants were unemployed but seeking employment; and 8 were employed, having been employed in the past 6 months. Participants' responses for being out of school or employment ranged from family responsibilities which included extended family responsibilities and parenting, financial reasons, household chores, and poor school performance, as well as lack of work experience, which will all be discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.6.1. Extended family responsibilities

Looking after family members was one of the most frequently cited reasons by 3 of the 4 female participants who were out of school due to caring responsibilities. All 3 participants had passed grade 12 with a higher certificate and could not continue with their tertiary education. When they were asked why they did not further their education, this is what they had to say:

“After I had passed my matric, I decided not to further my tertiary studies because there would be no one to take care of my grandmother and younger siblings at home. So, going far away to university was not an option for me. I knew I had to look for a job within my hometown so that in the afternoon I would come back home and take care of my family, as the eldest daughter” (Bianca, 19-year-old female).

Two other participants added the following:

“I did not further my studies because I had to stay at home and look after my mother who is suffering from a long-term illness, I am the only person left that she has” (Lucy, 23-year-old female). This is what the second participant had to say: *“I did not further my studies because after grade 12 I got married, and I was kind of forced by my*

husband's family to stay at home and take care of my family. We have 2 children together now, we had 1 back then” (Sally, 23-year-old female).

From these responses my study therefore shows that in the Bizana context, looking after and taking care of family members and relatives is one of the key family responsibilities because you are raised and later in life you are expected to take care of your family, especially as a girl child. In line with the SLA, taking care of and looking after family can be seen as a form of social capital, as it is these interactions and levels of trust that are said to provide strong family ties (Young, 2014: 39). And as long as social ties are strengthened as a form of social capital, human capital opportunities such as completing school or looking for work are sacrificed.

What can also be concluded about the above scenarios is that they speak to how family is a powerful agent of a young person’s socialisation, and how it constitutes the most influential agent amongst the different social factors that may influence their growth and development (Baldwin, 2000; Chenge, and Maunganidze, 2017). These will therefore have a strong impact on one’s ability to continue with school or to seek employment. This was evident from the participants' responses whereby the family’s environment, family structure as well as the family’s values and beliefs forced them to not further their education. In *Bianca & Lucy’s* case, the fact that one is the eldest daughter, and one is the only child forced them to look for jobs rather than continuing with their education, so that they could look after their families. On the other hand, *Sally’s* husband’s family values and beliefs forced her to be a stay-at-home mother when she got married, who would look after her kids and her new family. These therefore show that a family’s environment, family structure, and economic status, as well as their values and beliefs are some of the things that may influence the different milestones of a young person’s educational development (Rumberger, 2011; Farrington, et al. 2012; Bloom and Unterman, 2014).

4.6.2. Parenthood

Parenthood is widely identified as a contributing factor to young women's economic inactivity and dropping out of school (Fernandes and Gabe, 2009; Mndende, 2021). This is because the presence of a child especially for young women often makes the connections to school or work very difficult (Fernandes and Gabe, 2009: 35). This was the case with one of the four young girls in my study who dropped out of school due to parenting responsibilities. Lizzy shares how parenting affected her:

“When I was 16 and doing my grade 9, I had to drop out because I fell pregnant, and my mother had told me that I needed to take care of my child. When I was 19, I took my child to his father’s home, and I decided to go back to school. Later, that year I fell pregnant again, and had to drop out again and try to look for a job to help in supporting and raising my children” (Lizzy, 21-year unemployed female).

According to Spaul (2015: 37), for the majority of black South Africans especially those living in rural areas, teenage pregnancy is a particular risk factor that causes young women to not continue with their education and drop out. As noted by McQuaid and Lindsey (2005), having people to look after is a personal circumstance that has led to people feeling pressured to gain employment. Transfer-based entitlements of livelihood mentioned in 2.2, which can be in a form of child support grant, play an important role in ensuring that youth NEET that are parents are able to provide necessities for their children, however, it can also appear to be inadequate and may need to be supplemented by other sources of income. In *Lizzy’s* case, even though the plan was to drop out and look for a job to support her children, this has not succeeded, as she was still unemployed by the time these interviews were conducted. Her staying NEET for this extended period may be because she does not possess the required skills or educational attainment needed to gain employment. When she was asked about her highest level of education or qualification, she asked not to disclose it. According to the SLA, human capital is important in the fulfilment of productive and reproductive tasks to achieve one’s livelihood objectives; therefore, in *Lizzy’s* case, a lack of this human capital in the form of skills and education can be regarded as a contributing factor to her being unemployed and can affect her ability to secure a livelihood.

The findings from the participant *Lizzy*, about pregnancy and dropping out of school to look after her child are like those of the study conducted by Tele (2016), on the perceptions of rural youth NEET and the factors that influence their employability. The findings in Tele’s study revealed that pregnancy was one of the reasons that led to young girls leaving school due to economic constraints. These findings are also in line with what Strassberg *et al.* (2010) found in their study, where social pressures such as teenage pregnancy and financial pressures were one of the causes of dropping out of school among teenage girls. These therefore show how pregnancy and finances have a huge impact on an individual, on whether they continue with their education, or they drop out to find work to support their child. Although efforts have been made to encourage youth to stay in school, it is also crucial to take other social constraints that

may have an influence on whether one continues to study after giving birth, into account, such as money for stationery, school uniform, transport fare (if they stay far away from school), stigmatisation from peers, and who will look after the child when they return to school. The livelihood outcomes of youth NEET who find themselves having parental responsibilities and studying can be advanced through employing livelihood diversification, whereby they must construct a diverse portfolio of activities to enhance their standard of living and their children's.

4.6.3. Financial reasons

A family's socio-economic status can also be considered as one of the most important causes of early school-leaving among youth (Tsolou and Babalis, 2020: 1377). According to statistical and empirical research, children from better-off homes are more likely to finish school whereas those from poorer homes are more likely to drop out (Colclough et al, 2000; Hunt, 2008; Rumberger, 2011). One of the study participants shared her experience as follows:

"I live in a very remote rural area where schools are very far from us. One needs to have transport to get to school. Money for transport then became a problem when one of my parents passed away. My mother could not keep up with buying school uniforms, my lunch box things, and things that were needed at school. I was then forced to drop out so that the money for transport would go to other necessities in the house" (Anna, 21-year-old female).

Anna's quote shows that her family's financial standing affected her family's ability to pay for costs that are associated with their children going to school. Research from the authors cited below has shown that families with a high parental income make it convenient to support and provide more resources for their children's education, whereas families with a low economic status have limited means to provide these resources (Cardoso and Verner, 2006; Ratcliffe and McKernan, 2010; Rumberger, 2011; Chenge *et al.*, 2017). From these findings, it is evident that financial capital plays a pivotal role in the pursuit of certain livelihood outcomes. According to the SLA, having access to financial capital in the form of money allows households to afford certain necessities such as education, as can be seen in the case of Anna. Therefore, without this type of financial capital, children can be at a disadvantage as they will be forced to drop out of school, which further limits their chances of being employed in the formal sector (Neves, 2017; Mago, 2018).

Additionally, this is what another participant had to say about her story:

“I had to drop out after my first year in varsity because at home they were struggling to pay my tuition, rent, food, textbooks, and pocket money. I was not on financial aid therefore all this money had to come out of my family. I still had younger siblings back then who were in primary and high school, and I felt bad when most of the money had to be spent on me. My parents then advised that I drop out, while they raise money for me to go back, and I also look for a job in the meantime” (Lola, 21-year-old female).

In Lola’s case we can see that as children grow older, the cost of education is even higher. This therefore increases the pressure to drop out of school and look for employment as opposed to spending time in education, as children want to ease the financial burdens experienced at home. This is in line with Cardoso and Verner’s findings (2006) that a family’s low socio-economic status decreases the probability that a child will stay in school and increases their probability that they will look for a job, as seen in *Lola’s* case. Additionally, both participants who cited financial reasons for dropping out of school stated that there was not enough money for them at home to continue with going to school. Even though both participants dropped out after the introduction of non-fee-paying schools as well as the National Students Financial Aid System (NSFAS) in South Africa, there were other financial needs that had to be taken care of such as school uniform, food, stationery, transport money and other necessities. These narratives therefore show how the participants' family’s financial constraints forced them to drop out of school as they could not afford certain necessities that were needed for school. The SLA posits that the financial resources available to individuals such as savings, credit, remittances, and pension can provide individuals with different livelihood strategies (DFID, 1999: 25). Lack of this financial capital in *Lola’s* case where her family was unable to continue paying for her tertiary fees and living expenses, is regarded as a contributing factor to her not continuing her education or training.

4.6.4. Household Chores

Excessive household chores are one of the main reasons for young people, especially females, to drop out of school (Hunt, 2008: 11). Two of the study participants, *Ziggy*, and *Nicole*, pointed out that they dropped out of school due to household chores that took a lot of their time, as they would get to school very tired and could not concentrate. This is what they had to say:

“At home I would do all the household chores which included cooking, cleaning, fetching water and taking care of my younger siblings, while my brothers went to school without having to do anything first. I then ended up losing interest at school as I would

get there very tired. At home, I am literally the nanny/aunty of the house, as I am the only person who does all the housework, my mother works in another town, and comes home once or twice in 2 months” (Ziggy, 24-year-old unemployed female).

The most common household chores appear to be domestic, and household related (for girls) and agricultural work (for boys) taking up substantial amounts of their time (Hunt, 2008: 18). However, in my study, it was different as stated below:

“The household chores were too much. I would have to wake up every day at 5am to start by fetching water from our nearby river if I had not fetched the previous day; make a fire to boil water and cook porridge at the same time. I just did not get enough time with my books, and I knew that I would fail as I was failing even way back in primary school because of the excessive work I would do every morning before going to school, and after school” (Nicole, 20-year-old female).

Nicole’s case shows household chores that mostly affect girls, which have also been noted in other studies such as Morara and Chemwei (2013); Gondwe (2016); and StatsSA (2019). Even though the Department of Labour in South Africa has issued a report on household chores for children where it recognises acceptable chores such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for siblings, it does however stipulate those children between the ages of 7 and 11 are allowed to work three hours a day with supervision, whereas those between the ages of 11 and 15 are permitted to work a maximum of seven hours a day without supervision (Labuschagne, 2014). Even though this is the case, rural parents typically consider engaging girls in these chores as they believe that they are training them for future roles. This is supported by a study which was done by Colclough *et al.* (2000) which showed how some rural parents in Ethiopia saw 12 years of schooling in girls as a waste, as they would not be able to do household work, therefore limiting their chances of finding husbands.

Both the above scenarios of *Ziggy* and *Nicole* are in line with other studies (Ersado, 2005; Emmanuel, 2015; Yassin, 2020) which evidenced girls having a lot of activities to do at home, thus having little or no time to study - and ending up dropping out. From the above findings of my study, it is also safe to suggest that girls spend more time doing household chores, which take up a lot of their time and energy, compared to boys, as seen in *Lizzy’s* case. Additionally, these chores often lead to them having little or no time and energy to spend with their books.

4.6.5. Poor academic performance

Three of the participants in my study cited having had to drop out of school because of poor academic performance which led to grade repetition. All 3 participants shared the same sentiments that they were performing badly in most of their subjects at school and had been repeating grades at least twice in each grade since grade eight, and they all dropped out in grade eleven. They also outlined that their poor academic performance and having to repeat classes made them feel incapable. A poor and low academic performance has been regarded as one of the most consistent predictors that cause students to drop out either through grades, test scores or subject failure (Wagner *et al.*, 1993; Alexander *et al.*, 2001; Rumberger, 2001; Hunter and May, 2003; 2011; Juke, 2006; Bacolod and Ranjan, 2008; Gondwe, 2016). Three of my study participants experienced poor performance which led them to dropping out of school. This is what they had to say:

I really liked school a lot, but the fact that I kept failing almost all my class tests and exams really demotivated me. I would really try my best, but at the end of the year I would fail. The first fail I would take as a learning curve that I really needed to pull up my socks, but when I would fail again for the second time, thoughts would come into my mind that maybe this is not for me. That is when I decided to drop out of grade 11 after failing it three times, I just couldn't" (Tom, 24-year-old unemployed male).

Closely related to poor academic performance is being retained and having to repeat a grade, which increases the chances of a student dropping out (Alexander *et al.*, 2001; 2008; Hunt, 2008; Ampiah *et al.*, 2010; Sabates *et al.*, 2010). In the words of two of the participants, Ziggy and Yandi:

"My performance in school was not good at all and I have been repeating classes since grade eight more than once. I sometimes think of going back again and re-doing my grade eleven, but I just think of all the times students would make fun of me because of repeating classes, and besides I am old now. That will give them more reasons to laugh at me" (Ziggy, 24-year-old unemployed female). Additionally, Yandi said the following: "I felt stupid in class especially during Maths, Science and English periods and I was repeating classes several times because of these subjects, and this made me lose interest in school, so I decided to drop out" (Yandi, 23-year-old unemployed female).

When all three participants were asked follow-up questions regarding whether they would go back to school and finish where they left off, they showed themselves to be aware that completing their education and getting at least a NSC would put them at a higher advantage when it came to looking for jobs, as they have been NEET for a long time. However, they had doubts and reservations concerning the circumstances in which they would return to school, since they would be required to wear school uniform, which they felt they were too old for. According to the participant Ziggy:

“Education is very important when you want to seek employment, however I do not see myself going to high school, wearing school uniform and being amongst peers who are way younger than me”. Additionally, Tom said: “School is the way to go, I always preach this to my younger siblings as it opens many doors for you. Sitting at home like me and doing nothing is not nice at all. I do think of going back, but the thought of sitting behind the desk just terrifies me”.

When all three participants were asked about enrolling at a Technical and Vocational Training College (TVET) to learn a practical skill, they had little to say. One participant outlined that there was only one TVET college in Bizana and it had very limited course choices that he was not interested in. The second participant stated that out of the people she knows who went to the TVET college, she has not seen even a handful of people who have graduated and have found employment, and therefore doubts the credibility of the college and its courses. It was quite startling to me that none of these participants mentioned anything about enrolling at a TVET college to further their studies until I asked them, since they deemed education as being important for gaining employment. This therefore limits their human capital as education plays an important role in the accumulation of knowledge and skills, which are necessary conditions for preparing an individual for life and work. The findings of my study are in line with a study by Arko (2013) and Branson *et al.*, (2014) which revealed that the reasons why young people drop out of school is because they are not coping with the academic content and not qualifying to meet the minimum requirements to proceed to the next grade.

Overall, the findings on 4.6.5 are also indicative of the realities of the difficulties faced by youth NEET, as they have long-standing consequences, such as struggling to gain access into the labour market, as all of them were still unemployed by the time these interviews were conducted. This can be attributed to inadequate literacy levels as shown in 2.9, which puts them at a disadvantage when looking for jobs. Therefore, to sustain their livelihoods, they still see

the value of developing their human capital through furthering their education. Moreover, people are still of the view that getting a university qualification is the only option to further human and economic development as evidenced in the study by Mtengwana (2019: 58).

4.6.6. Lack of work experience

Having work experience can be seen as being useful and beneficial as it increases one's chances of gaining employment (Tele, 2016; Zilite, 2020). Kraak (2013: 84) argues that South Africa still faces the burden of having youth remaining unemployed despite having post-school qualifications. This was the case with my study where one participant had a TVET qualification and was struggling to find employment. This participant was from the same TVET college mentioned by participants above in 4.6.5. The participant claimed that his lack of work experience was a contributing factor to him being unemployed, even though he completed his studies by stating the following:

“I have a college qualification in electrical engineering, however, all the places I have been applying to require me to have some sort of work experience, which I do not have. When I was in my last year of college, it was also difficult to secure a placement where I would do my six months in-service training, there were strings I had to pull as my college was not assisting us in any way. At the moment I am self-employed as I have been struggling to get a company to hire me. As a well-known electrician in my area, I usually get a few house calls occasionally to go check or fix some electrical faults in people’s homes. At times I would even get to do some tubing and wiring for people who had just built houses. I am hoping this will at least count as relevant work experience as I continue applying for jobs” (Simon, 24-year self-employed electrician).

What is emerging from the above findings is that levels of unemployment amongst graduates of post-secondary school institutions exacerbate a further tranche of entrants into the NEET category. Even though *Simon* has passed his National Senior Certificate (NSC), unlike the other participants in the study, and has furthered his studies, he has been struggling to get a job like everyone else in this study and has not been in employment for a long time, except for the precarious work he has been doing for himself. This is in line with the SLA where work experience can be seen as a form of human capital that will provide positive labour market outcomes (Weiss, Klein, and Grauenhorst, 2014: 3). Assessing the first job amongst youth NEET seems to be a societal problem, and what my study findings show is that the combination

of human capital in the form of skills, knowledge, and capabilities, as well as social capital in the form of social networks of trust, can help youth NEET to find employment.

These findings from *Simon's* case are also in line with the research done by Gewer (2010) on TVET college graduates and securing their first job. The findings revealed that over half of the participants said they had no access to any work experience, as the college would only be delivering theory and not necessarily managing the workplace component of the course (Gewer, 2010: 52-53). In cases where the participants were able to access work experience, it was because of training programmes, learnerships and apprenticeships, where practical training was initiated outside the colleges (Gewer, 2010: 53).

What can be seen from these challenges facing rural youth NEET in Bizana is that a student's decision to drop out of school and not continue with their education should not be understood as a single event, as there are many factors that have a significant impact on a student's decision. These include extended family responsibilities and looking after family, parenting, financial reasons, excessive amounts of household chores, and poor academic performance as well as lack of work experience. Authors such as Rumberger (2004); De Witte *et al.* (2013); Tsolou and Babalis (2020) argue that there are two groups of contributing factors that influence them to drop out of school. The first group is associated with the individual's family which are referred to as family or social factors such as a family's socio-economic status. The second group is factors that are associated with the individual such as poor academic performance which leads to grade repetition (De Witte *et al.* 2013; Tsolou and Babalis, 2020).

Secondly, among the NEET participants in my study, women were more likely to be NEET as they had to stay at home and look after family. According to conventional knowledge, which is supported by statistical evidence, women frequently have caring responsibilities such as looking after the ill and elderly, as well as household chores such as childcare, cooking, cleaning, fetching water and gathering wood (ILO, 2019; Maguire, 2017: 3). Therefore, having multiple livelihood strategies or diversifying their livelihood strategies can put them in a better situation by contributing towards the sustainability of the household. Having people to take care of and look after was one of the main reasons for being out of school that was indicated by the participants in my study. Four out of 12 participants indicated that being out of education was due to family responsibilities, which included looking after younger siblings, extended family, caring for the ill and motherhood, that forced them to quit school and look for jobs so

that they can provide for their families. After being out of school, most of these young women, especially those who do not have any job-related skills, often find it difficult to enter into the job market, and therefore end up remaining NEET for a long time or taking up informal or precarious jobs (Bardak, Maseda, and Rosso, 2015: 17). This was the case with all 4 of the participants in this category, where one young woman was still unemployed by the time these interviews were conducted, and three had recently been employed in the past 6 months. Additionally, as much as these responsibilities strengthen social ties and trust within the family, they also disadvantage women from developing their education and professional skills.

My study also found significant differences in gender when participants were determining their NEET status. For females, development of their social capital puts them at risk of developing their human capital, where falling pregnant and having caring responsibilities such as extended family support and household chores, increased their risk of being NEET. The male participants were affected by financial and human capital challenges such as paying for costs that are associated with education, poor school performance which led to grade repetition and lack of work experience that increased their risk. This difference in the NEET status of females and males can be explained by typical gender roles that steer females towards taking care of the household, children, and other relatives.

4.7. The role played by human capital for youth NEET in Bizana

As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, SLA was used to inform the interpretations of my findings. The following sections, 4.7 to 4.9, will therefore present findings that will be in line with human and social capital, which are aspects of my theoretical framework. Human capital is defined by the OECD as the knowledge, skills, abilities, and traits that people possess and combine to produce personal, social, and economic well-being at a societal level (OECD, 2013; 2020). There is a consensus amongst scholars that the process of accumulating and investing in human capital is key to enabling youth NEET to reach their full potential and to sustaining long-term economic growth (Acemoglu, 2009; Acemoglu and Autor, 2012; Mtengwana, 2019; Gumbi, 2020; Murthi, 2021). In my study, this was evidenced by *Lucy's* response who stated the following:

“I can say that I have learnt basic computer skills from the Cyber Y's programme”. I am now able to navigate my way using a computer, especially those skills that are software related such as word processing and spreadsheets. I am now an administrative

clerk at a clinic because of the certificate that I got from this programme” (Lucy, 23-year-old female).

An important element of human capital from my study findings was the knowledge, skills, and abilities that youth NEET accumulated from the Love Life youth centre towards their personal well-being and improving their work opportunities. When all youth NEET participants were asked about the kinds of human capital they acquired from the youth centre, it was mainly in the form of valuable skills and knowledge they got from the computer literacy programme (Cyber Y’s programme) and the health lifestyle programme (Health4Life programme). According to the SLA, human capital represents the skills development, knowledge, and ability to labour in good health which is crucial for the achievement of different livelihood strategies (Cortes, 2008: 17). According to one of the participants, Tyra:

“I got more knowledge on how to use a computer and the internet to search for jobs and apply for jobs online, and that was how I got my first job as a cashier at a spaza shop through an advert I saw on Facebook” (Tyra, 18-year-old female). Moreover, Nicole stated the following: *“The ground breakers (youth centre staff) also taught us life skills such as child and youth care, HIV/AIDS counselling and testing where on some occasions we would facilitate these sessions amongst us and teach other communities” (Nicole, 20-year-old female).*

Lastly, Anna shares a story of how she benefited from the programmes as follows:

“I acquired more knowledge from the Health4Life programme on HIV/AIDS, TB, sexual reproductive health and rights, menstrual health and hygiene, teenage pregnancy, mental health and drug and substance abuse” (Anna, 21-year-old female).

Firstly, the above scenarios show a positive association between computer literacy and the probability of employment in the lives of these youth NEET participants. Many jobs nowadays require computer skills such as word processing skills, which therefore makes it difficult for those who do not have such skills to enter the labour market. Secondly, the role of the informal sector such as SMMEs can accommodate those that are less educated as seen in Tyra’s case, where she works for a spaza shop. Lastly, the participants also identified a range of life skills and knowledge such as child and youth care, HIV/AIDS counselling and testing, and facilitation and teaching skills that they felt were useful especially if they wanted to do the kind of work that the ground breakers do. One participant highlighted:

“If I could work for a youth centre or an NGO, I could use these skills and knowledge to help other young people who find themselves in this situation as me, whereby they are unemployed and not in school” (Nicole).

These findings resonate well with the SLA as new knowledge, wider skills set, and good health are components of human capital that are required for people to be productive and attain their livelihood objectives, as seen in *Lucy, Anna, and Nicole’s* responses. An example of this is that education and skills sets are often associated with the rewards of high income (DFID, 1999). Good health on the other hand is associated with people who can make better health decisions in their lives and who will offer productive services in their workplaces (DFID, 1999). Therefore, without strengthening and empowering human capital through these factors, one’s chances of employment are significantly reduced. A study conducted by Dlamini (2014) in eThekweni Municipality revealed that human capital in the form of skills development was a panacea to youth unemployment in the post-apartheid South Africa. The study found out that youth unemployment in eThekweni Municipality was because of skills shortages, and there should therefore be programmes that are aimed at aligning youth skills to workplace opportunities.

4.8. The role played by social capital for youth NEET in Bizana

For my study, aspects of social capital such as social ties and trust were not lacking, as these were acquired through family responsibilities and household chores, however these responsibilities do not help in finding jobs. There is strong evidence from both international and South African literature that shows the relationship between lack of social capital such as social networks in finding the right information about jobs and being NEET (Stone, Gray and Hughes, 2003; McQuaid and Lindsey, 2005; Gewer, 2010; Lolwana, 2010; Nudzor 2010; Migheli, 2011; Kraak, 2013; Miller, *et al.*, 2015; Tele, 2016; Spielhofer and Hahne, 2017; The Tavistock Institute, 2020). All this literature shows that social capital has become a prominent concept where it has been used to improve the conditions of young people who are NEET. In my study, this was evidenced by *Lola and Tom’s* response where they stated the following:

“The youth centre does community outreach projects and those interested are welcome to join. Through these, I would say that they have allowed me to create relationships of positive engagement with other members of the community. Currently, there is an NPO that I work for, that I got introduced to through the outreach programmes we would do” (Lola, 21-year-old female). Tom added that: “For job opportunities I often hear

about them from the peers I have met at the youth centre, there is a WhatsApp group that we have created, and people share job opportunities there, and I would go to that place to drop my CV. I am still unemployed now, but I am hopeful that something will come through” (Tom, 24-year-old male).

When the participants were asked how they access social networks and connections to find jobs, they stated that their involvement in the youth centre and its programmes played a huge role as they got opportunities to connect with people they would not typically interact with. In the context of my study, social capital refers to the social resources upon which youth NEET in Bizana draw in seeking their livelihood outcomes. These included networks that foster trust, reciprocity, and the spirit of unity, which in turn expanded their access to wider networks to find jobs. According to one of the participants:

“The people that I met through the mentoring and group-based coaching provided me with a more supportive network as I was able to widen my search for jobs and we would get linked with potential employers” (Sally, 23-year-old female).

Moreover, Lucy & Tyra said the following:

“The mentoring programme helped me with writing my CV and motivational letter as well as preparing for my interview which landed me my first job as a clerk at a clinic” (Lucy, 23-year-old female).

Tyra highlighted the following:

“The youth centre works hand in hand with the local municipality and a few businesses and organisations in town, through that I would say I also benefited because that was how I got my first job” (Tyra, 18-year-old female).

Neves (2017: 24) argues that these acts of reciprocity and mutuality amongst impoverished and vulnerable rural households are embedded in dense cultural practices of mutual aid and sharing. According to the SLA, these findings posit that social capital is based on the notion of cooperation and connections between people with the aim of achieving a certain goal. For my study, the above narratives indicate that social capital in the form of mentoring, group-based coaching, community outreach programmes and the peers of the Love Life youth centre are playing a huge role in helping youth NEET to develop their social capital and in raising their chances of employment. These findings align with Coburn’s (2011) study, that youth work

serves as a form of social capital building, where social and cultural ties are formed, and where young people get the opportunity to engage in proactive community participation. The youth centre also has other programmes that help to re-engage disconnected youth from school and the labour market, such as their sporting and media/acting programme; however, none of the participants mentioned those as having made a difference in broadening their social capital. The only factors that enabled them to develop their social capital are like Coburn's (2011) study, where there are other people who are investing in them and helping them to create connections that foster trust, cohesion, and reciprocity such as the mentors, coaches and youth leaders who facilitate the programmes. This is therefore an important aspect for my study as these types of engagement to acquire social capital help build relationships and widen networks of youth NEET (McQuaid and Lindsey, 2005; UNDP, 2014; Tele, 2016).

4.9. How the Bizana Love Life youth centre contributes to the lives of youth NEET

Another set of interviews was done with the youth centre staff whereby they were asked what kinds of programmes are offered by the youth centre to contribute to the lives of youth NEET and enhance their livelihood opportunities. One Assistant Coordinator at the youth centre and one ground breaker provided me with insights on the programmes they offer, which provide a positive lifestyle, skills development, and healthy living for youth NEET in Bizana. The findings below respond to the fourth objective of my study.

4.9.1. Computer literacy (Cyber Y's programme)

The Cyber Y's programme is a free computer literacy programme that offers computer related skills for in- and out-of-school youth. This is an eight-week programme at the completion of which the programme participants are given a certificate of participation. Through this programme, youth learn basic computer skills that will increase their chances of finding jobs. Both the youth centre staff claimed that they are the biggest feeders of people who end up working at internet cafes around Bizana. It is therefore in this context that basic computer literacy is seen as one of the most important basic skills required for a person to grow and work in an advanced economy. This is what youth NEET participants had to say about this programme:

“Before coming to this programme, I knew nothing about using a computer, now I can confidently say that I have a basic understanding of using one” (Sally). Additionally,

Bianca said: “The certificate that I got from the Cyber Y’s programme helped me to get a job at an internet café”.

Based on the above, SLA youth NEET who lack human capital such as basic computer skills, can find it difficult to actively participate in economic activities due to lack of understanding and knowledge of digital literacy skills. A study conducted by Matli and Ngoepe (2019) looked at digital literacy skills for capacity development of youth who are NEET in South Africa, where most of the interviewed NEET participants experienced problems when looking for work on digital platforms as they were not skilled in digital literacy due to lack of knowledge on how to use these platforms. According to the study’s findings, digital literacy programmes was one of the interventions that unemployed youth need to boost their chances of finding employment or starting their own businesses (Matli and Ngoepe, 2019: 2-7). Therefore, having highlighted the crucial role that digital literacy skills play in increasing youth NEET’s literacy competencies and abilities, my study findings show that it is necessary for governments to collaborate with NGOs and other stakeholders to create platforms that will develop the capacity of youth NEET.

4.9.2 Health lifestyle programme (Health4Life programme)

The Bizana youth centre offers a Health4Life programme which provides youth between the ages of 10 and 24 both in school and out of school with appropriate evidenced-based health interventions to achieve optimum health. These interventions concentrate on the major global and national health concerns that influence the wellbeing of South African youth, such as teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS & TB, sexual reproductive health and rights, drug and substance abuse, mental health, nutrition, and hygiene. Through events, Love Life’s devoted team of staff, referred to as ground breakers, and the Mpintshi programme (see 4.9.4 below), these programmes are facilitated in a fun and engaging way by interacting with the youth as a way of bringing these services and information to them. The Assistant Coordinator also highlighted that these are life changing programmes that are geared towards developing their sense of identity, self-worth, and purpose so that they can grow as young leaders in their own worth to realise their full potential. Only one of the study participants was also a participant in this programme, and this is what she had to say:

“I benefited from this programme as it helped me to make better health, lifestyle and sexual choices” (Anna).

Anna's response is therefore in line with the SLA as it argues that health care as human capital has a direct impact on the economic performance of individuals. Bloom and Canning (2003: 304-305) argue that good health is not only important for an individual's welfare and standard of living, but also has a direct impact on the future productive power of individuals and the economy. Being unhealthy is associated with lower productivity at work, lower income, and fewer chances of finding employment (Bleakley, 2010: 284).

4.9.3. Mentoring and group-based coaching

The mentoring and group-based coaching programme is there to guide youth in and out of school in their goals and aspirations, while maximising their own abilities. One advantage of this programme for youth at school is that the programme aims to decrease school drop-out rates, and aims to improve interpersonal skills, and enhance self-esteem and self-confidence for youth both in and out of school. A study conducted by De Lannoy (2019) highlighted essential social services for youth who are NEET that can help in reintegrating them into either education, training or the labour market through one-on-one counselling, and mentorship programmes which will help them in their career plans. In my study, this is what participants had to say about Love Life's mentoring and group-based coaching programme:

"I was part of this programme since I was in grade 9 and it helped me to stay in school I can say. The mentorship and coaching really helped me to stay in school and focused" (Tom).

Moreover, *Yandi* added the following:

"I have gained a bigger circle of friends and people that I trust from this programme whom I can share my struggles with without receiving any judgement" (Yandi).

Another advantage of this programme is that the mentors offer career related guidance, and for those young people who are out of school and not in employment, the mentors assist with job searching. This is how one of the participants who took part in this programme viewed it:

"I benefited from this programme as I was getting a lot of assistance with regards to searching and applying for jobs. The mentors were helpful and patient with us" (Sally).

4.9.4. The Mpintshi programme/ Youth Leadership Development Programme

The term “Mpintshi” refers to young leaders who serve as in- or out-of-school programme implementers. In-school Mpintshi’s are between the ages of 12 and 17, while out-of-school Mpintshi’s are between 17 and 24 years old. This programme is rooted in the premise that all young people are already leaders in their own worth, and therefore seeks to develop their leadership, agency, self-awareness, activism, skills, strengths, competencies, goals, and networks that will help them to tackle any challenges and obstacles they may face. Youth in school and out-of-school who are part of this programme benefit from it in the sense that they are empowered with knowledge and leadership skills to realise their untapped potential of becoming social innovators, leaders, and thinkers in their communities. Only one interviewed participant was part of this programme, and this was how she viewed it:

“The Mpintshi programme was life changing for me honestly. When I dropped out of varsity, I became part of this programme, and I can say that it has really helped me to grow as a person whereby I developed strong leadership skills which had a great impact in my community. I recently started working for an NPO in my community that works with young people” (Lola).

4.9.5. Active lifestyles programme

The Active Lifestyles programme is a sporting, recreation, arts, and culture programme that has been created to make it easier for young people to access sport and recreation for the promotion of health and physical activity, to lessen their vulnerability to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in the future. Through sport and recreation, the programme offers a chance to constructively engage young people in and out of school in programmes that help them to be engaged in positive activities. These include various kinds of sports like soccer, netball, volleyball, and basketball as well as recreational activities such as acting and traditional dancing classes. Secondly, being engaged in these activities provide youth and youth NEET with opportunities to develop skills in communication and team building. These skills therefore enable them to function effectively as leaders, as there are benefits to playing and coaching sport, such as recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses, learning to treat opponents with respect, and being able to make quick decisions necessary to succeed in leadership roles. None of the participants that were interviewed participated in this programme. Even though this was the case, this programme can be regarded as advancing their social and human capital by

helping them form stronger societal bonds and interpersonal relationships, as well as boosting their self-esteem.

4.10. Conclusion

This chapter presented and addressed the main findings drawn from the participants' interviews and provided interpretations of the collected data in line with the study's goals and objectives, the SLA, and the relevant reviewed literature. Several themes related to each of the study's objectives were addressed; under each theme there were relevant issues that were discussed. The study findings revealed that there are many challenges faced by youth NEET that hinder them from getting into mainstream education or the labour market. These include a combination of social capital challenges made up of interpersonal relationships such as extended family support, parenting and household chores that foster a sense of identity, shared understanding, norms, values, trust, cooperation and reciprocity within the household, human capital such as poor academic performance and lack of work experience, as well as financial capital challenges such as paying for costs that are associated with education.

In contrast, based on the research findings, the study concludes that the role of youth centres and the programmes that they offer through the provision of human and social capital opportunities can help to ameliorate the high unemployment amongst South Africa's youth. This was evidenced through the Bizana Love Life youth centre and its programmes that seem to play a useful 'intermediary' and 'bridging' role in helping and preparing youth NEET for work by providing valuable skills and broadening their networks. These included intangible assets they drew from for survival, such as computer literacy skills, health education, mentoring and group-based coaching, and stronger social bonds, as well as developing their leadership, agency, self-awareness, skills, strengths, and competencies. The following chapter will present the main conclusion, key summary of the findings, recommendations and the limitations of the study based on the research findings.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented an analysis of the findings. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the overall conclusion of the study, key summary of the findings on the objectives of the study, and recommendations and limitations of the study.

The overall aim of this study was to understand the role that youth centres play in enhancing livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana. The objectives of the study were to (a) understand the challenges facing rural youth NEET in Bizana, (b) understand how youth in Bizana access capabilities, knowledge, skills, and jobs, (c) understand how youth NEET access social networks and connections to acquire their livelihoods opportunities, and (d) understand how Bizana youth centres contribute to the lives of youth NEET. The study utilized the Bizana Love Life youth centre as a case study to understand whether its youth programmes enhance livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana.

Chapter two provided a review of literature on rural youth livelihood opportunities for youth NEET and the role of youth centres. The theoretical framework guiding the study was also outlined. The reviewed literature showed that rural youth NEET are not a homogenous group, there are varying reasons why they are not in employment or education and training. It also showed a significant positive correlation between the lack of skills development initiatives and the growing unemployment levels amongst rural youth NEET. The lack of access to skills development outside the formal school system exacerbates the problem as their skills are not necessarily matched with the demands of the labour market. Additionally, in this ever-changing globalisation world with emerging technology, investing in skills development can have a comparative advantage for youth when entering the labour market and achieving their future livelihoods.

The literature also pointed out several policies and intervention strategies to the youth NEET problem, however, they do not seem to be keeping up with the growing number of youth NEET due to the failure of legislation gaps and policy implementation such as lack of practical guidelines, as well as lack of skills and experienced staff in local government. Evidence from the international and South African literature seems to suggest that human capital through skills development and social capital through social networks and networks of trust offer context-

specific advantages during the transition from school to work especially for youth NEET. In the absence of formalized structures that facilitate the transition from school, or not in school, to work, the issue of finding work becomes very important. The literature from the developed countries revealed that community-based interventions and a combination of social networks are some of the effective ways that help youth NEET to enter the labour market, obtain jobs and gain work experience (Miller *et al.*, 2015; Thériault, 2016; Iwatsuki, 2019; Morgan *et al.*, 2020). In the South African context, literature revealed that there was much interest in expanding youth centre programmes from welfare-based approaches to development-based approaches that are designed to help youth, particularly those who are NEET, with skills, knowledge, capabilities, and social networks (Erulkar *et al.*, 2001; Graham *et al.*, 2019; Janowitz *et al.*, 2003). This was evidenced through NGOs and YEPs which seem to play a critical role in supporting youth in navigating the labour market, by developing their human capacity skills, which are required skills in the workplace (Graham *et al.*, 2019, Kraak, 2013). Building such skills can be seen as important especially for young people who have lower levels of education (Graham *et al.*, 2019).

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) was used as the theoretical lens through which to analyse the rural youth livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana. There was also a synergy between the literature review and SLA. The SLA helped me to understand the role of the Bizana Love Life youth centre. Since the SLA puts people at the centre of development and describes the tools and assets available to them, this theory was relevant for my study, to understand the sustainable livelihoods for rural youth NEET in Bizana in terms of the vulnerability context they find themselves in and how they convert their assets into livelihood outcomes. As Scoones (1998) points out, these assets may be material or social, tangible, or intangible such as human capital (knowledge, skills, and good health), financial capital (financial resources), social capital (network of relationships), physical capital (infrastructure and production equipment) and natural capital (natural resource stocks including land). For my study specifically, I wanted to research the role of the Bizana Love Life youth centre in helping youth NEET access human and social capital to enhance their livelihoods. Chapter two helped to achieve the study objectives a), b), c) and d) by providing a general understanding of the challenges facing rural youth NEET globally and locally; how youth access capabilities, knowledge, skills, and jobs globally and locally; how youth NEET access social networks and connections to acquire their livelihood opportunities; and how existing youth centres globally and locally contribute to the lives of youth NEET.

Chapter three discussed the methodological approach employed in the study. A qualitative case study research methodology philosophically guided by the interpretivist research paradigm supplemented by purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods, face-to-face and virtual semi-structured interviews, and open coding together with the thematic analysis method helped me in achieving the objectives of my study. With these methodological approaches, I acquired a deeper understanding of the life experiences of youth NEET in Bizana, their challenges, as well as the role of the youth centre in enhancing their livelihood opportunities. Overall, the employed methodological approaches assisted in acquiring data that provided insights, enabling all the study objectives to be achieved.

5.2. Summary of empirical findings

The findings below will be presented in line with the objectives of the study to show how each objective was achieved.

5.2.1. Objective one: To understand the challenges facing rural youth NEET in Bizana

The study found that youth NEET in Bizana are not a homogenous group, as findings revealed that circumstances leading to their employability and not being in education and training institutions differ. Family responsibilities such as extended family support and parenting duties, financial reasons, household chores, and poor academic performance which leads to grade repetition, as well as lack of previous work experience were some of the reasons facing youth NEET in Bizana. These findings point to a combination of personal, family, and external circumstances; to the participants who cited financial reasons for being NEET, this was mainly because there was not enough money at home to keep them in school as there were other siblings that needed to be in school, in some cases the money had to be used for other necessities such as food and clothing. Other participants revealed that they made a personal choice to drop out of school because of their poor academic performance in failing and repeating grades and had thus become demotivated to continue with school and opted to look for jobs. Caring responsibilities, having to take care of family and extended family were some of the family circumstances that kept youth out of school. In the Bizana context, this is a family expectation and is linked to socialization, as one is raised to make sure that one takes care of one's family. The findings further revealed that there were other external factors that were outside the control of individuals, such as lack of work experience. Though the one participant in my study had a tertiary qualification and was actively looking for employment, this was

outside their control. This may be explained by the mismatch between the skills possessed and the demands of the labour market.

5.2.2. Objective two: To understand how youth NEET in Bizana access capabilities, knowledge, skills, and jobs

The findings of the study revealed that investing in human capital in the form of skills development, knowledge, and good health can influence decreasing the numbers of youth NEET in Bizana. Moreover, the programmes of the Bizana Love Life youth centre, such as the Cyber Y's programme, provided them with computer literacy skills, the Health4Life programme helped them to make good health decisions, and the Mpintshi programme provided them with leadership and entrepreneurial skills that enhanced their livelihood and employment prospects.

5.2.3. Objective three: To understand how youth NEET access social networks and connections to acquire their livelihood opportunities.

The study revealed that youth NEET in Bizana face social exclusion in the labour market not only because they lack human capital (skills, knowledge, work experience), but also because they lack social networks. Therefore, building upon the social capital of youth NEET through strengthening and broadening their social networks can support youth NEET in finding the right information about jobs. Findings further revealed that the peers they met at the Love Life youth centre, community outreach projects and some of the programmes of the youth centre such as the mentoring and group-based coaching programme, played a huge role in helping youth NEET find information about job opportunities. Therefore, peers meeting at the youth centre became a social network or a connection for exchanging information about opportunities.

5.2.4. Objective four: To understand how Bizana youth centres contribute to the lives of youth NEET.

Findings of the study revealed that given that low educational attainment is a key characteristic of youth NEET in Bizana, the Love Life youth centre staff cited that youth NEET participating in their programmes are at an advantage, as they seem to be the most effective way of enabling them to access employment opportunities. These include the Cyber Y's programme, Health4Life programme, mentoring and group based coaching programme, Mpintshi programme/ Youth Leadership Development Programme as well as the Active Lifestyles

programme. All these programmes provided youth NEET with human and social capital that aimed to equip them with employable skills, basic life-skills, and information that would increase their chances of employment. Based on the above, the findings therefore make it clear that the Love Life youth centre provides a variety of skills training and development for youth NEET in Bizana and can achieve its goal of developing the youth.

5.3. Concluding remarks

Young people in South Africa are marked by multiple vulnerabilities such as low educational outcomes, personal and family factors, and limited human capital skills and social networks that restrict access to employment opportunities. Youth NEET are the most vulnerable in the labour market as they are at a much higher risk of exclusive basic education and long-term economic and social exclusion. Youth centres play an important role in providing livelihood opportunities for rural youth, including youth NEET. This study concludes that the current education system in South Africa needs to create an inclusive basic education that includes a technical component at high school level to cater for learners to fall off in the basic education. The South African government youth policy does not effectively cater for youth NEET. The provincial governments need to work together with youth centres to implement youth policies that are inclusive of their needs, to ensure that their ideas and opinions are integrated into developmental strategies. Additionally, there is a need for government, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to subsidize youth centres so that they can transfer knowledge, skills and develop social networks for youth NEET participating in programmes implemented by youth centres. In this way, they can create opportunities for young people, especially youth NEET to be re-integrated into support services that connect them to employment, education, and training opportunities.

5.4. Recommendations

This section presents recommendations by the researcher based on the key findings:

- Youth centres have a potential to improve the livelihoods of youth NEET in Bizana through enhancing their human and social capital, therefore, to improve the sustainability of these livelihoods, the WMMLM should invest in more youth centres, as there is currently one youth centre in Bizana that has programmes that deal with youth NEET, located in the centre of the Bizana town. Youth NEET in the rural

outskirts of Bizana town can be at a disadvantage as they are far away from the Love Life youth centre which may not be easily accessible to them.

- The TVET college in Bizana should be more visible, where their information about what they offer is easily available to everyone, especially in the rural communities around Bizana. It was evident in the findings of the study that the youth NEET participants had little information about the TVET college in Bizana when they were asked if they considered going back to school. Therefore, having such information easily accessible in the Bizana library, Love Life youth centre and other recreational and development facilities will bring knowledge closer to youth NEET for them to be re-integrated into the education and training system.
- As a policy recommendation, having emphasized the role of the Bizana Love Life youth centre, it is important for the government to work collectively with youth centres and other stakeholders to establish policies that drive the development of youth NEET as they are the most vulnerable in the labour market.
- Considering that my sample size was small, more research needs to be done on a larger scale to provide further in-depth insight into the realities and needs of youth NEET residing in rural areas; by providing a broader grasp on the issues relating to their unemployment and not being in education and training institutions, as well as sustainable ways to improve their livelihoods to meet their socio-economic needs.
- Since my study was primarily focusing on the views of youth NEET in Bizana, I recommend that a similar study be done in the same location investigating employers' views regarding youth NEET who are seeking work opportunities, as youth NEET might not know what potential employers expect from them.

5.5. Limitations of the study

The study was for a mini-Master's thesis and as a result it was limited to 12 rural youth NEET participants who are part of the programmes of the Bizana Love Life youth centre. This sample size is admittedly quite small, and the results cannot be generalizable to every youth that is NEET in Bizana because it is qualitative; the study only provides the realities of youth NEET in Bizana.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Information letter



Dear Potential Research Participant.

My name is Zikhona Mtwla, a Master of Social Science student in Development Studies, in the Department of Sociology at Rhodes University. I am conducting a Master's research entitled Exploring rural youth livelihoods opportunities: A case study of a youth centre in Bizana. I am writing this letter to humbly request your participation in this research study.

The aim of this research is to understand the role that the Bizana Love Life Youth Centre plays to enhance livelihoods opportunities for youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in Bizana. Your participation will be through taking part in a 40-60-minute interview that will look at understanding the challenges facing rural youth NEET in Bizana, how they access capabilities, knowledge, skills, jobs, social networks, and connections to acquire their livelihoods opportunities. I also request your permission to audio-record the interview so that I can have a permanent record of the interview for my research purposes. The audio-recording of the interview will be stored in a secured password encrypted file.

Participants will not be remunerated, as participation is voluntary. Participants may also withdraw from the study at any point. The information acquired through the interview will be kept with utmost confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured in the reporting of information obtained through using a false name. The research takes place during the Covid-19 pandemic, whereby face-to-face interactions carry the risk of infection. To mitigate this risk, the researcher will do telephone interviews which will be recorded or using WhatsApp voice notes. Where possible, and face-to-face interviews are able to take place, Covid-19 regulations and

restrictions will be adhered to, such as the wearing of masks, sanitising of hands, and maintaining social distance with the research participants.

This study will benefit participants in the sense that the research results will help you have a better understanding of the role that the youth centre plays to enhance livelihood opportunities for youth NEET in Bizana. You will need to sign an informed consent, acknowledging that you agree to participate in the research project, but this does not waive your rights to withdraw anytime you feel like it. Upon completion of the study, I undertake to provide you with feedback on the research findings if you are interested.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my research supervisor on the following contact details:

Researcher: Zikhona Mtwá

Contact details: 082 948 9323

E-mail address: g16m4868@campus.ru.ac.za

Or

Research Supervisor: Lungile Penxa

Contact details: 083 966 5076/ 046 603 7723

E-mail address: L.Penxa@ru.ac.za

Your permission to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Zikhona Mtwá.



Research Title: Exploring rural youth livelihoods opportunities: A case study of a youth centre in Bizana

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS, RURAL YOUTH

NEET

1. **Which type of school did you attend?** Was it a rural school or township school? Did it contribute to any skills that helped you to access jobs? (Please explain and give reasons with examples where applicable)
2. **What is your highest level of education?** (How old were you? How old are you now?)
3. **Why did you not further your education?** (Please explain and give reasons)
4. **Are you currently employed?** (If yes, how long have you been employed, and what type of job are you doing)?
5. **In your view, do you think enough efforts are being made to help youth to be employed?** What do you think is the role played by the national government? Provincial government? And your local municipality? (Please explain and give reasons with examples)
6. **Do you think enough efforts are made by the government to ensure youth complete their education?** What do you think is the role played by the national government? Provincial government? And your local municipality? (Please explain and give reasons with examples)

7. **Have you been involved in any youth training programs in your community?** What kinds of programs were you engaged in? (Please explain and give examples)
8. **How did you find out about Bizana Love life youth centre?** (Please explain)
9. **Have you benefited from the program(s) offered by the Bizana Love Life youth centre?** (Please explain and give reasons with examples)
10. **Did you acquire knowledge? If yes, what kind of knowledge?** (Please explain and give examples)
11. **Did you acquire skills? If yes, what kind of skills?** (Please explain and give examples)
12. **What kind of social networks, connections of trust, support, and informal relationships did you acquire?** (Please explain and give examples)
13. **What do you think of such programs for rural youth NEET?** (Please explain and give reasons with examples)
14. **Has this knowledge, skills, social networks of trust, and informal relationships helped you to access jobs?** (Please explain and give reasons with examples)
15. **Before you became part of the program(s) of the youth centre, what strategies did you use to maintain your livelihoods?** (Please explain and give reasons with examples).
16. **What are your livelihood strategies now?** (Please explain and give reasons with examples).
17. **How have your livelihood strategies changed since you got involved in the program(s) of the youth centre?** (Please explain and give reasons with examples)

18. To what extent do you think these changes are the product of your involvement in the youth centre versus maybe other factors that may have played a role. (Please explain and give reasons with examples)

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

Researcher: Ms. Zikhona Mtwana

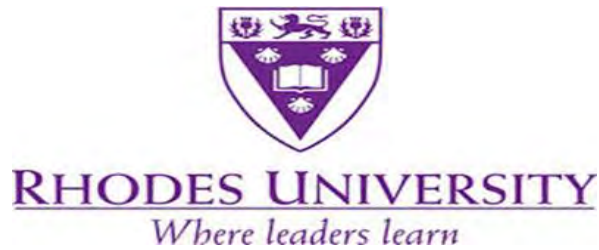
Email: zikhomtwa@gmail.com

Contact details: 082 9489 323

Supervisor: Mr. Lungile Penxa

Email: l.penxa@ru.ac.za

Contact details: 083 966 5076/ 046 603 7723



Research Title: Exploring rural youth livelihoods opportunities: A case study of a youth centre in Bizana.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR BIZANA LOVE LIFE YOUTH CENTRE STAFF

- 1. Please provide a brief history of the centre.** (Date of establishment? Why was it established? Target population? It's goals and mission statements? Does it have partnerships with the local municipality or other stakeholders? How does it get funding? Future plans?)
- 2. What is the purpose of this centre?** (Please explain and give reasons with examples)
- 3. What kind of programs does the youth centre have?** (Please explain and give reasons with examples)
- 4. Which programs focus on youth Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET)?** (Please explain and give reasons with examples)
- 5. What do the youth NEET programs specifically deal with?** (Please explain and give reasons with examples)
- 6. From the centre's perspective, what are the challenges facing rural youth NEET in Bizana?** (Please explain and give reasons with examples)

- 7. How has the youth centre contributed to the lives of rural youth NEET in Bizana?**
Skills & knowledge? Employment opportunities? Social networks? (Please explain and give reasons with examples)

- 8. Where does the centre think they have done well in relation to the youth NEET program?** (Any successes? Please explain and give reasons with examples).

- 9. Which areas within the Youth NEET program need improvement in the centre?**
(Please explain and give reasons with examples)

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact details are as follows:

Researcher: Ms. Zikhona Mtwá

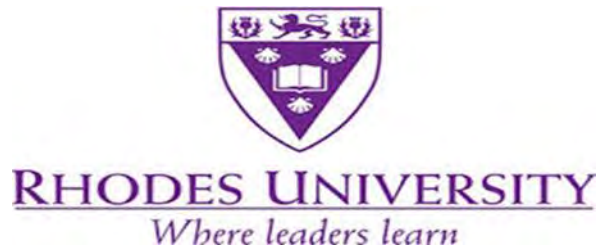
Email: zikhomtwa@gmail.com

Contact details: 082 9489 323

Supervisor: Mr. Lungile Penxa

Email: l.penxa@ru.ac.za

Contact details: 083 966 5076/ 046 603 7723



PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

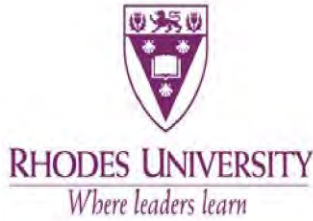
Project Title: Exploring rural youth livelihoods opportunities: A case study of a youth centre in Bizana.

Zikhona Mtwana from the Department of Sociology & Industrial Sociology, Rhodes University has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project. The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to understand the role that the Bizana Love Life Youth Centre plays to enhance livelihood opportunities for youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in Bizana.
2. The Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee (RUESC) has given ethical clearance to this research project, and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate by contacting Mr. Siyanda Manqele (s.manqele@ru.ac.za).
3. By participating in this research project, I will be contributing towards improving the programs offered at the Bizana Love Life Youth Centre; by being given the opportunity to talk about my experiences of being part of the youth centre, and giving suggestions and recommendations that will improve the operations of the youth centre going forward.

4. I will participate in the project by taking part in a 40–60-minute interview that will look at understanding the challenges facing rural youth NEET in Bizana, how they access capabilities, knowledge, skills, jobs, social networks, and connections to acquire their rural livelihoods.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research.
7. The following risks are associated with my participation: The research takes place during the Covid-19 pandemic, whereby face-to-face interactions carry the risk of infection. To mitigate this risk, the researcher will do telephone interviews which will be recorded or using WhatsApp voice notes. Where possible, and face-to-face interviews can take place, Covid-19 regulations and restrictions will be adhered to, such as the wearing of masks, sanitizing of hands, and maintaining social distance with the research participants. Secondly, research participants may fear being identified or may not want to be associated with the youth centre. To alleviate this risk, the researcher will make use of a coding system using pseudonyms instead of participants' names.
8. The researcher intends publishing the research results in the form of academic papers. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conducting of the research.
9. I will receive feedback in the form of communication through email, WhatsApp, or face-to-face if the Covid-19 circumstances improve regarding the results obtained during the study.
10. I agree with the researchers' use of voice recording of my comments and opinions during interviews.
11. Any further questions that I might have concerned the research, or my participation will be answered by Zikhona Mtwana (082 9489 323).



Rhodes University Human Ethics Committee
PO Box 94, Makhanda, 6140, South Africa
t: +27 (0) 46 603 7727
f: +27 (0) 46 603 8822
e: s.manqele@ru.ac.za
NHREC Registration number: RC-241114-045

<https://www.ru.ac.za/researchgateway/ethics/>

11/10/2021

Ms Zikhona Mtwá

Email: g16m4868@campus.ru.ac.za

Review Reference: 2021-5192-6314

Dear Mr Lungile Penxa

Title: Exploring rural youth livelihood opportunities: A case study of a youth centre in Bizana.

Principal Investigator: Mr Lungile Penxa

Collaborators: Miss Zikhona Mtwá

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Human Ethics Committee (RU-HEC). Your Approval number is: 2021-5192-6314.

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying you when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on the completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository,

please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloguing number allocated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Arthur Webb". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline for the first name.

Prof Arthur Webb

Chair: Rhodes University Human Ethics Committee, RU-HEC

cc: Ms Danielle de Vos - Ethics Coordinator