

**PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY LEADERS OF THE ROLE OF SPORTS  
PARTICIPATION IN DEALING WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL PROBLEMS  
AMONGST ADOLESCENTS IN A RURAL AREA**

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in the department of Psychology at the University of Western Cape



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**KEYWORDS**

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Perceptions of community leaders

Protective factors

Psychosocial problems

Rural area

Role of sports

Adolescents

Benefits of sports

Sports involvement

Extracurricular activities



## **Abstract**

Participation in recreational and formal sports can play a vital role in enhancing adolescents' wellbeing. Research indicates that involvement in different forms of recreation and physical activities offer beneficial effects on the physical and mental health status of individuals.

Sports participation has also been associated with lowered obesity, multiple risk behaviours, smoking and substance abuse. In South Africa rural and urban areas are increasingly affected by violence and a range of psychosocial problems such as youth crime, substance abuse and alcohol abuse. The aim of this research project was to explore the perceptions of community leaders of the role of sports participation in dealing with psychosocial problems amongst adolescents in a rural area. A qualitative approach was adopted to explore the perceptions of community leaders. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants according to the criteria set by researcher. The data was collected through the process of 10 indepth, semi-structured interviews with Afrikaans speaking community leaders, male and female from the two rural towns in the Cederberg region namely, Lamberts Bay and Clanwilliam. The semi-structured interview schedule consisted of five open-ended questions. A thematic content analysis was used to interpret the information. The study revealed that community leaders perceived sports participation as a protective factor against psychosocial problems within the community. They discussed sports benefits under three broad themes namely, health benefits, societal benefits and emotional benefits. The study further revealed poor financial resources, transport and poor facilities to be the major constraints for sports participation in their area. Future studies which explore the role of sports participation should include more information from a female's perspective, to enrich and understand the benefits of sports participation amongst females in the community.

## DECLARATION

I declare that “**Perceptions of community leaders of the role of sports participation in dealing with psychosocial problems amongst adolescents in a rural area**” is my own work. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

**Heinrich Neil Benjamin**



**Signed:** .....

**February 2010**

## DEDICATION

This research paper is dedicated to my parents Jeremy and Elaine Benjamin

&

My friend, André Lakay, rest in peace.

**Thank you for support, prayers and encouragement.**



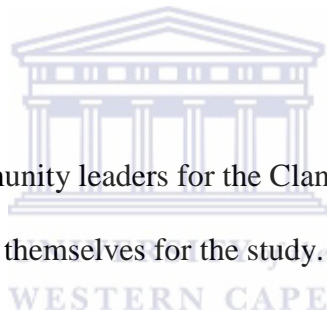
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly, I would like to thank the Lord, our source of life who gives us the strength and courage to persevere through difficult times.

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I regard myself lucky to have caring friend like Nina Leibrant, for her support through difficult times.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | <b>PAGE</b> |
|--|-------------|
| Keywords   | i           |
| Abstract   | ii          |
| Declaration  | iii         |
| Dedication   | iv          |
| Acknowledgements   | v           |
| <b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>                         |             |
| 1.1 Background to the study                              | 1           |
| 1.2 Rationale of study                                   | 4           |
| 1.3 Aims of the study                                    | 4           |
| 1.4 Objectives   | 4           |
| 1.5 Overview of the study                                | 5           |
| <b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>                    |             |
| 2.1 Introduction   | 6           |
| 2.2 General benefits of sports                           | 6           |
| 2.2.1 Societal benefits of sports participation          | 10          |
| 2.2.2 Health benefits of sports participation            | 11          |
| 2.3 Community leaders` perceptions on the role of sports | 13          |
| 2.4 Perceived barriers to sports participation           | 15          |
| 2.5 Sports participation as a protective factor          | 18          |
| 2.6 Theoretical framework                                | 18          |
| 2.7 Conclusion   | 23          |



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| 3.1 Introduction           | 24 |
| 3.2 Study design           | 24 |
| 3.3 Participants           | 24 |
| 3.4 Procedures             | 25 |
| 3.5 Data collection        | 26 |
| 3.6 Data analysis          | 27 |
| 3.7 Reflexivity            | 29 |
| 3.8 Ethical considerations | 29 |
| 3.9 Conclusion             | 29 |

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 4.1 Introduction                               | 31 |
| 4.2. Benefits of sport participation           | 31 |
| 4.2.1 Health benefits                          | 32 |
| 4.2.2 Societal benefits                        | 33 |
| 4.2.3 Emotional benefits                       | 34 |
| 4.3 Barriers to sports participation           | 35 |
| 4.3.1 Financial constraints                    | 35 |
| 4.3.2 Poor facilities                          | 35 |
| 4.3.3 Transport                                | 36 |
| 4.3.4 Financial support from community leaders | 37 |
| 4.3.5 Poor parental involvement                | 38 |
| 4.3.6 Peer pressure                            | 38 |
| 4.4 Sports and resiliency                      | 39 |
| 4.4.1 Sports participation and choices         | 39 |





|  |    |
|--|----|
| 4.4.2 Sports as a protective factor against alcohol and drug abuse | 40 |
| 4.4.3 Sports as a protective factor against teenage pregnancy      | 41 |
| 4.4.4 Self-esteem  | 42 |
| 4.4.5 Discipline   | 42 |
| 4.4.6 Building relationships                                       | 43 |
| 4.4.7 Sports and school performance                                | 44 |
| 4.4.8 Sports is not enough   | 44 |

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 5.1 Introduction                       | 46 |
| 5.2 Summary of main findings           | 46 |
| 5.2.1 Health benefits                  | 46 |
| 5.2.2 Emotional benefits               | 47 |
| 5.2.3 Societal benefits                | 47 |
| 5.2.4 Barriers to sports participation | 48 |
| 5.2.5 Sports as a protective factor    | 48 |
| 5.3 Recommendations                    | 49 |
| 5.4 Limitations of the study           | 50 |
| 5.5 Conclusion                         | 50 |

## **REFERENCES**

|                               |    |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Appendix A: Information sheet | 56 |
| Appendix B: Consent form      | 60 |
| Appendix C: Questionnaire     | 61 |



# CHAPTER ONE

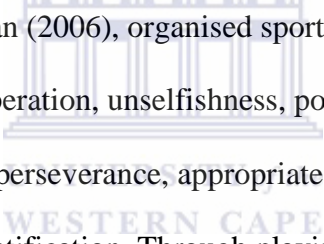
## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study

Involvement in youth sport offers numerous important benefits and educational values through which youth learn lifelong lessons (Surujlal, Dhurup & Sooful, 2008). According to Donaldson and Ronan (2006), not only does participation in sports help to reduce many physical problems such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and obesity, but it also fosters the development of important virtues such as team spirit and social responsibility. From as early as the seventies several researchers documented a protective association between extracurricular activity participation and involvement in delinquent and other risky behaviours (Eccles, Barber, Stone & Hunt, 2003). According to Margolin and Gordis (2004), community violence has a negative impact on adolescents especially because they are in an extremely vulnerable and impressionable stage of their lives. In an effort to address the psychosocial problems affecting these communities, various intervention strategies should be adopted. One of those identified in literature is sports participation (Donaldson & Ronan, 2006).

In South Africa violent crime is a major concern that affects our society (Møller, 2004). The Western Cape is one of the most crime-ridden provinces in South Africa (Leggett, 2004). Violence in urban areas is fast becoming a serious problem, especially in low-income communities (Møller, 2004). In the same vein crime in rural areas is increasing, which result in the escalation of various psychosocial problems in these areas. This is clearly shown in the crime statistics of two of the main towns in the Cederberg in the Western Cape, namely

Clanwilliam and Lamberts Bay. This trend is highlighted in crime statistics of the Clanwilliam Police Precinct in the Western Cape. For the period April 2007 to March 2008 the following statistics were reported: 88 incidents of assault with the intent to cause grievous harm, 94 incidents of common assault, 41 burglaries at residential areas and 215 drug related crime. Crime for the Lamberts Bay Police Precinct from April 2007 to April 2008 indicate 65 incidents of assault with the intent to cause grievous harm, 61 incidents of common assault, 48 burglaries at residential areas and 96 drug related crime. Crime and violence appear to be one of the main contributing factors to the many psychosocial problems affecting these communities, for example substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, alcoholism and gangsterism.

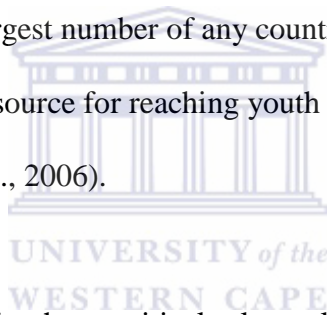


According to Donaldson and Ronan (2006), organised sport influences the development of important behaviours such as cooperation, unselfishness, positive attitudes toward achievement, stress management, perseverance, appropriate risk-taking, and the ability to tolerate frustration and delayed gratification. Through playing with others, children and adolescents build co-operative relationships. They learn key cooperation skills as they work together and perform specific team roles.

In contrast to this, some researchers suggest that competitive and performance orientated activities actually promote antisocial behaviour and may have a negative effect on prosocial behaviour (Rutten, et al., 2007). These researchers argue that organised sports promote antisocial behaviour as sport is based on competition, self-interest and a postponement of relational responsibility. They also associated sports participation with higher levels of aggressive behaviour and lower levels of moral functioning in comparison with non-contact sports. However, other researchers argue that sports participation fosters the development of

important virtues such as team spirit and social responsibility (Rutten et al., 2007). Research done by Donaldson and Ronan (2006) supports this view as they suggest the sport environment can provide socialisation opportunities and also help with skills which can also be transformed to other important life settings.

Research conducted in South Africa (Surujlal et al., 2008) suggests that sport participation plays an important role in educating youth about the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This view is further supported by Villada, Decelles and Banda (2006) who posit that through sports based education coaches are able to build resiliency within youth which could prevent infection of HIV. This is an important element in our country as an estimated 5.6 million South Africans were HIV positive in 2008, the largest number of any country in the world. Sports have thus been identified as an important resource for reaching youth and to protect them from HIV/AIDS infection (Villada et al., 2006).



Jones (1995) suggests that recreation has a critical role to play in the integration of youth into society. Participation in all forms of recreation can cultivate sustainable involvement in arts and culture, thereby developing creativity and self expression. It can also be used to acquire specific skills which can create jobs and generate an income. Sport as a form of recreation improves the quality of our lives. This view is supported by the World Health Organization who indicated that involvement in different forms of recreation and physical activities offer beneficial effects on the health, including mental health status of individuals (WHO, 2002). Sports can thus be seen as an innovative way that enhances quality of live. It also holds a protective association between sports participation and involvement in delinquent and other risky behaviours (Eccles et al., 2003).

## **1.2 Rationale of study**

Given the exceedingly negative effects crime and violence has on adolescents lives (Margolin & Gordis, 2004), the motivation for this study is to gain insight into community leaders perceptions on the role of sports participation in dealing with psychosocial problems amongst adolescents in a rural area. Although research done in this area provides insight into how youth can build resiliency against pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, it would be beneficial to investigate the perceptions of community leaders on the role of sports as a protective factor in dealing with psychosocial problems if we want to bring about change in the community. An investigation into the possible role of sports participation in prevention of psychosocial problems in rural communities, could contribute meaningfully to the development of more holistic approaches in dealing with psychosocial problems.

## **1.3 Aims of the study**

The aim of the study is to determine the perceptions of community leaders on the role of sports participation in dealing with psychosocial problems amongst adolescents in a rural area.

## **1.4 Objectives**

1. To determine community leaders perceptions on the role of sports participation in dealing with psychosocial problems in a rural area
2. To identify the relationship between sports participation and resiliency amongst adolescents in rural areas in dealing with psychosocial problems.

3. To identify possible constraints to sports participation as perceived by community leaders for adolescents in a rural area.

## **1.5 Overview of the thesis**

Chapter one has provided the background to the study, together with the rationale of the study, the aims and objectives of the study and an overview of the thesis. The next chapter gives a review of the literature that is relevant to the study. This includes exploring research related to perceptions of the role of sport, benefits to sports participation, barriers to sports participation and the theoretical framework.

Chapter three explains the methodological framework and research process. This includes the process of acquiring participants, how information was collected, and the method of interpreting the information. Reflexivity issues and ethical considerations are also explored in this chapter.

In chapter four results on the perceptions of community leaders of the role of sports are presented. I explore the benefits of sports participation, perceived barriers to sports participation and the role of sports against psychosocial problems. The final chapter provides conclusions, central findings and my reflections in the study. This also includes the limitations of the study and recommendations for further studies.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the literature review will be discussed under the following headings: general benefits of sports, societal benefits of sports, general health consequences of sports participation, community leaders' perception on the use role of sports and perceived barriers to sports participation. This is followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework within which this research was done.

#### **2.2 General benefits of sports participation**

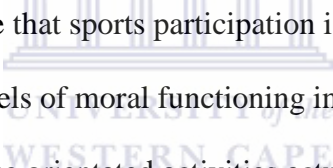


The physical health benefits of regular activity are well established (WHO, 1995). This is in line with Sallis and Owen's (1999) view that regular participation in physical activities is associated with a longer and better quality of life, reduced risks of a variety of diseases and many psychological and emotional benefits.

According to Donaldson and Ronan (2006), sports participation in children and adolescents has also been linked to reduced behavioural problems. Regular physical activity has specific benefits for children and adolescents, as well as for the prevention of chronic illnesses. The benefits of regular physical activity, specifically for children and adolescents, include improving strength

and endurance, building healthy bones and muscles, controlling weight, reducing anxiety and stress, increasing self-esteem and improving blood pressure and cholesterol (Phillips, 2003).

According to Eccles et al., (2003), children and adolescents in the United States spend more than half of their waking hours in leisure activities. For many, much of this time is spent in either unstructured peer focused activities or in front of the television set. Both developmental scientists and youth policy advocates have suggested that this leisure time could be better spent in ways (such as participating in high quality out-of-school and after-school programmes) that would both facilitate positive development and prevent the emergence of developmental problems (Eccles et al., 2003).



However, Rutten et al. (2007) argue that sports participation is associated with higher levels of aggressive behaviour and lower levels of moral functioning in comparison with non- contact sports. Competitive and performance orientated activities actually promote antisocial behaviour and has a negative effect on prosocial behaviour. Arnold (2001) in contrast, argues that sport should be understood as a practice imbued with moral values. Sport not only entails respect for the rules of the game, but also relates to respect for one's opponents, equal opportunities to perform well, mutual co-operation, fairness and higher levels of self-esteem.

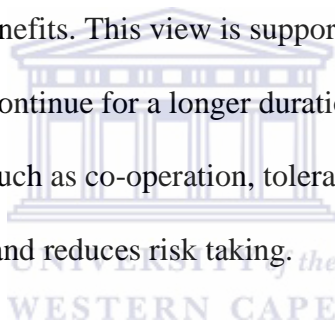
According to Arnold (2001), sports participation with adolescents is associated with fewer behaviour problems. This finding is consistent with a large British study (Steptoe & Butler, 1996) which concluded that emotional wellbeing was positively associated with participation in sports by adolescents. The study found that those who engaged in more formal sports and for a



greater length of time, reported significantly lower levels of delinquent behaviour, aggression, and peer related problems (Steptoe & Butler, 1996).

Begg, Langley, Moffitt and Marshall (1996) suggest that sports which incorporate many rules, may appeal to non-delinquent youth, but for the delinquent youth these activities may have little appeal. Research has also found significantly lower levels of anxiety and depression-related problems in active as compared to inactive adolescents (Jeziorski, 1994).

According to Jeziorski (1994), sports for youth need to be of a set duration and intensity in order to achieve certain psychological benefits. This view is supported by Steptoe and Butler (1996), who found that formal sports that continue for a longer duration, greater intensity, frequency, and discipline, build important values such as co-operation, tolerance, teamwork, lack of selfishness, stress management, perseverance, and reduces risk taking.



Kremer and Scully (1994) emphasised that sports participation provide children with the experiences they need in order to learn social skills and values. Through play, children become sensitive to other children's needs and values, learn to handle exclusion and dominance, manage their emotions, learn self-control, plus to share power, space, and ideas with others. At all levels of development, play provides opportunities for children to feel comfortable and in control of their feelings by allowing the expression of emotions in acceptable ways.

Sports participation provides children with the chance to get involved with others through joining competitive teams. The context of interventions is primarily focused on the process of

helping children restore their psychological and social functioning in a cooperative environment (Boyden & Mann, 2005). Sports thus offer children the opportunity to learn new problem-solving skills in managing their own emotions and behaviours, as well as to have healthy peer relationships (Phillips, 2003). These problem-solving skills have also been found to be a strong predictor of improved resilience in children, as improved problem-solving skills can enhance the possibility that life's challenges will be resolved successfully (Boyden & Mann, 2005).

The idea that youth who participate in sport exhibit fewer behaviour problems has been supported by empirical studies (Jeziorski, 1994). Jeziorski (1994) found that participant's in sports earned better grades, behaved better in the classroom, had fewer behavioural problems outside the classroom, dropped out less frequently, and attended school on a more regular basis with fewer unexcused absences as compared to non-participants. This view is supported by Steptoe and Butler (1996) suggest that adolescents who do not participate in sports are more likely to drop out of school, use drugs, become teen parents, smoke cigarettes, and are more likely to be arrested.

Zaharopoulos and Hodge (1991) suggest that sport not only affects physical ability but also the individual's self-esteem. Zaharopoulos and Hodge (1991) further emphasised that adolescents may not necessarily have to be competent at sport in order to gain psychological benefits from sports participation. Arnold (2001) supports this view as he argues that participating in sports help young adolescents gain confidence. Participating in sports not only improves levels of self-esteem, but it also provides adolescents with a socially accepted way to release energy and aggression rather than through negative acting-out behaviours (Arnold, 2001).

### **2.2.1 Societal benefits of sports participation**

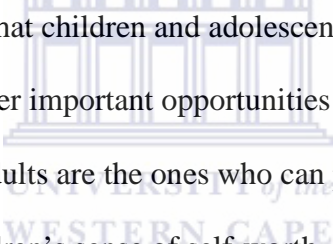
According to Donaldson and Ronan (2006), the sport environment can provide socialisation opportunities that are similar to those of other important life settings. Interest in the developmental consequences of extracurricular and after school programs has been stimulated also by the growing interest in positive psychology and positive youth development.

Eccles et al. (2003) argues that sports participation is needed to fully prepare our youth for the transition into adulthood. According to Eccles et al. (2003), involvement in sports activities provide opportunities to acquire and practice specific social, physical, and intellectual skills that may be useful in a wide variety of settings, including school. It also contributes to the well-being of the community and provides a sense of agency as a member of one's community. This suggests that adolescents want to belong to a socially recognised and valued group and helps to establish supportive social networks of peers and adults that can help in both the present and the future. In turn, these values are predicted to facilitate both current levels of school engagement, achievement and subsequent educational and occupational attainment and prevent the emergence of risky behaviour patterns that can deter young people's future (Eccles et al., 2003).

According to Surujlal et al. (2008), sport is a part of society as both an educational fixture and an entertainment enterprise. Sport forms part of human and social development; it can contribute to social cohesion, tolerance and integration and is an effective channel for physical and socio-economic development. As a universal language, sport can be a powerful medium for social and

economic change, it can be utilised to bridge cultural gaps, resolve conflict and educate people in ways that very few activities can.

Sports participation (Asihel, 2005) has a crucial social impact on society's health and well-being as well as healthcare costs. Asihel (2005) suggest that there is a connection that exists between being physically active and living a healthy lifestyle. Sport provides not only health benefits for young participants but also promotes qualities such as team work, discipline, and a competitive spirit that prove valuable in adulthood. It therefore, warrants a prominent place in the educational system.



Boyden and Mann (2005) suggest that children and adolescents benefit from quality role models. Group sports and play activities offer important opportunities for them to be engaged with older members of a community. These adults are the ones who can provide structured activities that encourage the development of children's sense of self-worth, support their ability to communicate more effectively, and help them develop healthier relationships with peers. Having healthy peer relationships is yet another significant protective factor.

### **2.2.2 Health benefits of sports participation**

According to Asihel (2005), a physically active lifestyle needs to be maintained if one is to realise long term health benefits. Immediate benefits include increased endurance, flexibility and strength. Health studies also show that active persons are more likely to be better adjusted,

perform better on cognitive functioning test, exhibit reduced cardiovascular responses to stress and report fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Donaldson and Ronan (2006) suggest that one of the benefits of sports participation is that it helps to reduce many physical problems such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and obesity. A Canadian survey showed the risk of having a heart attack reduced by 50% amongst post-menopausal woman who partook in modest physical activity (Asihel, 2005).

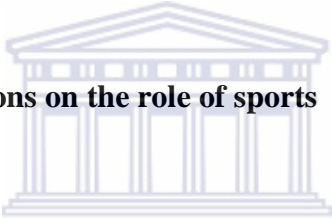
Increased physical activity has a positive effect on the development and course of diabetes.

According to Asihel (2005), increased physical activity appears to offer the greatest potential benefit in the primary prevention of Type II diabetes. The benefits of exercise extend far beyond weight management. Research shows that regular physical activity can help reduce your risk for several diseases and health conditions and improve your overall quality of life. Regular physical activity can help protect you from various health problems. Daily physical activity can help prevent heart disease and stroke by strengthening your heart muscle, lowering your blood pressure, raising your high-density lipoprotein (HDL) levels and lowering low-density lipoprotein (LDL) levels, improving blood flow, and increasing your heart's working capacity. Optimising each of these factors can provide additional benefits of decreasing the risk for peripheral vascular disease (Asihel, 2005).

According to the Centre of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States of America, regular physical activity can reduce blood pressure in those with high blood pressure

levels (Asihel, 2005). Physical activity reduces body fat, which is associated with high blood pressure. By reducing body fat, physical activity can help to prevent and control this type of diabetes. Physical activity helps to reduce body fat by building or preserving muscle mass and improving the body's ability to use calories. When physical activity is combined with proper nutrition, it can help control weight and prevent obesity, a major risk factor for many diseases. By increasing muscle strength and endurance and improving flexibility and posture, regular exercise helps to prevent back pain. Regular weight-bearing exercise promotes bone formation and may prevent many forms of bone loss associated with aging (Asihel, 2005).

### **2.3 Community leaders' perceptions on the role of sports**



In the United Kingdom (Thurston & Green, 2002) a study was conducted on 35 physical education teachers in northwest of England. The outcome of the study reflected that teachers' views were heavily tinted with health related ideological justifications for physical education. Teachers` not only viewed sport as a central aspect of the subject, but also as the main means for health promotion (Thurston & Green, 2002). The teachers in the study frequently expressed a desire to encourage active and health lifestyles through the medium of sports involvement. Some teachers held the view that healthy lifestyles overshadow the traditional physical education curriculum, because the emphasis is on health related aspects compared to the physical education curriculum where the focus is on the actual sport (Thurston & Green, 2002).

In a study conducted by Grassroots soccer, a community based project that uses sport to deal with psycho-social problems found that through sports based education coaches and teachers are able to build resiliency within youth and prevent infection of HIV (Villada, et al., 2006). One of the teachers from the grassroots programme, at a training-the-trainers session described it as the opportunity to help youth tap their own voice and build resiliency, *“as teachers and coaches, we help them [youth] break their shells to bring out their skills and visions so they can bounce back”* (Villada, et al., 2006, p. 145)

A student who was part of the Grassroots’ programme expressed the following view regarding the programme as she addressed an invited crowd of teachers, parents, siblings, and friends at a GRS resiliency program graduation ceremony in Lusaka, Zambia: *“In Grassroots Soccer, we’ve also learnt that anyone has a choice to make and that anyone has strength to do something in every day of our lives”* (Villada, et al., 2006, p. 146)

According to Surujlal et al. (2008), youth participation in sport provides an excellent opportunity for parent-child interactions to take place. Parents involved in youth sport influence the sporting experience of the youth and have been identified as the primary agents for introducing youth to sport. Surujlal et al. (2008) believe that parents are responsible for imparting values and attitudes to children, shaping their behaviour, shaping their psychological development, fostering their growth and maturity, transmitting life skills and enhancing the sport experience of their children. Previous researches have found that a healthy and secure link to parents may facilitate greater sporting achievement of individuals through the reduction of disruptive behaviour, low

aggression levels, respect for authority, self-control, and an environment free from harmful situations (DuBois & Eitel, 1994).

## **2.4 Perceived barriers to sports participation**

Steptoe and Butler (1996) defined barriers in sports and recreation as factors that preclude or limit an individual's frequency, intensity, duration or quality of participation in sports and recreation activities. Sayed, Du Meyer, and Monyeki (2004) conceptualise barriers as a sub-set of diverse reasons why individuals may not participate in some activity. Sayed et al., (2004) identified three types of barriers/constraints to participation in sports and recreation, namely structured, intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints. Structured barriers (Sayed et al., 2004) are those factors that mediate between sports participation and other recreation activity preferences such as finance, season, time, and climate. Intrapersonal barriers are internal psychological states of the person, such as stress, depression, anxiety, attitude and skills. Interpersonal barriers are those factors that interact with leisure and recreation preferences, for example, lack of company or partner for a game of tennis. According to Torkildsen (1999), several studies explored barriers to sports participation. These studies indicate the following as common constraints to participation in physical activity: time, interest, availability and accessibility of facilities and more recently safety and security concerns, especially in countries with high crime rates (Torkildsen, 1999).

Adolescents face many barriers to participation in physical activity and recreation (Arnold, 2001). The most common barriers include lack of money, transportation, lack of information,



lack of parental support, and a gender bias within sports participation. According to Allison, Dwyer and Makin (1999), the presence of perceived barriers decreases the likelihood of engaging in preventative health benefits. In a study done by Allison et al. (1999) the results indicated that adolescents identified a lack of time available as a barrier to sports participation. Arnold (2001) identified various barriers to physical activity among adolescents in a study conducted in the United States of America. The barriers identified were related to adolescent and peer subgroup norms that devalue healthy eating behaviour and sports participation.

Wuerth, Lee and Alferman (2003), suggest that there is ample evidence that parents play a highly facilitative and positive role for sport career development. This however, is only part of the truth as he identified over-involved parents as a barrier for youth to gain the intended benefits that sports participation offer. Over-involved parents, according to Singh (2005), can contribute to higher levels of pressure in young athletes, which may result in lowered self-esteem, burnout, discontent with sport participation, and stress.

Brustad (1993) argues that the way in which parents support, encourage and become involved is fundamental to their children's participation and success in sport, whether beneficial or detrimental. Cumming and Ewing (2002) suggest that overzealous or intrusive parents have a negative effect on the development and experiences of young athletes, a concern which suggests that parents are going beyond their role at sport events (Cumming & Ewing, 2002; Gould, Chung, Smith & White, 2002).

In the United States there has been an increase in the number of reported instances of parents engaging in violent, abusive and controlling behaviour towards coaches (Wuerth et al., 2003). This trend is not unique to the United States alone. Singh (2005) reported that there are frequent incidents of unruly parental behaviour and violent confrontations at school sports fields and community clubs in South Africa. According to Coackley and Dunning (2002), the current system of school and youth sports not only condones but also facilitates the emotional and physical abuse of children. Singh (2005) adds that it also encourages negative behaviour.

Coackley and Dunning (2002) suggest that there is a relationship between the adolescents' social context and their level of involvement in a sport activity. According to Coackley and Dunning (2002) adolescents with the highest frequency of physical activity belong to a higher social class. According to a Canadian study, not only the frequency of sports, but also the strength of the intention to exercise, is closely linked to the socio-economic status of the family. This view is supported by Singh (2005) who suggest that a more positive attitude regarding physical activity or sports practice is found in families with a high socio-economic level.

Torkildsen (1999) suggest the personality of an individual could be seen as a barrier to sports participation. The individuals needs, interests, physical, and social ability, culture, gender, education and a whole range of personal factors could influence recreational choice and participation. Torkildsen (1999) further considers social and circumstantial factors as barriers to sports participation. Opportunity factors, such as available resources, distribution of facilities, access and location of facilities, organisation and leadership, recreation services, and political policies are all factors that influence participation in sports (Torkildsen, 1999).

## **2.5 Sports participation as a protective factor**

According to Kremer and Scully (1994), there is a positive relationship between exercise and emotional well-being. According to Feron, Narring, Caunderay and Michaud (1999), the literature on adolescent risk behaviour has listed sports participation as a protective factor against substance abuse. Research suggests that a low level of involvement in a sport activity is linked to a tendency to adopt experimental behaviours in several areas such as cigarette smoking or marijuana and alcohol use. Feron et al., (1999) suggest increasing opportunities for meaningful participation in groups may increase social bonding and decrease the tendencies to engage in deviant behaviours, specifically alcohol consumption by youth.



## **2.6 Theoretical framework**

For this study I will use the systems theory framework to better understand the perceptions of community leaders of the role of sports participation in dealing with psychosocial problems amongst adolescents in a rural area. Systems theory provides a conceptual framework for understanding the complexities of community processes, development and change (Visser, 2007).

This theory looks at the adolescents' development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory defines complex layers of environment, each having an effect on a child's development. The interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his immediate family or community environment, and the societal landscape fuels and steers his development. Changes or conflict in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers. To study a child's development we must look not only at the child

and her immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment. (Visser, 2007).

The systems theory suggests that reality is complex and the characteristics of systems underlie all processes, therefore the theory is based on interconnections of all parts of the system in a non-linear way. All that exists within a system can be defined as a part of a complex whole where everything is connected to everything else be it directly or indirectly (Visser, 2007). The interaction between these parts and changes in them affect the systems as a whole. Therefore, relationships and processes exist between these subsystems (Visser, 2007).

Within this study there is a relationship between sports participation and psychosocial problems within the rural community. These subsystems of the community are all interconnected and if changes occurs within one of the subsystems it affects the system as a whole.

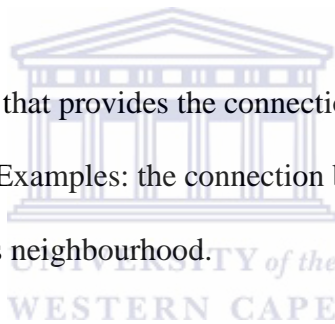
According to Bronfenbrenner, there are certain cultural and social factors within an individual's immediate environment that influences development. Within the immediate environment of an individual, there are various levels or systems that can affect and influence the individual's development. Bronfenbrenner identified five systems within the ecological theory (see figure 1) (Visser, 2007).

The microsystem, refers to the layer closest to the child and contains the structures with which the child has direct contact. The microsystem encompasses the relationships and interactions a

child has with her immediate surroundings (Berk, 2000). Structures in the microsystem include family, school, neighbourhood, or childcare environments.

At this level, relationships have impact in two directions, both away from the child and toward the child. For example, a child's parents may affect his beliefs and behaviour; however, the child also affects the behaviour and beliefs of the parent. Bronfenbrenner calls these bi-directional influences, and he shows how they occur among all levels of environment (Visser, 2007). At the microsystem level, bi-directional influences are strongest and have the greatest impact on the child. Interactions at outer levels can however, still impact the inner structures.

The mesosystem refers to the layer that provides the connection between the structures of the child's microsystem (Berk, 2000). Examples: the connection between the child's teacher and his parents, between his church and his neighbourhood.



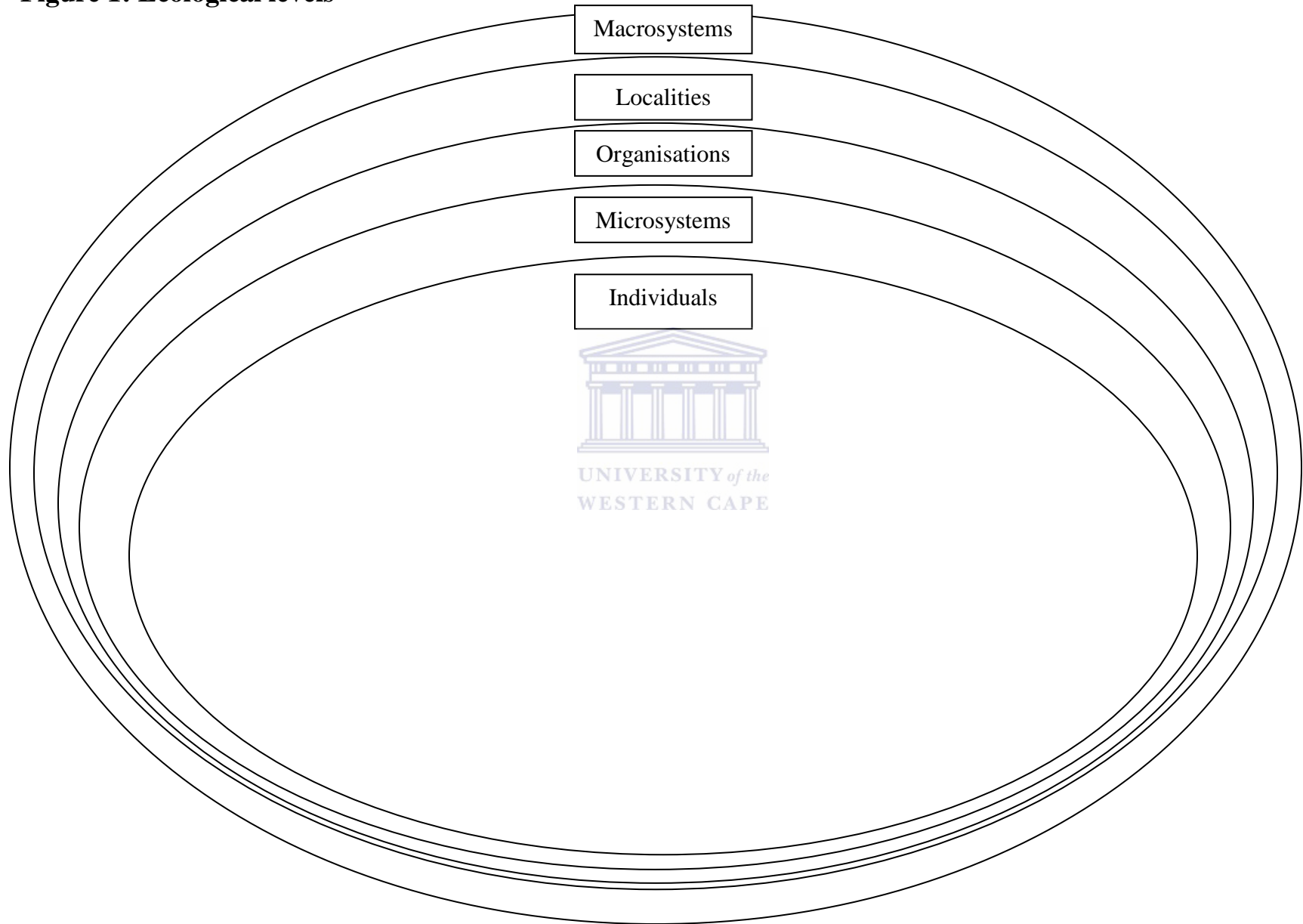
The exosystem refers to the layer that defines the larger social system in which the child does not function directly. The structures in this layer impact the child's development by interacting with some structure in her microsystem (Berk, 2000). Parent workplace schedules or community based family resources are examples. The child may not be directly involved at this level, but he does feel the positive or negative force involved with the interaction with his own system.

The macrosystem may be considered the outermost layer in the child's environment. While not being a specific framework, this layer is comprised of cultural values, customs, and laws (Berk, 2000). The effects of larger principles defined by the macrosystem have a cascading influence

throughout the interactions of all other layers. For example, if it is the belief of the culture that parents should be solely responsible for raising their children, that culture is less likely to provide resources to help parents. This, in turn, affects the structures in which the parents function. The parents' ability or inability to carry out that responsibility toward their child within the context of the child's microsystem is likewise affected (Berk, 2000).



**Figure 1: Ecological levels**



## 2.7 Conclusion

Chapter two has provided a review of the literature relevant to the study. It has explored the research related to the perceptions of the role of sport, benefits of sport participation, barriers to sports participation and a discussion of the theoretical framework.

In the next chapter the methodology used in the study will be explained. It will be discussed under the following aspects: the study design, selection of participants, procedures, data collection, data analysis, reflexivity. The chapter will also include the ethical considerations.





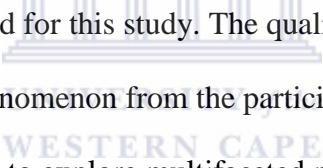
## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHOD**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Qualitative methodology was used in this investigation, with semi-structured individual interviews being the method of inquiry. The chapter commences with the rationale for using a qualitative research design followed by methods of data collection. Thereafter, a description of the data analysis is presented. Lastly, the ethics of the study is discussed.

#### **3.2 Study design**



A qualitative approach was adopted for this study. The qualitative approach aims to understand the meaning of the phenomenon from the participants' perspective (Creswell, 2003). This allowed the researcher to explore multifaceted perceptions individuals experience within their natural environment. Henderson (2000) claims qualitative data generate rich, valid, detailed, process information that leaves the study participants intact and provides an insider's view to better understand the phenomenon being investigated. For this study, I used semi-structured interviews to provide both an understanding of the perceptions of community leaders as well as their awareness of the research problem.

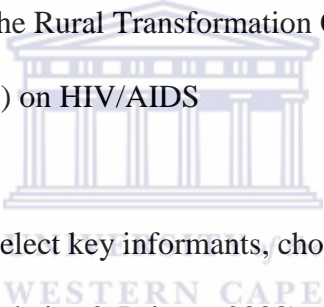
#### **3.3 Participants**

A sample of 10 community leaders was purposefully selected in two towns (Lamberts Bay) and (Clanwilliam) in the Cederberg region. The participants in this study included four male

participants and one female participant from the Lamberts Bay community and four male participants and one female participant from the Clanwilliam community.

The sample consisted of the following:

1. Two BOSASA correctional service leaders, one male and one female respectively
2. One male primary school principal
3. Two male primary school teachers
4. Two male SAPS officers from the South African Police Service (SAPS), one captain and one officer respectively
5. Two male members from the Rural Transformation Company (RTC) on HIV/AIDS
6. One female from the (RTC) on HIV/AIDS



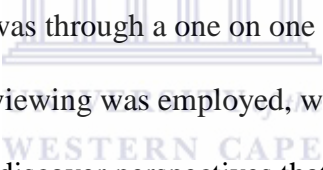
Purposeful sampling was used to select key informants, chosen according to the criteria set by the researcher (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2008). According to Greef (2002), purposeful sampling creates conditions that enable the researcher to find participants that are able to provide the most in depth information about the phenomenon being investigated. The criteria were as follows: participants must be involved or linked to community work, participants must reside in the Lamberts Bay and Clanwilliam community, and participants were chosen who would most likely be knowledgeable about the role of sports in these communities.

### **3.4 Procedures**

An interview schedule was prepared so that key issues concerning the role of sports participation could be addressed so that the interview could have a logical flow. (Terre

Blanche et al. 2008). At the commencement of the interview the nature of the study was explained and participants were given the opportunity to raise any questions related to the research. Each participant was presented with a consent form informing them of the study and requesting their permission to participate in the study. According to Terre Blanche et al. (2008), informed consent must be sought prior to interviews being conducted. Participants were informed that their participation within the research was entirely voluntary and that they have the right to terminate the interview at any stage. The interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the participants, to ensure information was captured. The transcribed conversations were used to make up the data set (Terre Blanche et al. 2008).

### **3.5 Data collection**



The main form of data collection was through a one on one in-depth interview (Terre Blanche et al. 2008). Semi-structured interviewing was employed, which is a more open and flexible tool and allowed the researcher to discover perspectives that are not usually envisaged at the beginning of the study (Terre Blanche et al. 2008). The semi-structured interview schedule consisted of five open-ended questions. Each interview was approximately 40 minutes long. Participants were encouraged to express themselves in their language of choice (English or Afrikaans) as this allowed them to express themselves more accurately and effectively.

The interviews were tape recorded with the participants' permission. According to Leideman (2002), a tape recorder is an indispensable tool when using qualitative methods as it increases accurate information taking and it allows the researcher to be more attentive to the participants.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Each tape recorded interview was transcribed verbatim and a thematic analysis was employed to identify themes in the collected data. A thematic analysis is a coherent way of organising or reading interview material in relation to the specific research questions (Liedeman, 2002).

The findings were then organised under thematic headings or categories in an attempt to do justice, both to the research question as well as the views of the participants (Liedeman, 2002).

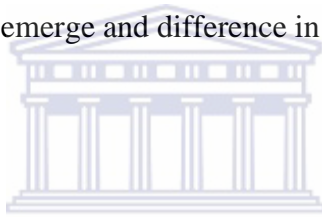
The researcher broadly followed the following steps of analysis as described by Terre Blanche et al. (2008), although they argue, that in reality, interpretive analysis rarely proceeds in an orderly manner as suggested by their step-wise presentation.

Step 1: The researcher is to become familiar with and immersed in the research material (Terre Blanche et al., 2008). The researcher was the facilitator in the one on one interview with the participants. After the research material was collected and transcribed, the researcher checked the transcripts. This meant reading through and checking the transcripts several times. The processes helped the researcher to become familiar and immersed in the material and to develop some ideas of various interpretations to be made.

Step 2: This particular step involves the identification of themes. This means the researcher looked at the research material and established what the organising principles are that 'naturally' underlie it (Terre Blanche et al. 2008). The researcher used language of the participant rather than abstract language. The researcher looked for similarities and contradictions, as well as the process and functions that were present in the research material.

Step 3: This step is called coding. According to Terre Blanche et al. (2008), coding is the process in which a word, phrase, line, sentence, or paragraph that becomes the textual quotes that are linked to the themes under consideration. The researcher found several quotes that were linked to more than one theme and various sub-themes emerged. In this process certain themes changed and additional themes were identified.

Step 4: This step is called elaboration. This entails moving the research material around in order to organise material according to themes. This process allowed researcher to engage with the text in such a way that quotes grouped together could be compared. This process allowed for several sub-themes to emerge and difference in opinions relevant to the same theme.



Step 5: This step involves interpretation and checking. This involves using the thematic categories of the analysis of the research material, interpreting and checking it, and then giving a written account of the phenomena studied. The researcher first wrote up the themes that emerged from the research material and included the quotes linked to it. It was then checked to establish whether the quotes matched and explained themes optimally. At this point the researcher also reflected on how his own biases might impact on the interpretation process. This process was to ensure that the interpretation of the research material optimally reflect the participants perceptions on the role of sports participation in dealing with psychosocial problems.

### **3.7 Reflexivity**

Throughout the research process as the researcher, I was aware of my influence within each interview session. The aim of the interviews was to ascertain relevant data pertaining to the objectives of the study. All the information collected was observed and analysed through continuous reflection upon my role and influence on the research. As part of my continuous self reflection I consulted my supervisor to resolve some of my difficulties. Doing this research project helped the researcher understand the extent of the psychosocial problems within our communities. The researcher has become more aware the role he can play to support the community by using the knowledge and insight gained.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**



The purpose of the study was explained to all the participants. The participants were informed that participation in the study is voluntary and they retain the right to withdraw at any time. Each participant was requested to sign a written letter of consent which was given to them before the interview. With their consent a tape recorder was utilised and they were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity in the analysis of the data and the reported findings. This was stated in their consent letters. The recordings were destroyed after the completion of the transcription process.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the methods used in the present study. A qualitative method on the form of 10 semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explore the perceptions of

community leaders on the role of sports participation in dealing with psychosocial problems in a rural area. The researcher ensured the trustworthiness and credibility of the data that emerged from the study and used a thematic analysis in doing so. Ethical considerations and reflexivity were engaged with by the researcher.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the results of the study are presented in the form of qualitative thematic analysis. The discussion included the participant's perceptions of the role of sports participation in dealing with psychosocial problems in their community.

The data was collected from 10 semi-structured interviews. The discussion focuses on the following aspects covered under the aims and objectives of the study:

1. Perceptions of community leaders on the role of sports participation in dealing with psychosocial problems in a rural area
2. The relationship between sports participation and resiliency amongst adolescents in rural areas in dealing with psychosocial problems.
3. Possible constraints to sports participation as perceived by the community leaders.

#### **4.2 Benefits of sports participation**

The first objective of the study was to explore the perceptions of community leaders on the role of sports participation and to identify the perceived benefits of sports. The benefits of sports participation was indicated by the participants as falling into the following three areas: health benefits, societal benefits, and emotional benefits.



#### 4.2.1. Health benefits

Most respondents agreed that sports participation keeps your body healthy and reduces the chances of developing sickness. They associated sports participation with lower levels of physical complaints and believed a healthy body to be the foundation for a healthy mind. This ties in with Donaldson and Ronan (2006) view that participation in sport helps to reduce many physical problems such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and obesity. This is supported by Sallis and Owen (1999) view that regular participation in physical activities is associated with a longer and better quality of life, reduced risks of a variety of diseases and many psychological and emotional benefits.

This comes out clearly in the following quotes:

*“If you involve yourself in sport on a daily basis, it prevents you from suddenly becoming sick [...] sports keep your body healthy”* (Participant 1)

*“It keeps you healthy... and it helps you to loose weight”* (Participant 2)

*“Helps you to stay fit, your mind becomes healthy because your body healthy”* (Participant 3)

*“Sport builds healthy bones and prevents that you become overweight”* (Participant 6)

The respondents hold the view that sports participation has health benefits attached to it and suggest that sports participation can be seen as a protective factor against health difficulties.

The only difference that emerges from the interviews is the descriptive quality of the perceived health benefits of sports participation. This means that some participants provide a more detailed and in-depth explanation on the health benefits of sports participation. For example, participant 3 explains that sports keep your body fit whereas participant 6 explains the sports participation builds strong bones and prevents obesity.

#### 4.2.2 Societal benefits

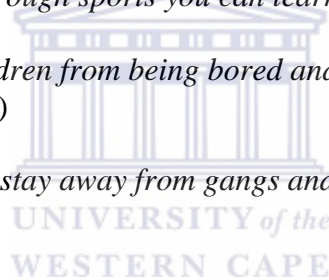
Informants hold the view that imbedded in sports involvement are principles that can be generalised to broader society. Respondents believe that sports can help youth to work together as a team. Some suggest that sports can help identify talented youth and later they can make a career out of sports. This could create an employment opportunity and provide a role model for other youth within the community and inspire them to strive for similar goals.

*“Some boys don’t know what talent they have [...] maybe they are very good at a particular sport and they could go on to become professionals in that sport”* (Participant 1)

*“Sports can help you to handle loosing [...] so it teaches you in life that you that things will not always go your way... then through sports you can learn to cope with it”* (Participant 2)

*“Involvement in sports keeps children from being bored and involving themselves in crime, alcohol and drugs”* (Participant 7)

*“It keeps them busy and they will stay away from gangs and other risky things”* (Participant 8)



The respondents hold the belief that sports participation can benefit the broader society. The perceived benefits include possible job opportunities, reducing crime and reduce involvement in high risk behaviours. This link between sports and social benefits is supported by Eccles et al.(2003), who suggests that sports participation can help youth to fully prepare for the transition into adulthood. Through sports participation adolescents acquire and practice specific social, physical, and intellectual skills that may be useful in a wide variety of settings including school. Wright (2007), supports the idea that sports participation is a means of sharing and creates the opportunity amongst people of various backgrounds, nationalities or beliefs, and promotes expression beyond traditional barriers. This is supported by Surujlal et al. (2008) view that sport participation plays an important role in social development as it

promotes social cohesion, tolerance and can be seen as a valuable way to initiate change within the community.

#### **4.2.3 Emotional benefits**

Several of the respondents hold the view that sports participation promotes very specific values and norms that build character and self-esteem within adolescents. Added to that, it builds discipline and self respect that can be practiced within the community. These values are seen by the participants as important factors to aid youth in their transition into adulthood.

*“You can build character through sports and will boost your self-esteem”* (Participant 10)

*“Sports build healthy bodies which could leads to healthy minds”* (Participant 8)

*“It can help you to loose weight and make you feel good about yourself”* (Participant 4)

*“It builds discipline because sports have rules [...] it helps you to channel your energy into something constructive”* (Participant 3)

The quotes above suggest that sports participation helps youth to vent their frustration in an adaptive way and in so doing they reap benefits such as emotional well-being, improved self-esteem and positive attitudes. Research suggests that exercise has been found to improve the emotional state of participants. This is similar to Eccles et al's. (2003), view that exercise also enhances psychological and emotional well-being. Sports participation has also been linked to building self-esteem with in youth (Eccles et al. 2003). This view ties in with Kremer and Scully (1994) who suggest that there is a positive relationship between sports participation and emotional well-being. This is consistent with a large British study (Stephoe & Butler, 1996) that found that sports participation is associated with emotional well-being. The study found that those who engaged in sports reported significantly lower levels of

suicidal ideation, delinquent behaviour, aggression, and peer related problems (Steptoe & Butler, 1996).

### **4.3 Barriers to sports participation**

The second objective of the study was to identify the perceived barriers to sports participation. The following themes regarding barriers to sports participation emerged from the responses of the participants: financial constraints, uninvolved parents and lack of interest in sports participation.

#### **4.3.1 Financial constraints**

The main constraint that was highlighted by the participants was a lack of financial resources. Poor financial resources impacted on sports participation in two ways, namely poor facilities and transport cost.



#### **4.3.2 Poor facilities**

A common theme that arose from the interviews was issues around poor facilities. According to the respondents the poor facilities is due to financial reasons. Not enough money is available to develop facilities for the communities. The poor facilities result in youth becoming less motivated because of substandard facilities. It appears this also has an effect on the motivational level of the coaches as they cannot bring across the main objectives of the various sport codes. This is shown in the following quotes:

*“We only have one sport complex that we use for both soccer and rugby” (Participant 1)*

*“It is very frustrating to wait on others to finish before we can start with our activities”*  
(Participant 7)

*“Youth don’t come because there is nothing to draw them with... the poor facilities in many ways prevents them to come”* (Participant 8)

This view ties in with Torkildsen (1999) who suggest that the poor facilities and availability and accessibility to facilities is one of the most common barriers to sports participation. Given the lack of quality facilities in the community it decreases the chance that youth will participate in sports (Allison et al., 1999). Allison et al. (1999) further suggest that poor facilities does not only affect the motivation of the participants but it also decreases the motivational levels of the coaches. According to Singh (2005), the poor or lack of facilities contribute to lowered levels of motivation amongst coaches, burnout and discontentment with their role in sports development amongst adolescents.



### **4.3.3 Transport**

Several of the respondents emphasised transport to be a major barrier to sports participation. The respondents’ emphasised that the towns are wide spread and transport is needed to get the participants where they need to be. Many of the youth cannot afford to pay transport cost and would therefore opt out of engaging in sports. The literature provides evidence that suggest that transport is a major barrier for sports participation (Allison et al., 1999). This is clearly shown in the following quotes:

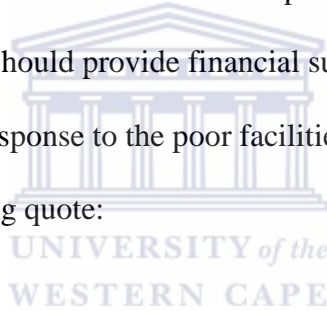
*“Game days we have to cancel because we don’t have money to provide transport for the children”* (Participant 4)

*“There is a lack of finances which means no money for transport”* (Participant 6)

This view ties in with Arnold (2001) who suggests that the lack of transport is a major constraint in rural areas. Arnold (2001) further suggests that lack of transport contributes to lower levels of sports participation as it prevents youth interested in sports to participate.

#### **4.3.4 Financial support from community leaders**

One of the respondents held the view that the lack of financial support from community leaders is a barrier to sports participation. The participant believes that community leaders should provide financial support to promote and develop sports participation in order for adolescents to engage in sports. His view centres on the poor involvement of the government. He suggests that the government should provide financial support to communities in need. This is a theme that emerged in response to the poor facilities in the community. This is clearly highlighted in the following quote:



*“We need the support from the government to help us overcome this financial problem. They should become more involved on the grassroots’ level so that they can see and our need for financial support (Participant 9)*

This ties in with Coakley and Dunning (2002) view that even if policies and financial support is available to communities there is poor control and planning over how the available funds are used to develop sports participation. Thus, Coakley and Dunning (2002) do not only suggest financial support to develop sport participation but also administrative support to aid in planning and organising.

#### **4.3.5 Poor parental involvement**

Two of the participants emphasised the importance of parental involvement to promote sports participation. Many of the respondents hold the view that most parents within their community are not promoting sports with the result that the youth are more exposed to the psychosocial problems within their community. They believe that parents are one of the most important agents to promote sports participation. This is clearly shown in the following quotes:

*“Parents are not involved because they have to work”* (Participant 9)

*“If parents are more involved and they encourage their children”* (Participant 1)

This is similar to the view of Surujlal et al. (2008) who believe that participation in sport provides an opportunity for parent-child interactions to take place. Surujlal et al. (2008) further suggest that when parents are more involved with their children, they can promote their children to participate in sports and it also creates the opportunity for parent-child interaction. However, Brustad (1993) suggests that the way in which parents support and encourage their children is essential to their participation in sport. Cumming and Ewing (2002) suggest that if parents support in an overzealous or intrusive way, it will have negative effects on the development and willingness among adolescents to participate in sports (Cumming & Ewing, 2002).

#### **4.3.6 Peer pressure**

Respondents hold the view that peer groups can be both a motivating factor for youth to participate in sports, as well as a barrier to sports participation. One of the respondents holds

the view that peer groups have a strong influence on adolescents' willingness to participate in sports. This is clearly shown in the following quote:

*“Sometimes friends influence you not to go to the fields to [...] they would much rather be socializing and drink [...] yes they have other attractions that keep them away from the sport but in the other hand some good friends will tell you not to go and do wrong things but rather to do sports to stay out of trouble”* (Participant 1)

This is similar to Arnold (2001) view that poor peer-groups norms influence sports participation amongst adolescents. Singh (2005), suggest that peer pressure is a predisposing factor for various illnesses and engagement in high risk behaviours (Singh, 2005).



#### **4.4 Sports and resiliency**

The third objective of the study was to explore the relationship of sports participation and resiliency building. The third objective will be discussed under the following themes that emerged from the interviews: sports participation and choices as well as sports as a protective factor against psychosocial problems.

##### **4.4.1 Sports participation and choices**

All the participants believed that sports had a positive impact on the choices that youth make. Most of the participants believed that youth learn lessons through sport that inform their decisions about the future. This is clearly shown in the following quotes:

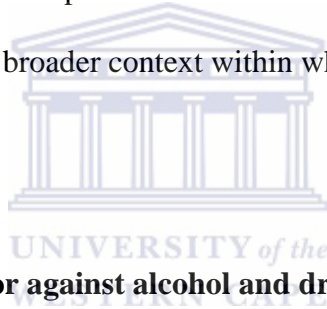


*“Sport helps you to understand a loss, so in future you would know how to handle the disappointment” (Participant 2)*

*“It helps you to say no the peer pressure” (Participant 3)*

*“Sport helps you to think differently about your decisions” (Participant 9)*

This is similar to Donaldson and Ronan’s (2006) view that sports participation develops behaviours such as co-operation, unselfishness, positive attitudes toward achievement, stress management, perseverance, appropriate risk-taking, and the ability to tolerate frustration and delayed gratification. This view ties in with Arnold’s (2001) view that imbedded in sports are rules where consequences are enforced if one does not stay by the rules. Thus he believes the rules of the game hold important principles which allow one to think about the consequences of a decision that can be used in a broader context within which youth interact (Rutten et al., 2006).



#### **4.2.2 Sports as a protective factor against alcohol and drug abuse**

South Africa is experiencing an increase in alcohol and drug related problems (Parry et al., 2002). Alcohol is identified as the most commonly abused substance in the country (Møller, 2004) and more concerning results indicate that the Cape Town metropole reports the highest rates of risky drinking compared to other cities in South Africa (Moller, 2004). Most of the respondents agreed that sports can address issues such as alcohol abuse and substance abuse. The respondent identified sports participation as a protective factor that can be used to amongst the youth to ensure they use their time more constructively. This is clearly shown in the following quotes:

*“The most common problems with our community is alcohol and drug abuse” (Participant 1)*

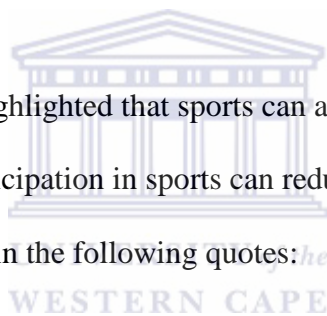
*“The youth drink over weekends”* (Participant 4)

*“Most of our youth is bored and that is why they drink...they need money so they join gangs”*  
(Participant 8)

This is similar to Donaldson and Ronan’s (2006) view that sports participation has been identified as an intervention strategy to address alcohol and substance abuse. This is similar to Feron et al’s. (1999) view that the participation in sports increase social bonding and decrease deviant behaviours such as alcohol consumption and drug abuse amongst adolescents.

#### **4.2.3 Protective factor against teenage pregnancy**

Both of the female participants highlighted that sports can also aid females against teenage pregnancy. They believe that participation in sports can reduce the chances of teenage pregnancy. This is clearly shown in the following quotes:



*“Sport can help girls’ against teenage pregnancy and prostitution”* (Participant 2)

*“Sports can help because it will keep them busy so they will use their time in more positive things and so they will not get the chance to have sex and fall pregnant”* (Participant 6)

A review on unsafe sexual behaviour of South African youth indicates that at least 50 % of young people in South Africa are sexually active by age 16 and at least 80 % by age 20 (Eaton, Flisher & Aero, 2003). A concerning statistic is that under 20 % of young people use condoms at every sexual encounter and an estimate of 50-60 % of youth in these studies have never used a condom (Eaton et al., 2003). Sports participation according to Feron et al’s. (1999), is associated with lowered levels of high risk behaviour such as unprotected sex.

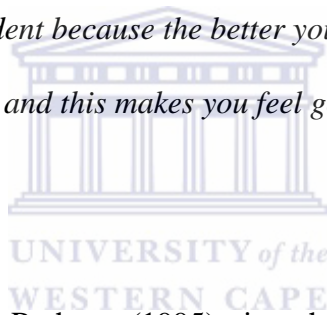
#### 4.2.4 Self-esteem

Several of the participants believed that sports participation can contribute to higher levels of self esteem. The respondents suggested that sports participation can shape more confident youth and build strong character traits which can be generalised to the broader community. This is clearly shown in the following quotes:

*“You can build character through sports and will boost your self-esteem”* (Participant 10)

*“Sport can make you feel good about yourself because if you do well people will admire you”*  
(Participant 3)

*“Sports can make you more confident because the better you become at sports the more you feel you are doing something well and this makes you feel good about what you can do”*  
(Participant 8)



This is similar to Willimczik and Rethorst (1995) view that suggest sports participation and activities have a beneficial effect on self-esteem. They believe that participation in sports has a moderating influence on the link between actual physical activity and self-esteem.

#### 4.2.5 Discipline

Some participants hold the view that sports build discipline within youth that can transcend into their behaviour in the broader community. This is clearly highlighted by the following quote:

*“It builds discipline because sports have rules [...] it helps you to channel your energy into something constructive” [...] sports have rules and you have to be disciplined to perform*

*well...in the same way the principles of sports can be used at home and school” (Participant 3)*

This is similar to Torkildsen`s (1999) view that sports participation is positively linked to discipline amongst adolescents. This is supported by Eccles et al. (2003) who believes that sports participation is needed to fully prepare youth for the transition into adulthood.

Therefore sports participation has been identified as contributing to discipline which ultimately results in the youth engaging in constructive activities which have a positive influence on their future (Eccles et al., 2003).

#### **4.2.6 Building relationships**



Participant 5 believes through sports new friendships can be developed. The respondent suggests that sports participation creates the opportunity for new friendships to emerge.

This is clearly shown in the following quote:

*“Through sports youth can build relationships that will act as a support for them. To have friends is an important thing but if you have a friend that is also involved with sports it makes it easier to participate in sports (Participant 5)*

This is similar to Donaldson and Ronan`s (2006) view that sports participation allows the opportunity for adolescents to meet other youth who share similar interest. Not only does sports participation help to develop relationships but it also helps serves as a support system that help youth to motivate each other to engage in sports activities. Willimczik and Rethorst (1995) also suggest that sports participation cuts across all boundaries as sport is a universal language and fosters the development for new friendships.

#### 4.2.7 Sports and school performance

One of the themes that emerged strongly from the interviews was the relationship between sports participation and enhanced school performance. This is clearly shown in the following quote:

*“Sports give you a healthy body and mind...this sports allows you not only to develop you muscles but your brain also, it helps you to focus better because if you are involved in sports you must concentrate to get the best result [...] now youth can apply the same skill in the class room and in my experience children involved with sports are always in school, perform better in their school work and show more respect for their teachers”* (Participant 4)

Research conducted by Mahoney and Stattin (2000) also found that school extracurricular activity participation and supervised and structured leisure activities, including organised youth sport, are associated with improved school performance amongst adolescents. Jeziorski (1994) believe that youth participating in sports earned better grades. He further suggests that youth who participate in sports behaved better in the classroom and had fewer behaviour problems outside the classroom. Sport participation has also been linked to better school attendance and a reduction of the dropout rate amongst school children (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000).

#### 4.2.8 Sports is not enough

Although all participants felt that sports participation is crucial to deal with the various psychosocial problems, some felt that sports cannot solve all the problems. It was recommended that higher structures, such as government, should address psychosocial problems in order to elicit change within the individuals. The following response of one respondent indicates although sports have many beneficial consequences, it is unable to address issues such as psychosocial problem holistically and adequately in the community.

*“Sport is a good thing all schools should have sports at the school [...] however a sport does not address the entire problem in our community. Sports only help children up to a point but the problem is much bigger and sport does not cover everything. We have to look at unemployment and the upbringing of our children and many a times if the parents provide the support needed for our youth to develop positively they tend to make better decisions in life”*

(Participant 7)

The understanding is thus that the government, parents and schools and other important organisations should make a collective effort to address issues in the community.

## CHAPTER FIVE

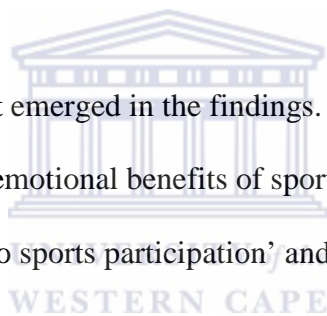
### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will include a summary of the main findings and discussion thereof in relation to theory and previous literature. It will also include the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research. This is then followed with a conclusion.

#### 5.2 Summary of the main findings

There were five major themes that emerged in the findings. These were as follows: 'health benefits of sports participation', 'emotional benefits of sports participation', societal benefits of sports participation', 'barriers to sports participation' and 'sports and resiliency'. These themes will no be discussed.



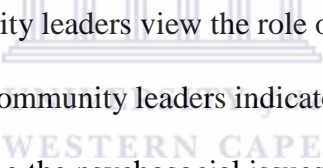
##### 5.2.1 Health benefits

The first major theme that emerged from the study is health benefits associated with sports participation. The study concluded that the participants understood sports participation as a protective factor against illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and obesity. The participants suggest that adolescents engaged in physical activities can avoid many health risks associated with inactivity during childhood (Steptoe & Butler, 1996). The literature highlights that participation in sports activities is linked with a better quality of life and reduces the risks of a variety of diseases (Sallis & Owen, 1999).

### **5.2.2 Emotional benefits**

The majority of participants in the 10 interviews felt that sports participation can be linked to improved emotional state amongst adolescents. The participants hold the belief that if youth participate in sports they are able to vent their energy in a functional manner. It is suggested in research done by Donaldson and Ronan (2006) that sports participation promotes emotional wellbeing and included improvements in depressed mood, anxiety and stress. This ties in with what DuBois and Eitel (1994) found, namely that through sports participation risky behaviours such as suicide can be reduced.

### **5.2.3 Societal benefits**



The findings suggest that community leaders view the role of sports in their community as beneficial. The perception of the community leaders indicate that sports participation is a vital part of the community in addressing the psychosocial issues prevalent in the community. The study revealed that most participants suggest that sports participation creates employment opportunities for adolescents in the community. They believe that through sports participation youth can earn a living and sustain themselves. The participants' believe that through sports participation the youth are able to generalise the rules and structures to the broader society. This view ties in with Bronfenbrenner ecological levels that suggest everything within the system is interconnected (Visser, 2007). According to systems theory, adolescents may learn the values through sports participation which can be practiced in the microsystems as well as the organisational and community levels. The benefits of the values learnt will thus also effect change on the entire system, as Bronfenbrenner suggest all things within a system are



connected, be it directly or indirectly (Visser, 2007). Thus youth learn through sports rules and self discipline needed in their community when facing challenges.

#### **5.2.4 Barriers to sports participation**

The study also helped identify the barriers to sports participation. The lack of financial resources and poor parental support appear to be the main constraints to youth participating in sports. Poor financial support is seen as the main constraint that affects the facilities and transport costs. The study also identified poor maternal and emotional support as a barrier. The study found that due to poor financial reasons parents are compelled to work most of the time to provide for the children. According to Coakley and Dunning (2002), financial support is needed to develop sport participation. Financial problems impacts negatively on the supply of proper sports facilities, as well as the ability to pay for transport costs. Participation in sport requires that players have to travel long distances to other towns to compete, which contributes to high transport costs for sports. These factors all contribute negatively to sports participation.

#### **5.2.5 Sports as a protective factor**

The majority of the participants believe sports are a protective factor for adolescents. The study found that the perceptions of the community leaders favour sports participation. They hold the view that sports participation can address psychosocial problems amongst adolescents such as teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse prevalent in the community. They felt that sport can also address issues, such as gangsterism and health related factors such as obesity and heart diseases. The study revealed that sports participation can be linked

to better performance in school. They believe that children who participate in school are associated with improved academic performance, as well as an improvement in their behaviour in class.

This is supported by Jeziorski (1994) who believes that children who participate in sports obtained better grades in school and behave better in the classroom. This view ties in with Sallis and Owen (1999) view that adolescent who are involved in sports are linked with fewer behaviour problems outside the classroom. He further suggests that children who participate in sports are less likely to drop out of school when compared to those who do not participate in sports (Sallis & Owen, 1999).

### **5.3 Recommendations**



Although this study focussed on the perception of community leaders on the role of sports participation in dealing with psychosocial problems in the community, it did not explore alternative intervention strategies as one of the participants mentioned that sports participation is not enough to address the issues prevalent in the community. This is an area which would have been valuable to explore further as alternative intervention strategies need to be investigated to suggest the best alternatives to sports participation. The study further did not address the perception of parents as the literature show that parents play a vital role to promote sports participation. This is an aspect that could be researched.

## 5.4 Limitations of the study

1. Due to the nature of sports in the Clanwilliam and Lamberts Bay community, most of the sport codes are managed by males. This study did not adequately address the perceptions of female community leaders on the role of sports participation in a rural area. The two female participants involved in the study provided some insight, however, this was not enough.
2. Because many of the participants work long shifts it was very difficult to find available participants to involve themselves in the study. Many of the participants are also involved in community projects which made it difficult to find a time to administer the various interviews.



## 5.5 Conclusion

Involvement in sport participation has many benefits attached to it, however, various constraints like poor financial resources lie at the heart of preventing the development of optimum sports participation of the youth in this area. Sports participation is understood as a protective factor, therefore more time and effort should be adopted in the research and development of sports participation amongst adolescents in our South African society.

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## Appendix A

### INFORMATION SHEET

**Title of Research Project:** Perceptions of community leaders of the role of sports participation in dealing with psychosocial problems amongst adolescents in a rural area.

#### **What is this study about?**

The present study investigates the use of sport as protective factor against psychosocial problems in the community. Research indicates that participation in recreational and formal sports can play a vital role in enhancing adolescents' wellbeing. In an effort to address the psycho-social problems affecting these communities, various intervention strategies should be adopted. One of those identified in literature is sports participation (Donaldson and Ronan, 2006).

#### **What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?**

You will be asked to answer questions contained in a discussion guide which you must please respond to the best of your ability. All the questions will be related to the issue of whether participation in sports can build resiliency within adolescents against psycho-social problems.

The discussion will be facilitated by trained researchers. Participation in the research is completely voluntary and you are under NO obligation to take part. The information that you will provide will NOT be disclosed to any member of the community or any other person, unless you give permission. In addition, some demographic information such as age, gender, family make-up, etc. will also be necessary to facilitate a more comprehensive study.

**Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?**

We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. We will need to record information like your age, gender and socio-economic status, but your name will not appear on the record that will be kept of the information. A number that will be assigned to the information will be recorded and will be the only way of linking your responses to a specific question, but it will be completely anonymous. The researchers will be the only people who will have access to the results. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.

**What are the risks of this research?**

There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project. We are not doing research on you as a person or to affect you in any way.

**What are the benefits of this research?**

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the researchers learn more about the factors in your community that influence adolescents into crime and other psycho-social issues prevalent in the community. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of this problem.

**Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, there will be no consequences.



**Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?**

Should you be negatively affected by this research, you can contact Mr Mohammed Adam, my research supervisor at the University of the Western Cape. Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Head of Department: Prof K. Mwaba (021-959 2839)

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences: Prof R. Mpofo

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate

Research Committee and Ethics Committee.

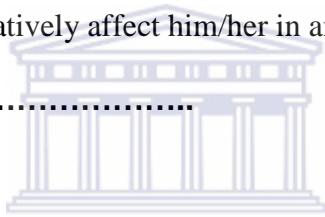


## CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project:** Perceptions of community leaders of the role of sports participation in dealing with psychosocial problems amongst adolescents in a rural area.

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily give my permission to be recorded and participate in the study. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that s/he may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect him/her in any way.

**Participants name**.....



**Participants signature**.....

UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

**Date**.....

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinator:

**Study Coordinator's Name: Mohammed Adam**

**University of the Western Cape**

**Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535**

**Telephone: (021)959-2842/2283/2453**

**Fax: (021)959-3515**

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Questionnaire**

1. In your opinion, what benefits does sport offer adolescents in your community?
  
2. Can sports protect adolescents against crime and behaviour problems in the community? Why?
  
3. What would be the motivating factors that would lead adolescents to participate in sport?
  
4. Comment on some of the barriers that would influence adolescents not to participate in sports?
  
5. In your opinion does sports participation protect adolescents against high risk behaviours?

