Enhancing the Resilience Process for South Sudanese Unaccompanied and Separated Children: A Case Study from Nairobi, Kenya

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This thesis is submitted for obtaining the Master's Degree in International Humanitarian Action. By submitting the thesis, the author certifies that the text is from his/her hand, does not include the work of someone else unless clearly indicated, and that the thesis has been produced in accordance with proper academic practices.
Abstract
The main aim with this thesis has been to understand how the resilience process could be enhanced for South Sudanese unaccompanied and separated children, USC, resettling in Nairobi, Kenya. The aim has further been to provide primary empirical data in order to bridge the gap on resilience research specifically related to this target group, within a non-western refugee context. The research has been carried out using a single case study design, with qualitative methods including an extensive literature review, and semi-structured interviews, as well as a questionnaire for qualitative purpose with 16 South Sudanese youth, arriving in Kenya unaccompanied or separated. Within this thesis, the concept of resilience has been approached from mainly a childhood perspective, focusing on research from the field of child psychology. As a complement, one specific model from the salutogenic research field on health promotion has also been used.

Through the case study, a variety of internal and external protective factors were identified, that could enhance the resilience process for South Sudanese USC. The most occurring were: a belief in God; focus, hard work and discipline; the desire to help family and people in need of support; education; support from others; and to understand and accept the new culture. In addition, the senses of meaningfulness, comprehensibility and manageability worked as important tools to further understand the protective factors that had enhanced resilience for the South Sudanese participants. The findings of this research have also included risk and vulnerability factors that could challenge the resilience process for the target group, including severe human suffering and stressful events; violence; lack of basic needs; loss of family and relatives; lack of mentor/advisor; and separation from family. The thesis ends with providing practical recommendations for humanitarian and development actors on how they best can support South Sudanese USC in the East Africa region.
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Preface

This research has been carried out for all those hundreds of thousands of unaccompanied and separated children worldwide, who forcibly have been displaced due to conflicts and disasters. I want to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has been involved in this research, contributing and making it possible. This includes interview participants, staff members from the local organisation in Nairobi, friends and family, and mentors and staff from Uppsala University, as well as staff from other organisations. I want to especially thank all the young South Sudanese refugees in Nairobi, who participated in this research and boldly shared their stories and perspectives with me. Your conversations humbled me and taught me so much about life, adversities, strengths and hope. This thesis is dedicated to you.

I also want to especially thank my supervisor Luz Paula Parra for her patience, advice, and encouragement throughout the research process. To my beloved husband, there are no words to express my gratefulness to you for your unconditional love and support, and for always believing in me.
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<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCA</td>
<td>Climate Change Adaptation</td>
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<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<td>CPA</td>
<td>Comprehensive Peace Agreement</td>
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<td>DRR</td>
<td>Disaster Risk Reduction</td>
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<td>HRW</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
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<td>IDPs</td>
<td>Internally Displaced People</td>
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<td>LEC</td>
<td>Life Events Checklist</td>
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<td>MFS</td>
<td>Minor Field Studies</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organisation of African Unity</td>
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<td>OCHA</td>
<td>United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCR</td>
<td>Department of Peace and Conflict Research (Uppsala University)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Posttraumatic Stress Disorder</td>
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<td>SOC</td>
<td>Sense of Coherence</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPLM/A</td>
<td>Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army</td>
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<td>SSDM/A</td>
<td>South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army</td>
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<td>SSLM/A</td>
<td>South Sudan Liberation Movement/Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCDP</td>
<td>Uppsala Conflict Data Program</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>U.S.</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>USC</td>
<td>Unaccompanied and Separated Children</td>
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1. Introduction

The world is currently facing the highest level of displacement ever recorded. Over 65.6 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide due to war, political instability, natural disasters, mass population movements and extreme poverty, with over half of the population being under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2017; Carlson, Cacciatore and Klimek, 2012, p.259). In May 2017 the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reported that the number of children\(^1\) being displaced alone has increased five-fold since 2010 (UNICEF, 2017). Many refugee children are exposed to various traumatic events and risks, both previous to, and after their resettlements, such as violence, exploitation, abuse, loss of family and possessions, neglect, trafficking, mass murder, rape, torture, discrimination, and military recruitment (UNHCR, 2018a; Carlson, Cacciatore and Klimek, 2012, p.261). These extreme adversities can lead to mental health problems and adjustment problems, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, difficulties in school, and behavioural problems. Unaccompanied\(^2\) and separated\(^3\) children (USC), who have to resettle without their parents, are among the most vulnerable groups (Luster, et al., 2010, p.197; UNHCR, 2016; Carlson, Cacciatore and Klimek, 2012, p.261).

However, children exposed to various risks and adversities do not necessarily become ill or develop long-lasting negative outcomes. Research has shown that children are incredibly resilient and that the majority of children exposed to severe risks such as political violence, develop resilience. Children with so called protective factors can experience reduced negative effects of risks and adversities, as these factors will weaken or erase the stress caused by these risks (Carlson, Cacciatore and Klimek, 2012, p.262; UNHCR, 2018a; Borge, 2011, p.171). As the number of USC is increasing worldwide, there is great value in studying resilience processes among USC. Through more research, a better understanding can be obtained of which protective factors could

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\(^1\) In this thesis a child is defined as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, Article 1).

\(^2\) Unaccompanied children are also called unaccompanied minors and refer to “children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so” (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2004, p.13).

\(^3\) The term separated children refers to “those separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members” (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2004, p.13).
This research has set out to study a specific group of South Sudanese USC, resettled in Nairobi, Kenya, with the aim to understand their resilience process and identify factors that could enhance their adaptation and way forward, despite all the adversities that they have faced as young refugees in a non-western context. If resilience for this specific group could be understood, it could also contribute to paving the way for appropriate interventions, aiming to promote adjustment and well-being, and prevent development of problems and undesirable consequences for USC in challenging contexts (Borge, 2011, p.11).

This thesis consists of seven chapters. This first chapter gave an introduction to the pressing issue laying the foundation of the thesis, namely the high influx of South Sudanese USC to neighbouring countries and the importance of finding ways of enhancing the resilience process for this specific group. The second chapter will provide a broader picture of this research, with its aims, questions, previous research, relevance, methodological framework, limitations and ethical dilemmas. The third chapter will present the conceptual and theoretical framework selected for this thesis, while the fourth chapter will provide a background, including the history of conflicts in South Sudan and the on-going humanitarian situation in the country. The fourth chapter also contains a background on Kenya as a recipient country of refugees, its legal framework for refugees, and on the situation for refugees residing in Nairobi. The chapter ends with presenting findings relating resilience with specifically USC from South Sudan/Sudan. The fifth chapter will present the findings from the field study, which will be discussed further within the sixth chapter. The seventh and last chapter will provide a conclusion of this research and recommendations on future research and on how humanitarian and development agencies best can support South Sudanese USC in the East Africa region.
2. The Research Process

This qualitative research takes its stand from the pressing issue illuminated in the introduction above, the increased number of USC, that are forcibly displaced due to humanitarian crises, and the importance of understanding how the resilience process of these children can be enhanced. This chapter will continue with providing an overall picture of the thesis. First the aims and research questions will be presented, and thereafter a brief summary of previous academic research on the topic of resilience with focus on resilience relating to children, as well as the relevance of the subject to the humanitarian field will be presented. The chapter will continue with providing the methodological framework for this research, including research design, methods and the validity and reliability of the thesis. The chapter will end with discussing relevant ethical considerations.

2.1 Research Aims and Questions

This research is based on a case study of a specific group of South Sudanese USC in a town in the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya. The field study was enabled through the Minor Field Studies (MFS) grant and carried out during eight weeks between March and May 2018. The methods used for data collection were semi-structured interviews, one questionnaire (for qualitative use) and an extensive literature review. The semi-structured interviews and the questionnaire were carried out with 16 young South Sudanese refugees arriving to Kenya as USC.

This research had the following three aims: (1) to contribute to the academic research on resilience through providing primary empirical data regarding South Sudanese USC living in Nairobi, Kenya; (2) to provide a better understanding of how the resilience process could be enhanced for this target group; (3) to provide concrete examples of how humanitarian and development agencies could enhance resilience for South Sudanese USC through their practices.

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4 For statistical purposes, the United Nations (UN) defines youth as “persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years” (UN, 2018). This definition is useful for this research as the individuals of the target group are above the age of 18 but recently (0-5 years) was below the age of 18.
The main research question has been: *How could the resilience process for South Sudanese unaccompanied and separated children living in Nairobi, Kenya, be understood in order to enhance it?* In order to answer the main question the following four sub questions were used:

- What protective factors have enhanced the resilience process among South Sudanese unaccompanied and separated children in Nairobi, Kenya?
- Are some of the protective factors more commonly occurring than others within this specific context?
- What risks and vulnerability factors could challenge the resilience process among these unaccompanied and separated children?
- Which concrete recommendations could be given to humanitarian and development agencies working with the target group, in order to enhance these children’s resilience processes?

### 2.2 Previous Academic Research on Resilience

The concept of resilience is researched among a wide variety of fields, and its history goes back all the way to the year of 1807, when it was used within the field of physics to describe a material’s capacity to “absorb energy without suffering permanent deformation” (Sudmeier-Rieux, 2014, p.69). The word resilience means “to bounce back after a chock” and has its origins in Latin’s “resilire”. After introducing resilience to physics, popularisation of the concept followed within fields including ecology, economics, child psychology, systematic science (engineering), and more lately within the development and humanitarian field, with a major focus on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA). As resilience has become increasingly popular within the humanitarian and development fields during the last century, millions of dollars have been invested, by donors, with the goal to build resilience, especially with regards to climate changes (Sudmeier-Rieux, 2014, p.68).

The concept has risen into national and international policy, yet Sudmeier-Rieux (2014) argues that the theoretical understanding of resilience is inadequate and that the concept has a variety of different definitions, which results in lacking guidance in how the concept should be understood, used, and measured (2014, pp.67-68). Sudmeier-Rieux
(2014) also focuses on the risk of using resilience in recovery and rebuilding (so called passive resilience) as that could be “actually a dangerous shift, promoting short-term actions and focusing on short-term recovery issues rather than on root causes of risk and vulnerability” (2014, p.68). Instead of passive resilience, focus should be placed on transformational resilience, referring to “a high degree of flexibility to change, including interventions that address root causes of risk” (Sudmeier-Rieux, 2014, p.75).

Within this specific research, the concept of resilience has been approached from primarily a childhood perspective, focusing on research within the area of child psychology. In addition, one specific theory from the salutogenic research field on health promotion has also been used, as it interrelates with resilience. As mentioned above, resilience within the humanitarian field is often approach by a DRR and CCA perspective. However, for this research a child psychology approach is more suitable as the aim of the research is to understand how resilience could be promoted among individuals, and more specifically, USC.

Research on childhood resilience has been on-going since the 1960’s and 1970’s, when studies of children with schizophrenia were conducted (Luthar, 2006, p.740; Luthar and Brown, 2007, p.337; Borge 2011, p.60). Among children with a high risk of developing psychopathology (study of mental diseases), a group of children were found to have “surprisingly healthy adaptive patterns” (Luthar, 2006, p.740). This finding attracted researchers to study the factors behind this unexpected well-being (Luthar, 2006, p.740). Ever since then, there has been extensive research on the concept of resilience for children, often focusing on children threatened of, or exposed to, a high level of risks and adversities, including children affected by conflicts and disasters (Masten, 2011, p.493).

Research on childhood resilience can be summarised through four waves of resilience research. When the research begun in the 1960’s and 1970’s, there were scientists arguing that “crucial aspects of human function and development, essential for

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5 Childhood in this thesis refers to the quality of a child’s life and not merely the space between birth and adulthood. “The time for children to be in school and at play, to grow strong and confident with the love and encouragement of their family and an extended community of caring adults. It is a precious time in which children should live free from fear, safe from violence and protected from abuse and exploitation” (UNHCR, 2018b).
understanding and promoting prevention of, resistance to, or recovery from psychopathology, had been profoundly neglected” (Masten, 2011, p.493). Hence, the main aim of the first wave was to understand how development of psychopathology could be prevented, and which protective factors could be associated with the absence of psychopathology among children with a high level of risks (Borge, 2011, p.60). Pioneering scientists, including Norman Garmezy, Irving Gottesman, Lois Murphy, Michael Rutter, Arnold Sameroff, Alan Sroufe, and Emmy Werner, started to study the consequences of major threats to development (Masten, 2007, p.921). It was highly compelling for scientists to continue with the resilience research, carrying in mind the many children suffering from trauma and severe adversities around the world. A lot of attention was put on children facing domestic violence, war, poverty, and disasters (Masten, 2011. p. 493).

During the second wave, resilience researchers focused on revealing the processes behind the discoveries during the first wave. What characteristics defined resilience and when was a child to be considered resilient? (Borge, 2011, p.60; Masten, 2011, p.493; Masten, 2007, p.922). The third wave was focused on experimental research, as demands emerged calling for the development of methods and interventions that could actually promote resilience and prevent psychopathology among children in risk groups (Borge, 2011, p.61). However, this task was challenging as protective factors often are multi-layered and interfering with each other, thus making it difficult to highlight which factors were the most efficient and determinant (Borge, 2011, p.61). In addition, it was a slow process to establish proof of the efficiency of different resilience-promoting interventions by conducting experimental research (Masten, 2011, pp.493-494).

The fourth and still on-going wave of research within the area of childhood resilience is characterised by an interdisciplinary scientific approach, a greater focus on genetics, biology, neurology, emotional regulations, and the dynamics of adaptation and change (Borge, 2011, p.61; Luthar and Brown, 2007, p.931; Masten, 2007, p.921). One of the major characteristics in the resilience research is that it is “fundamentally applied in nature with the core aim of understanding, and thereby ultimately promoting, forces that maximize well-being among those at risk” (Luthar and Brown, 2007, p.931). The understanding of resilience can be achieved through identifying vulnerability and
protective factors that modify negative effects of adversities, and through identifying mechanisms and processes that confirm these findings (Luthar, 2006, p.743).

2.3 Importance and Relevance to the Humanitarian Field

As resilience has climbed into the agendas of both policy and practical interventions among international and national humanitarian actors, it is necessary to continue to conduct research on the concept in order to provide a better understanding of how resilience processes could be enhanced in humanitarian contexts for individuals affected by disasters. There are studies connecting resilience with specifically USC, but very few studies are explicitly focusing on USC from South Sudan, despite the increasing number of South Sudanese children and youth resettling in neighbouring countries. There are only a few researchers (Luster, et al., 2010; Qin, et al., 2014; Goodman, 2004; Carlson, Cacciatore and Klimek, 2012; Jani, Underwood and Ranweiler, 2015) who have carried out studies in the United States (U.S.) on a group of USC from the areas that today compose South Sudan and the southern parts of Sudan. The findings from these studies will be presented in chapter four. In addition, the research that has been conducted on resilience and USC has primarily focused on children who have resettled in western countries. Yet, 84% of the world’s refugees are hosted by developing countries and thus, this research aims to contribute to empirical data regarding USC in non-western settings (UNHCR, 2018c).

The target group of South Sudanese refugees for this specific research is further of utmost relevance, as South Sudan currently is one of three countries from where 55% of all of the world’s refugees come from (UNHCR, 2017). As of April 2018, the number of refugees from South Sudan had reached over 2.4 million, with the majority being children, out of which a large number are defined as USC. The biggest recipients of the South Sudanese refugees are the neighbouring countries, including Kenya (UNHCR, 2018d), hence the importance of creating empirical data relevant for refugee children in these host countries.

The final hope of this research is that the findings would inspire further research on the specific group of USC in both western and non-western contexts, in order to broaden the understanding of the protective factors behind the resilience process for this
vulnerable group. If more research were provided, it could contribute towards more appropriate humanitarian and development interventions for USC resettling in different contexts.

2.4 Methodology

This qualitative research, regarding South Sudanese USC in Kenya, is based on a single case study research design, implementing it with semi-structured interviews and the Life Events Checklist (LEC) questionnaire with 16 participants, and an extensive literature review. To use a case study as the research design was the most suitable choice, as the research aims to understand the reality from people’s own perspective, which is the aim with qualitative research (Sleijpen, et al., 2013, p.4).

There are four important perspectives of qualitative research that are relevant for this study. The first perspective is that a qualitative researcher aims to understand processes rather than results or a product. Secondly, a qualitative researcher is interested in the meaning, i.e. the exit point lies within peoples’ own experiences and interpretations of these. The third perspective enhances the researcher as the prime instrument for the data collection and the analysis of the data. Strengths of the researcher as an instrument are that he/she is sensitive to the context and can observe non-verbal messages, be flexible with the technique appropriate for different situations, observe the overall context, and be able to handle contra-responses. Fourthly, qualitative research is characterised by the implementation of field studies, i.e., the researcher often needs to physically approach places, people or institutions to be able to observe human behaviour within their natural context. This also often puts a demand on the researcher to firstly get familiar with the environment in which the research is to be carried out (Merriam, 1994, pp.31-32).

2.4.1 The Case Study

There is no exact formula for when a case study methodology should be used. However, a case study is more useful when the research questions aim to answer “how” or “why” some social phenomenon works and also when “the questions require an extensive and “in-depth” description of some social phenomenon” (Yin, 2014, p.4; Merriam, 1994, p.43). As the main question of the research is a “how” question and as it aims to
contribute to the understanding of the target group’s own perspective on their experiences and resilience process, in-depth research is necessary and thus a case study was believed to be the most efficient and appropriate research design to be used for this study. One of the limitations with case studies, relevant for this thesis, is the position of the researcher. With the researcher as the prime instrument, the case study could be limited by the researcher’s own integrity, bias, morality, knowledge, skills, empathy and sensibility. If the researcher identifies too much with the interviewee, her/his professional role cannot be upheld, and the dependency of the research could be threatened (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014, p.111).

The subject for this case study was a town in the outskirts of Nairobi in Kenya. In this locality, thousands of young South Sudanese refugees have resettled during the last decades, many arriving to Kenya unaccompanied or separated from their parents (Interviewee 1, 5th April, 2018). Kenya, as the country for this case study, was chosen as it is a big recipient of refugees from the region and has received a large number of South Sudanese refugees both pre and post violence in Juba in December 2013. Thus, it was not difficult to find young South Sudanese refugees who already had spent several years in Kenya, which has been one of the criteria for the participants, in order to best capture the resilience process.

The locality and the interviewees for the research were identified with the help of the hosting non-governmental organisation (NGO) working with sports, dance, and music activities for children and youth in the area. The name of the locality and the name of the hosting NGO will remain undisclosed throughout the thesis, in order to protect the work and staff of the organisation, together with all young South Sudanese refugees residing within the locality, many illegally. As the author of this thesis previously has lived in Nairobi, speaks basic Kiswahili, and is familiar with the context, Kenya was a good choice for conducting the field study in. Thus, already having knowledge about the context enabled the author to efficiently start the research process shortly after arriving to Kenya.


2.4.2 The Interview Process

In order to collect empirical data from the field study chosen, semi-structured interviews and one questionnaire were carried out with 16 young South Sudanese refugees, who resettled in Kenya as USC. In order to select the participants for the study, the author sent the hosting NGO a number of selection criteria in advance of the author’s arrival to Kenya. The criteria were the following:

- To have her/his national identity as South Sudanese
- To have arrived to Kenya as an unaccompanied or separated child
- To have lived in Kenya for a minimum of three years
- To be between the ages of 18 and 24 at the time of the interview being conducted

The selection was carried out by one of the volunteers in the NGO using his contacts, as he himself came to Kenya as an USC from South Sudan and thus had knowledge of other youth that fulfilled the criteria for participating. As this volunteer fulfilled all the criteria above, he was also one of the participants within the research. Every individual selected needed to fulfil all criteria above. During one of the interviews it turned out that one informant did not fulfil all criteria and thus the data collected from this participant was not used.

Ahead of each interview the informants received a presentation and information on the research, including the purpose and set-up, and that participation was voluntary and thus could be withdrawn at any time. All participants were also informed that they would be completely anonymous and thus, their names were coded into numbers. Before the research could start, all the participants had to sign a consent form (see appendix, no.1). Ahead of the interviews, each participant also filled out the LEC self-report (see appendix no.2). The LEC questionnaire is a screening tool for identifying potentially traumatic events that could lead to the development of PTSD (Gray, et al., 2004, p.330). The list is composed of 17 events and the participant check off one or several of the following statements: happened to me; witnessed it; learned about it; not sure; does not apply. This questionnaire was used only for a qualitative reason, in order for the author to have a wider understanding of what harmful events the young South Sudanese had been exposed to in life, and to also be able to better understand their resilience processes. To talk about stressful events can be difficult and a sensitive issue, and might
potentially also cause harm to the young participants. Thus the LEC report was used in order to minimise the negative effects of having to share difficult life experiences.

The semi-structured interviews were composed of 25 questions (see appendix no.3) and lasted between 17-57 minutes, depending on each interviewee and his/her talkativeness. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed by the author, and the data collected has been stored in a data-base, only accessible to the researcher. The author has chosen not to edit the language when quoting the interviewees. However, to make the language flow, the author has sometimes added a few words or a brief explanation. The language used for the interviews was English. An interpreter was available at all times. However, all the participants chose to conduct the interviews without the interpreter. As the author can speak basic Kiswahili and have access to people that are fluent in Kiswahili, the participants also had the possibility to express themselves in Kiswahili, if there were a certain word or sentence that they preferred to say in Kiswahili.

2.4.3 Validity and Reliability
The criteria of validity and reliability are important to integrate in order to enhance the quality of the research. Validity is often defined as “coherence between theoretical definition and operational indicator”, or that one measure what one claim is being measured (Esaiasson, et. al., 2007, p.63). According to Kvale and Brinnkmann (2014) there are three different types of validity relevant for qualitative research and two of them are relevant for this specific research: handcraft validity and pragmatic validity. The promotion of these validity types has been of importance to this research.

Handcraft validity is based on the researcher’s credibility and the quality of her/his research. The researcher should continuously control, dispute and theoretically interpret the results during the study in order to achieve a good handcraft validity (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014, pp.297-298). According to Alvehus (2013), it is important for the researcher to constantly argue for the procedures and approaches chosen within the study, which the author of this thesis has aimed to do through this extensive methodological chapter (Alvehus, 2013, p.123). In order to further strengthen the validity, the author has aimed to illuminate the concept of resilience from different
conceptual perspectives, including approaches from both child psychology and health promotion.

Pragmatic validity means that the knowledge produced by the research is valid, as it can be used in order to affect society. Validity within social science aims to provide input to ongoing discussions and practices in society, with the purpose to change and improve practices (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014, p.306). Within this research one of the aims has been to provide recommendations for humanitarian and development agencies in how to enhance resilience for South Sudanese USC, and the purpose of these recommendations is to improve the situation for the target group. The second aim, contributing to the academic field of resilience research, also has the ultimate purpose of improving the situation for USC affected by disasters and conflicts, thus also strengthening the validity of this research.

Reliability is about the absence of unsystematic and random errors, and to what degree the results of the research can be repeated (Esaiasson, et al., 2007, p.70; Merriam, 1994, p.180). The errors emerge through arbitrariness within the description of reality. Unsystematic errors are unpredictable and random, sometimes resulting in an overestimation or underestimation. However, reliability is ensured when the same phenomenon is measured repeatedly, and the results remain the same (Teorell and Svensson, 2007, p.56). For this research, reliability is ensured through the identification of different factors and mechanisms that either weaken or enhance the resilience process, which could be repeated at another time.

To enhance reliability, all interviews for data collection were also recorded and transcribed, with authorisation from each of the interviewees, in order to avoid possible errors caused by merely taking notes during the interviews. This also creates transparency and the possibility for other researchers to analyse the data if needed, and see if they can replicate the study. To describe all the necessary details of the methods used, as well as saving the database and data collected, is further a way of ensuring reliability, creating a manual for how the study can be repeated or replicated (Merriam, 1994, p.183; Yin, 2014, p.49). When using interviews as a data collection method, the data should reflect the source in order to have a high level of reliability (Lantz, 2013, pp.16-17). Thus a lot of efforts were put into the interview technique, including ensuring that the interviewee had a sufficient amount of time to reflect over and respond.
to the different questions. The author also tried to avoid one of the most common reliability mistakes within the interview method, which is to misuse the answer from the interviewee through adding the researcher’s own beliefs or perspectives into it, in order to confirm her/his presumptions. Instead the author tried to be aware of her own bias and subjectivity, and aimed to remain objective.

2.5 Limitations

The first limitation of this research regards the target group, as only refugees from South Sudan have been targeted. Secondly, within the group of South Sudanese refugees, the target group has been further limited to only include those arriving to Kenya as USC, due to the lacking research on this specific group. Another important limitation is the case study itself. Only one locality was chosen for the selection of interviewees. This is due to the limited time given within the thesis writing process. However, the aim of this research is not to make comparisons between different localities. Rather the purpose has been to achieve an in-depth understanding of the protective factors that enhance resilience in USC. This particular case of South Sudanese USC in Nairobi will help to illuminate these factors.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure that the people participating in this specific research have been treated with dignity and respect, the “demand for individual protection”, developed by the Swedish Research Council for Humanistic and Social Scientific Research, has been adhered to. This demand is the fundamental base for ethical considerations within humanistic and social research in Sweden and can be summarised in four principles; the principle of information, the principle of consensus, the principle of confidentiality, and the principle of utilisation (Vetenskapsrådet, 1990, pp.5-6).

The principle of information has been adhered to through providing adequate information to all interviewees, including the interviewees’ role within the research and the conditions for their participation, contact details for the responsible researcher, and
that the participation is voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time (Vetenskapsrådet, 1990, p.7). The second principle, regarding consensus, has been operationalised through acquiring each interviewee’s consent of participation ahead of conducting an interview. No inappropriate pressure was to be put on the interviewee, if she/he would decide to withdraw from the interview (Vetenskapsrådet, 1990, p.10). In order to comply with the principle of confidentiality, the names of the interviewees, locality and hosting NGO have been undisclosed throughout the research and within this thesis. The materials from the interviews were coded with numbers instead of the names of the participants. The principle of confidentiality is especially important for vulnerable individuals, and thus, for the target group of this study, as an exposure could imply harming consequences for them (Vetenskapsrådet, 1990, pp.12-13). The fourth principle imply that data collected for research, containing details of individuals, are not be shared or used for non-scientific purpose (Vetenskapsrådet, 1990, p.14).

The main ethical concern ahead of this research was in regard to the interviewees, as the individuals within the target group all arrived to Kenya as either unaccompanied or separated children. To interview children requires, not only the child’s consent, but also the parent’s or the legal caregiver’s consent (Hill, 2005, p.70; Vetenskapsrådet, 1990, p.9). This would have been challenging with regards to the target group, as many of them lack a caregiver. In order to avoid this consensus dilemma, one criterion for being an interviewee was that he/she was an USC at arrival to Kenya, but was above the age of 18 at the time when the interview was conducted.

The author has also taken into consideration cultural sensitivity throughout the research. The research questions and questionnaire were checked for cultural appropriateness ahead of the field study by the director of the hosting NGO. As the research concerns young refugees who have undergone major traumatic experiences and adversities, it was also important for the author to be aware of that some of the questionnaire and interview questions might be uncomfortable for the interviewees and could cause stressful and disturbing thoughts during and after the interviews. Hence, all the participants were informed that in case of any disruptive event, the hosting organisation was available and could provide support if needed. The informants also had the option of not answering if any of the questions were considered to be uncomfortable.
This chapter has provided an overall picture of the thesis, including research questions and aims, previous research, relevance of research, methodology, limitations and ethical considerations. The thesis will move on with presenting the conceptual framework chosen for the research.
3. Conceptual Framework

Within this chapter the conceptual framework for this thesis will be provided. This framework has been a tool for understanding and analysing the findings from the data collection. First, a brief discussion on the definition of resilience will be presented. Thereafter the chapter moves on to analyse the important components of the resilience process (risk, vulnerability and protective factors), and the sense of coherence (SOC) perspective from the field of health promotion.

3.1 Defining Resilience

Resilience is a concept, not a theory (Eriksson, 2015, p.94). Despite that, the concept of resilience has grown in popularity and with it the knowledge on resilience. Yet there is little consensus on how to define the concept, creating multiple and sometimes even contradictory definitions (Sudmeier-Rieux, 2014, p.68; Sleijpen, et al., 2013, p.2). However, the resilience concept is based on the common recognition that people exposed to all kinds of environmental adversities, respond in huge heterogeneous ways. Thus, when experiencing comparable levels of adversity, some people will have a better outcome than others, the negative experience will have either a strengthening or weakening effect on individuals (Rutter, 2012, p.335). Based on this inference, Michael Rutter (2012) defines resilience as “reduced vulnerability to environmental risk experiences, the overcoming of a stress or adversity, or a relatively good outcome despite risk experiences” (2012, p.356).

Other general resilience definitions are “positive adaptation, or the ability to sustain or regain mental health, despite experiencing significant adversity” (Sleijpen, et al., 2013, p.2) and “the capacity of the individual to (a) bend, but not break, and to (b) bounce back from adversity” (Sippel, et al., 2015, p.1). As the fourth wave of resilience researchers have started to work more with interdisciplinary perspectives on resilience, a definition that can be used across different system levels is anticipated to become more relevant in the upcoming years (Southwick, et al, 2014, p.4).

In this thesis, resilience will refer to Masten and Powell’s definition (2003, p.4), “patterns of positive adaptation in the context of significant risk or adversity”. This
definition can be made based on two fundamental elements: 1) that a person is “doing okay” or better than okay; and 2) that significant risk or adversity to overcome, exists or has existed (Masten and Powell, 2003, p.4; Masten and Reed, 2005, p.75). This definition is chosen as it is based on the perception of resilience as a dynamic process, rather than a personal trait. When defining resilience as a personal trait, there is a risk of perceiving an individual of either having resilience or not, and that some individuals might lack resilience and thus could never overcome adversity. Sleijpen et al. (2013, p.2) argue that when conducting research on young refugees, it would not be fair to say that some refugees’ mental health problems are a result of the lack of resilience, as some psychological problems should be regarded as “normal reactions to abnormal circumstances”.

The authors further argue the irrelevance of using the terms “bouncing back” when defining resilience, as it would never be possible for young refugees to return to a normal life. Hence a better definition of resilience would instead imply to “move forward” (Sleijpen et al., 2013, p.2). This definition would acknowledge that even some of the most resilient people could have had or still have severe mental health issues, but actively decide to keep moving forward. Sometimes later in life, traumatised people could even find themselves in a better place than they were before the traumatic event (Southwick, et al., 2014, p.3). Defining resilience as a dynamic process, better reflect the reality where resilience “more likely exists on a continuum that may be present to differing degrees across multiple domains of life” (Southwick, et al., 2014, p.2).

3.2 Risk Factors and Vulnerability Factors

Risk, vulnerability, and protective factors are all indicators of complex processes and mechanisms that affect the level of adaptation in individuals (Cicchetti and Cohen, 1995, p.9). Risk is a prerequisite for the existence of resilience, without it no one can prove to exhibit resilience (Borge, 2011, p.65). A risk factor, also called a stressor, refers to “a measurable characteristic in a group of individuals or their situation that predicts negative outcome in the future on a specific outcome criterion” (Masten and Reed, 2005, p.76). The difference between a risk factor (or a stressor) and a routine stimulus is that to the latter, the individual can respond more or less automatically, while a risk factor requires an additional source of energy in order to restore the normal
functioning (Antonovsky, 1979, pp.71-72). One example of a risk factor is a stressful life event. In the beginning of the resilience study, researchers often focused on one factor when identifying risks. However, risk factors often co-occur and add up over time, which result in risk factors often predicting similar issues, thus composing a cumulative risk (Masten and Reed, 2005, pp.76-77). These cumulative risks are often of more serious character than other risks, as their effects “tend to be synergetic, with children’s outcomes being far poorer than when any of these risks existed in isolation” (Luthar, 2006, p.742). The duration of a risk will also depend on the effect it has on a child. Major life events are commonly anticipated to lead to persistent changes, negatively affecting children. However, children often deal with acute situations relatively easily, while chronic crises are far more threatening to a child’s development, even in small doses. Persistent diseases, poor childhood environment, and a drawn-out refugee situation are all examples of chronic risks for children (Borge, 2011, p.76).

The initial source of risk could be either external (environmental) or internal (individual), or both. The same risk can have different effects on different children as the effect is dependent on the processes and mechanisms that it activates. However, it is important to remember that not all risks and stressors are negative. As already mentioned, an experience with adversity can either have a strengthening or weakening effect on an individual (Rutter, 2012, p.335; Borge, 2011, p.65; Antonovsky, 1979, p.71). Age and intellectual maturity are two factors that affect a child’s reaction to a risk. When there is a disaster, older children might be more vulnerable as they better can perceive the extent of the event, while younger children might be better protected as they do not perceive the situation to the same extent as the older children. If there are caregivers present who can deal with the adversities in an appropriate manner, the children (even the older ones) will most probably be even more protected and thus less affected by the disaster (Borge, 2011, p.69).

There are certain established risk factors that have been identified through decades of resilience research that pose a risk to children’s positive development, adaptation and well-being. These stressors include premature birth, maltreatment, parental illness or parent psychopathology, poverty, homelessness, war and disasters. Masten and Reed (2005, p.77) argue that there is “good evidence that such experiences or conditions elevate the probability of one or more problems in the development of children"
Young refugees, arriving to host countries, have to deal with their often traumatic experience, but in addition they also need to adapt to changed societal conditions, including social, cultural, and linguistic differences, and complex legal immigration processes, which all pose a risk for the child who already is in a vulnerable position (Sleijpen, et al., 2013, p.1).

All children are vulnerable and will be exposed to risks and stressors (Borge, 2011, p.82), but it is the child’s level of vulnerability and the existence of protective factors that will decide the effect of these adversities. Through identifying vulnerability and protective factors, an understanding for the resilience process is created. Vulnerability factors refer to indicators that enhance the negative effects of risks. Vulnerability factors are commonly regarded as enduring life conditions that promote maladaptation. Both external influences (interfamilial, social, and environmental) and internal influences (biological, psychological) can become sources of vulnerability if they negatively affect the outcomes of successful adaptation and competence (Cicchetti and Cohen, 1995, p.9). For young people living in urban poverty, the male gender can be a vulnerability factor as boys are often more reactive to negative community influences than girls. (Luthar, 2006, p.743).

There are no invulnerable children, as already mentioned above, as the vulnerability for stress and risk is relative, not absolute, and the resilience of a child is dependent on both internal and external factors. In addition, the level of vulnerability varies over time, with the context and with the personality of the child (Borge, 2011, p.82; Cicchetti and Cohen, 1995, p.9). What could be a vulnerability factor in one context might be a protective factor in another context. A good example of a factor having different effects and roles, is given in a study that was made among Masai children during the drought in East Africa in 1974, when the infant mortality rate was high. Two groups of young children were studied, one composed of children with troublesome temperament (or personality) and the other composed of children with calm temperament. The children with troublesome temperament cried, whined and drew attention to themselves, which resulted in them getting more food and thus increasing the survival rate in their group compared to the other group. In this context the troublesome temperament was a protective factor. However, in food secure environments a troublesome personality is
often linked with vulnerability, as it can create stress and irritation among family members and other people in the child’s environment (Borge, 2011, pp.71-72, 82).

3.3 Protective Factors

In contrast to vulnerability factors, protective factors (sometimes also called promotive factors) modify the effect of risks in a positive manner and promote competent adaptation in the child. Thus they rather enhance than hinder the development of the child (Masten and Reed, 2005, p.77; Cicchetti and Cohen, 1995, p.9). In addition to protective factors, the concept of resources and assets are also important for the understanding of resilience. Resource refers to the “human, social, and material capital utilized in adaptive processes”, while the presence of asset “predicts better outcomes for one or more domains of good adaptation, regardless of level of risk” (Masten and Reed, 2005, p.77). Within this thesis, assets and resources will be included in the concept of protective factors.

Protective factors can operate in both a compensatory manner and in an interactive manner. In a compensatory manner, the protective factors counterbalance the effects of risks while in an interactive manner the factors more powerfully regulates the effect of high levels of risks, through providing minimal influence during conditions of low risk, and providing maximum influence during conditions of high risk (Cicchetti and Cohen, 1995, p.9). The extent, to which certain risks and protective factors will affect the development and adaptation, will depend on where in the development process they will occur and also in what context. In addition, both protective and vulnerability factors vary and exist within a dynamic balance. Children, in whom the risk and vulnerability factors outweigh the protective factors, are more likely to have a maladaptive development and a weaker resilience process (Cicchetti and Cohen, 1995, p.9).

Protective factors are often, as with risk factors, divided into two groups, internal and external. Internal factors (also called personal) can have strong biological components, such as temperament and physical health, or be linked with social experiences, such as self-esteem and mastery beliefs. External factors (also called environmental factors) refer to the resources an individual has in her/his surroundings, such as family relations and family income, or links with a supportive community. Even if it this classification is
useful, it is important to remember the interrelation between these two groups. There are several other issues that are essential to consider when studying protective factors. Protective factors may vary in their efficacy, depending on individual differences. In addition, certain existing protective factors can enable the emergence of other protective factors at another point in time. This time span varies, it can be short, as in short-term adaptation to a stressor, or it can be life-long (Gore and Eckenrode, 2000, pp.34-35). As with vulnerability factors, protective factors can often co-occur to some degree within a specific population or within a specific time period. Within the resilience research, it is common to view protective factors from a variable-centred approach, i.e. to look at each factor and its contribution. In this way, the importance of the interrelation of different factors can be neglected or forgotten. Thus it is better to use a more holistic person-centred approach, which better allows the recognition of these interrelations (Gore and Eckenrode, 2000, pp.38-39).

Through research, several protective factors have been identified, that has shown to be important especially for children affected by war. Some of these might be relevant for the target group of this research as these youth have experienced conflicts in their home country of South Sudan. These factors include the availability of an additional care giver, shared sense of values, the use of humour and altruism as defence mechanisms, strong bond between the primary caregiver and the child, and the social support of members in the community who are exposed to the same adversities, especially teachers and peers (Werner, 2012, p.555). Borge (2011, p.176) claims that in a context where the child is exposed to political violence, the child’s own perception of the event has a major impact on the development of resilience. The interpretation of the event can either strengthen or weaken the child. The psychological difficulties can for example emerge if the child is having feelings of guilt, perhaps due to surviving when others did not, or due to not helping siblings and family more (Borge, 2011, pp.177).

In a context of political violence and conflicts, ideology is often a great protective factor, as it helps the children to place the violence into a social structure, giving it a feeling of meaning and function (Borge, 2011, pp.177-178). However, a very strong ideology can also intensify and prolong the struggle and thus become a chronic risk for children. Religious faith is also believed to serve as an important protective factor, helping a person to maintain the ability to care, love and show compassion despite being
exposed to hatred. Support from family and well-functioning parents are still the strongest protective factor for children exposed to disasters and conflicts. When there are no parents or family around, children can take care of each other as if they were family. A group of orphan and/or separated children in southern Sudan is given as an example of how children survived in groups, sharing food, shelter, joy and sorrow together (Borge, 2011, pp.178-179).

3.4 Antonovsky and the Sense of Coherence
In addition to the conceptual framework provided above, Aaron Antonovsky’s salutogenic model of health, the “sense of coherence” (SOC), will be presented. This model is used within health promotion and has its origins in medicine sociology (Medin and Alexanderson, 2000, p.63). The SOC perspective is not specifically focused on childhood resilience, nor specifically described as a resilience approach. However, the model is referred to by resilience researchers (Borge, 2011; Førde, 2017), and it is also fundamental for the comprehension of health promotion, which strongly interrelates with the promotion of resilience. Thus the author regarded the model as an important complement to the resilience framework used for this thesis.

3.4.1 Sense of Coherence and its Three Components
Antonovsky started conducting research focusing on health promotion in the 1970’s. In contrast to many of his fellow colleagues within the medical field, Antonovsky was one of the pioneers using a salutogenic orientation as a base for his research. A salutogenic perspective, focusing on the origins of health, asks the questions why people end up on the positive side of the health versus ill health dimension, and what drives them towards the positive pool. The salutogenic approach stands in contrast to the pathologic perspective, which instead has its focus on finding out why people get ill. Before Antonovsky introduced the salutogenic model, the pathologic approach had been dominating the research within medicine and medicine sociology (Antonovsky, 2005, pp.15-16). The aim of the salutogenic orientation is to study the factors behind the ability to handle stressors. Stressors will cause disease for some people while other people survive, remain healthy. It is the level of resistance and the ability to handle the stressors, which will determine the output (Antonovsky, 2005, pp.9, 16).
Through empirical research, Antonovsky developed the SOC concept, describing some people’s orientation towards the world (including stressors) as continuously comprehensible. (Antonovsky, 2005, p.17). The author claimed that the strength of SOC “was a significant factor in facilitating the movement toward health” (Antonovsky, 1996, p.15). The concept of SOC is composed by three essential components: meaningfulness; comprehensibility; and manageability. Through years of extensive research it became clear that people with a high SOC, also had high levels of these three components, compared with people with a low SOC (Antonovsky, 2005, p.43). However, SOC is not the only variable that contributes to health, but it can protect an individual from mental and physical illness (Medin and Alexanderson, 2000, p.65).

The first component, meaningfulness, can be regarded as the source of motivation for the concept of SOC. When a person with a high level of meaningfulness is forcibly confronted with an adversity, this person will face the challenge and try to find a meaning with it, while also getting though with her/his dignity intact. The meaningfulness refers to something having a value not merely from a cognitive perspective, but also from an emotional one. In his research, Antonovsky discovered that those interviewees regarded to have high SOC, always talked about one or two areas in life being meaningful to them (Antonovsky, 2005, pp.45-46). In contrast, interviewees regarded to have low SOC, rarely thought that there was anything in their lives in particular that was meaningful (Antonovsky, 2005, p.46).

Comprehensibility is the second component, and describes “to what extent a person experience internal and external stimuli as sensibly apprehensible, as information being ordered, coherent, structured and clear rather than as noise – i.e. chaotic, unordered, random, unexpected, reasonless” (Antonovsky, 2005, p.44). To have a high comprehensibility, makes a person able to apprehend adversities, despite not having wished for the events to occur, such as death, war, and failures. Comprehensibility emphasises a more cognitive reasoning than an emotional. In Antonovsky’s research, people with a low SOC tended to talk about all the unfortunate stressors that they had been exposed to, and thus expected it to continue throughout life. People with a high SOC rather talked about the stressors as life events that bring experiences, and challenges that can be faced and dealt with (Antonovsky, 2005, pp.44-45).
The third component, manageability, defines to what extent a person experience that there are resources available for her/him to use, which are of help when exposed to adversities and different forms of stimuli. Resources can both be internally controlled or externally controlled (as e.g. friends, family members, God, or history). Being on the positive side of the pool, a person with high manageability tends to not victimise herself/himself, but rather reason that it is possible to get through the adversities and that his/her sorrows will not last forever (Antonovsky, 2005, p.45).

3.4.2 The Sense of Coherence in Relation to Resilience

There are similarities connecting resilience to Antonovsky’s theory on sense of coherence. They both take their stand in processes that leads an individual towards health and well-being. From a salutogenic approach, one of the factors towards resilience could be a strong SOC (Eriksson, 2015, pp.93-94; Borge, 2011, p.22). Both the concept of resilience and the SOC model illustrate a relative soundness in people exposed to adversities (Borge, 2011, p.22). In addition, as both the concepts are process orientated, they can be placed on a continuum, and can be used on individual, group and community levels. However, resilience research has its starting point in the risk of developing pathology and ill health, while salutogenic research is independent of stress and risk, even if they often are taken into consideration (Eriksson, 2015, p.94).

Further on, Antonovsky’s has strongly based his model on a perspective that implies that it is the society that is the major designer of the individual, meaning it is through the socialisation that an individual can obtain the ability to handle different stressors. Thus to enhance SOC, interventions should focus on improving the socio-structuralised conditions for individuals. Antonovsky’s perspective can be regarded to be deterministic, as it does not provide much space for the individual herself/himself to promote health, unless she/he has grown up in an environment that enhances SOC (Korp, P., 2009, p.131). From a resilience perspective it is both internal and external factors that promote resilience and the well-being of an individual.

As this chapter has provided the conceptual framework for this thesis, the next chapter will provide a background on the situation in South Sudan, the situation for refugees in
Kenya, and a background on resilience research especially linked to USC from South Sudan/Sudan.
4. Background

The aim of this chapter is to provide a background to the subject of this thesis, in order to enhance the understanding of the findings that will be presented in the next chapter. First, an overview will be provided on the history of conflicts in South Sudan and on the ongoing humanitarian situation in the country, as well as the increased refugee influx into neighbouring countries. The chapter will move on to present the refugee context in Kenya and the legal rights and the situation for refugees residing there. The chapter will end with a presentation on the findings made on USC from South Sudan/Sudan resettled in the U.S.

4.1 South Sudan and its History of Conflicts

South Sudan, the world’s youngest nation, is currently facing a growing humanitarian crisis. Before the country became independent from Sudan in 2011, conflicts had already been ongoing for decades between rebel groups and the government of Sudan. Between 1963 and 1972, the southern based rebel group Anya-Nya fought the government, with the aim to achieve independence for the southern part of Sudan (UCDP, 2018a). The warfare continued in 1983, however this time the conflict was fought between the government in Khartoum and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) over governmental power. The fighting did not cease until the 9th of January 2005 when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between the two warring parties (UCDP, 2018b). The conflicts had disastrous results, including food insecurity and starvation, which claimed the lives of over 2 million people, (CIA, 2018; Qin, et al., 2014, p.215). The signed CPA included six years of autonomy for the south, followed by a referendum in which independence was to be one of the options for the final status for the southern part of Sudan (CIA, 2018). On the 9th of January 2011, the referendum was held with a remarkable 98% of the votes in favour of secession, and six months later, South Sudan was declared independent from Sudan (CIA, 2018; UCDP, 2018b).
Intrastate conflicts\(^6\) between the new government and the South Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SSLM/A) and the South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army (SSDM/A), and other similar intrastate conflicts marked the birth of South Sudan and have been on-going since 2011 in several locations in the country. In addition, in 2012 there were renewed fighting between the South Sudan and Sudan over their common disputed boarders (UCDP, 2018a). After disagreements with its neighbour, the South Sudanese government shut down the oil production, which led to a deteriorated economic situation for the young and fragile nation (CIA, 2018; UCDP, 2018b).

4.2 The Escalating Humanitarian Crisis

The on-going humanitarian crisis in South Sudan started to emerge in December 2013, when violence erupted in Juba between government and opposition forces. The conflict was the result of a split in SPML/A, the governing party, which led to “a vicious cycle of violence and the outbreak of intrastate conflict between the Government of South Sudan and SPLM/A in opposition” (UCDP, 2018b). The conflict caused massive displacement and food insecurity for millions of people in South Sudan, and the neighbouring countries started to see an increased influx of South Sudanese refugees, fleeing for their survival (CIA, 2018; UNICEF, 2018). A peace agreement was signed in August 2015, resulting in a transitional government in April 2016. The people of South Sudan did not get to embrace the peace for long, as renewed fighting broke out in July 2016 between the two signatories (CIA, 2018). Salva Kiir, the sitting South Sudanese president since independence, discharged the vice president Riek Machar, based on the accusation of Machar attempting to stage a coup d’état (BBC, 2013). Machar fled the country and remains in exile still up to date (HRW, 2018). The fighting between rival factions loyal to Kiir and Machar, deepened the humanitarian crisis and increased displacement internally and into neighbouring countries.

Today, South Sudan is still facing a civil war with violence continuously spreading into new parts of the country. Civilians are constantly targeted in the conflict through killings, sexual violence, abductions, and other forms of abuse and violence (HRW,

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\(^6\) An intrastate conflict is in this thesis defined as “a conflict between a government and a non-governmental party, with no interference from other countries” (PCR, 2018).
2018). The economy continues to deteriorate and the inflation has deepened the already severe situation of food insecurity. Currently, South Sudan has the highest proportion of children being out-of-school (over 50% of children), and they are exposed to all kinds of severe risks, including recruitment by armed forces and groups, sexual violence, exploitation and malnutrition (UNICEF, 2018).

According to the latest update by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of 30 April 2018, it is estimated that a total of 2,470,611 South Sudanese have fled their country (UNHCR, 2018d). Almost 70% of the refugees are children (UNICEF, 2018) and the majority have fled to the neighbouring countries, including Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sudan, with Uganda being the country hosting the largest amount of South Sudanese refugees (UNHCR, 2018d). In addition, there are approximately 1.76 million internally displaced people (IDPs) within the borders of South Sudan (OCHA, 2018).

4.3 Kenya as a Recipient Country

Kenya is currently one of the top countries hosting refugees in a protracted conflict context, with a total number of 483,597 refugees (as of 28 February 2018), where the majority of refugees and asylum-seekers have Somalia (57.3%) and South Sudan (23.4%) as their country of origin. The majority of the refugees live in the camps of Kakuma (38%) and Dadaab (48%), and in urban areas (14%), with Nairobi being the main city for refugees to reside in (UNHCR, 2018e).

Refugees in the urban areas of Kenya are many times a hidden population as the information about their status, location, numbers, or livelihood is severely lacking. International humanitarian actors and policy-makers have started to pay more attention to urban displacement, yet there is still a gap in knowledge and assistance to refugees within these specific areas. The actual number of refugees residing in Nairobi is unknown (there are only estimations as the one above) and the majority of these refugees are not given the same support as refugees inside the camps of Kakuma and Dadaab (Pavanello, et al., 2010, p.11). In Nairobi the refugees are exposed to harassment and abuse by police officers, discrimination, and the high level of criminal violence that all Nairobi residents are exposed to (Pavanello, et al., 2010, pp.17-20).
The harassment and abuse by police officers are often based on the widespread belief that refugees are restricted to camps, the lack of understanding why refugees would want to reside in Nairobi, the concept that refugees in general are criminally minded and some connected to terrorist organisations, and the lacking knowledge of the validity and authenticity of refugee documentation (Pavanello, et al., 2010, p.17).

Despite the fact that Kenya has been a recipient of refugees since the 1960’s, the country still views refugees as a transient issue and as a threat to national security (World Policy, 2016). During the 1960’s, 1970’s and 1980’s, refugees residing in Kenya could de facto both access work and move around relatively freely, even if there was a lack of legislation dictating the terms for refugees. In the 1990’s, the situation for refugees changed as Kenya witnessed a massive influx of refugees due to civil wars in neighbouring countries. The refugee camps Dadaab and Kakuma were set up close to the country borders and the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) took over the responsibility for the refugees from the Kenyan government. What was assumed to be a temporary refugee situation, turned into a protracted situation with the refugee camps and its refugees still remaining there today, over 25 years later. With the increased influx, Kenya started viewing refugees as a burden on the country’s already strained economy, and as a threat to the few jobs available (World Policy, 2016).

In 2007, the Refugees Act of 2006 came into practice and with it the rights and duties of refugees and asylum-seekers, including the implementation of the 1951 United Nations Convention Related to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (Pavanello, et al., 2010, p.15). The legislation provides the right for refugees to access work permits, seek employment, or start a business. However the same law restrict refugees’ right to movement. Through the encampment policy, “the government expects refugees to stay in camps to facilitate their protection and assistance needs and to safeguard national security” (World Policy, 2016). Only refugees with authorisation to live elsewhere are allowed to move outside the camp. Applying for a work permit, which only can be granted in Nairobi, is not a basis for this authorisation, thus limiting the refugees the right to work. Refugees who decide to live and work in urban areas illegally, without a movement pass, live with the constant threat of being harassed and
arrested. The encampment restrictions have during the last decade been stricter as a consequence of the increased Al-Shabab attacks. The gaps of the Refugees Act of 2006 regarding residence, registration, reception, and durable solutions resulted in a review of the legislation in 2017 (World Policy, 2016).

Map 1. Infographics - Refugees in Kenya as of 28 February 2018

As of 30 April 2018, Kenya was hosting 113 794 South Sudanese asylum-seekers and refugees, out of which approximately 63% are boys and girls under the age of 18. The majority of refugees are located in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Northern Kenya. However, approximately 5 500 refugees are located in the area of Nairobi and it is within this population that the participants of this study were selected (UNHCR, 2018f).
4.4 Resilience in Relation to USC from South Sudan/Sudan

As mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, there have been quite a few resilience studies specifically targeting South Sudanese USC, despite the severe on-going humanitarian crisis in South Sudan. However, a large group of Sudanese USC resettling in the U.S., often referred to as “the lost boys of Sudan”, has drawn the attention of several resilience researchers (Luster, et al., 2010; Qin, et al., 2014; Goodman, 2004; Carlson, Cacciatoro and Klimek, 2012). This group of approximately 500 Sudanese USC were resettled in the U.S. in 2000, through the largest resettlement project of USC that the world had ever seen (including over 3,500 USC). Most of these young Sudanese originated from the southern parts of Sudan, from the geographical areas today composing South Sudan and the southern parts of Sudan. The USC within these studies, mainly boys but also a few girls, had been exposed to extreme adversities, including death, loss of caregiver, hunger, thirst, extreme violence, and several resettlements within Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya. From the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, where the young refugees had lived before being resettled to the U.S., humanitarian actors had reported that very few of these Sudanese USC were in need of psychological help from institutions. Instead, there was a remarkable resilience noted in these young people that diversified them from USC from many other African countries (Goodman, 2004, pp.1177-1178; Qin, et al., 2014, p.215).

Goodman (2004), one of the researchers on resilience in this Sudanese group of USC, identified four themes that reflected the coping strategies used by the young refugees in order to survive and adjust after resettling in the U.S. The first coping strategy was the collectivity, which refers to the sense of being part of a group, knowing that “what is happening is not happening to me alone” (Goodman, 2004, p.1183). Suppression of traumatic memories and associated feelings, together with using distractions to keep their mind busy in order to avoid difficult thoughts and feelings, was the second theme. The third theme was finding meaning in their experiences, which also is one of the three previously mentioned SOC components (Antonovsky, 1987). For many of the USC, meaningfulness in life was related to a strong belief in God, that God was in control of their lives and that it was God deciding when to live and when to die. Other participants also mentioned that the historical and political context could explain why they had to suffer and experience all the extreme adversities (Goodman, 2004, pp.1184, 1187-
The process from hopelessness to hope was the fourth theme. During their flight and temporary resettlements, the young refugees lived under extremely destructive circumstances, surrounded by death, accepting that they might be the next person to die. There was no access to education or work, and no prospect of a future. That hopelessness emerged into hope as they were resettled and got the opportunity to go to school and start to take control of their own lives, which demonstrates the importance of education for USC when resettling (Goodman, 2004, pp.1188, 1190).

The importance of hope, in order to enhance resilience and successful adaptation, has also been identified by Jani, Underwood and Ranweilier (2015). They argue that hope has “two principal components: pathways, the possession of concrete, feasible goals; and agency, a belief in one’s ability to reach those goals” (Jani, Underwood and Ranweilier, 2015, p.1198). Research, both unlimited and limited to migrant children, have demonstrated that hope has a positive impact on life satisfaction and emotional state, long-term psychological well-being, stability in life, integration into new communities, and academic achievements. Hope has also shown to be a protective factor against adverse life events (Jani, Underwood and Ranweilier, 2015, pp.1198-1199).

Qin, et al. (2014) have also carried out resilience research on this specific group of USC from Sudan, focusing on cultural adaptation. In their study, three major challenges for a successful adaptation among the USC were identified: mental health issues, ambiguous loss, and the burden of requests of remittance from family members back home (Qin, et al., 2014, pp.222-223). Despite the challenges, the majority of the participants adapted well and the authors of the research identified four themes that helped the Sudanese USC with the adaptation process. To stay connected with home and preserving their culture was the first theme, which refers to the youth remembering where they came from and taking advantage of the possibilities available in the U.S. Once again, education served as an important tool for the Sudanese USC to stay focused and seize opportunities, and also their strong belief in God. To maintain faith, had an extremely important role in shaping the purpose and goals for the youth, both in regards to their journey and to their future. The second theme was to make good choices and not becoming too 'Americanised'. This theme refers to grasping the positive sides of the American culture, such as education and work opportunities, more equal gender roles,
and better living conditions, but to also keep the positive sides of the Sudanese culture, such as strong family bonds, and children being more obedient and respectful towards adults (Qin, et al., 2014, pp.223-226). Even if the research showed the importance of maintaining the Sudanese culture, to accommodate to the new life, including learning the English language, everyday skills, and broaden the social circle beyond the Sudanese peers, was also necessary and this is also the third theme. The fourth theme was to engage in a process of cultural appropriation and refers to the Sudanese USC engaging in a process of conscious selective acculturation, similar to the second theme. Those participants who chose to obtain parts of both the American and Sudanese culture tended to do best in their adjustments (Qin, et al., 2014, pp.229, 231-232).

A third study on the specific group of USC from Sudan, resettling in the U.S., was conducted by Luster, et al., (2010), examining what factors it is that contribute to successful adaptation within an unfamiliar context. The factors, identified by the youth themselves, were similar to the above presented studies. The youth had three main goals when resettling in the U.S.: getting an education; rebuilding Sudan; and helping people back home. Any of those working towards these goals were considered to be successful. Individual attributes that helped within the adaptation process were: staying focused and grasping the opportunities of education and work; remembering where they came from and helping those still suffering back home; being persistent; the belief in God as the one saving them; and to make good choices, i.e. not being seduced by the less positive aspects of the American culture. Relationships with and receiving guidance from those familiar with the new context and culture were also two factors recognised as important in order to adjust to the new country (Luster, et al., 2010, pp.202-204). The importance for USC to build relationships with, and emotional attachments to, other adults and peers is also confirmed by Carlson, Cacciatoro and Klinek, (2012) who also conducted research on this specific group of USC from Sudan (Carlson, Cacciatoro and Klinek, 2012, p.264). As Qin et al., discovered in their research, Luster et al., also found that those youth selecting the best from each culture were the ones adapting most successfully (Luster, et al., 2010, pp.204).

Carlson, Cacciatoro and Klinek, (2012) identified several different protective factors that were of importance to the Sudanese USC in their survival and adjustment process, which they divided into three different categories. The first group was individual
protective factors, which included easy temperament (outgoing and positive attitude), good coping skills, effective school performance and belief in a higher power or religiosity. The second category was family protective factors and enhanced the importance of being part of a large and extended family system. Even if a close relationship could not be kept with living parents, still the USC could get help to adapt through maintaining other family ties. Some of the USC in the research were placed in loving foster families, which also was important for a successful adaptation (Carlson, Cacciatore and Klimek, 2012, pp.265-266).

The third category was community protective factors, including mentors, adults from school, church and community groups. Within this category, Carlson, Cacciatore and Klimek also mention the value for the USC to remain connected to their Sudanese culture. Culture is an important aspect for young refugees in their resettlement, as the cultures in the home country and in the new country of resettlement often differs significantly (Carlson, Cacciatore and Klimek, 2012, p.267). The author claims that “culture plays an important role in how traumatic events are experienced, including the meaning attached to them, how people express distress and mental health symptoms, and how healing does or does not occur” (Carlson, Cacciatore and Klimek, 2012, p.267).

This chapter has presented a background on the subject of the thesis, providing the reasons for the high influx of refugees into neighbouring countries from South Sudan, and the situation for refugees in Kenya. This background chapter has also been complemented with a subchapter especially connecting resilience with USC from South Sudan/Sudan through previous research. The next chapter will present the specific findings from the case study made in Nairobi, Kenya, including the interviews and the questionnaire.
5. Research Findings

In this chapter the important findings from the data collection will be presented and analysed, including the results from the LEC questionnaire, and the 16 interviews with the young South Sudanese. The chapter will start with providing a brief background on the participants and an overview of the research findings. Thereafter, the different components of the resilience process will be presented, beginning with risk factors and challenges identified for the young South Sudanese, followed by vulnerability factors and protective factors. The chapter will end with presenting the findings from the approach of the SOC model.

5.1 Background on Participants and Overview of Findings

The majority of the young South Sudanese interviewed for this thesis lived in Eastern Equatorial State in South Sudan before coming to Kenya. One came from Juba, two did not recall their home place, and the remaining youth came from various places of unknown location to the author. Only one of the youth came after the start of violence in Juba in 2013, the others came even before South Sudan got its independence, which also explains why sometimes they referred to Sudan instead of South Sudan in the interviews. At the time of the interviews, the ages of the interviewees ranged between 18 to 24 years with the mean value of 20 years. Out of the 16 youth, 14 belonged to the Didinga tribal community, while the tribal communities of the remaining two participants were unknown. The gender division among the participants was 37.5% female and 62.5% male.

The three reasons mentioned for the participants to leave South Sudan were education (N=12), war (N=9) and famine (N=1), sometimes in combination. Almost all of the respondents were brought to Kenya by a family member or a relative. However, as the border was reached, many of these family members or relatives returned back to South Sudan, leaving the child in the hands of neighbours, other relatives, strangers, or left them to manage by themselves. Their ages when arriving to Kenya as USC ranged from four up to 15 years with the mean value of 8.5 years. Those arriving directly to Nairobi composed 37.5%, while 62.5% first arrived to Kakuma refugee camp before resettling in Nairobi. Some of the interviewees never registered as refugees when entering the border to Kenya, left Kakuma without legal permission or never returned to the camp.
when they should have, or lacked basic documentation, which made them reside illegally in Nairobi.

Table 1. Overview of Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
<th>Vulnerability Factors</th>
<th>Protective Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Severe human suffering and stressful events</td>
<td>- Separation from family</td>
<td>Internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Violence</td>
<td>- Lack of mentor/adviser</td>
<td>- Belief in God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Loss of family and relatives</td>
<td>- Great responsibilities</td>
<td>- Focus, hard work and discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Natural disasters, accidents and other hazards</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Help family and people in need</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Lack of basic needs</td>
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<td>- Self-confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Expensive school fees</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Openness, honesty and respect</td>
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<td>- Linguistic barriers</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Harassments and lack of documentation</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Accept and forget</td>
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<tr>
<td>- News about South Sudan</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table elaborated by the author based on the LEC questionnaire and interviews carried out with 16 participants from the 5th of April 2018 to the 16th April 2018.

The table above presents the major finding from the data collection, which will be further described in details in the following sub chapters.

5.2 Risk Factors, Adversities and Vulnerability Factors

Within this subchapter the adversities that the young participants have experienced in life and the risk and vulnerability factors that they faced when resettling in Kenya as USC will be presented. First the results from the LEC self-report will be provided, followed by a focus on the findings from the interviews.

5.2.1 Risk Factors and Adversities

Graph 1 below presents the total results from the LEC questionnaire, indicating the adversary events that these South Sudanese youth had been exposed to during their life.
Graph 1. Total results from the LEC report

Source: Graph elaborated by the author based on the LEC questionnaire carried out with 16 participants from the 5th of April 2018 to the 16th April 2018.
Not all of the participants completed the self-report. They were told that if they were uncomfortable with any of the questions they had the right to not answer them, yet they were encouraged to fill in as much as possible as their anonymity was confirmed. In addition, through the stories shared by the youth in the interviews, it became clear to the author that some of the participants had not checked off all the events that he/she had experienced. Thus, it can be anticipated that the results below humbly indicate the stressful events that the participants had been exposed to, and that in reality they had experienced far more harmful events than what they checked off in the LEC questionnaire.

Severe Human Suffering and Stressful Events (no. 13; 17; 12)

The majority of the participants (N=11) checked off that they had directly experienced a stressful event, and thus, this event was the most common experienced in the questionnaire. However, not all participants checked off this specific event even if they had experienced it. One of the young men being interviewed, told the author about his journey from South Sudan to Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. He and his four traveling companions, all young children were trying to find their way to the camp, he recalled “…we just survived, took fruits from the trees. It was so hard without parents, maybe you are hungry. We were walking by foot, some barefoot. It was a month from South Sudan from Kakuma. We sleep on the way” (Interviewee 16, 16th April 2018).

The young man further described how they would try to get directions from people that they met on their way, using only signs as they were speaking different languages “…some of them will direct you to the wrong place where you can get…going to be killed, so you also walk taking care. We even used the forest, it is dangerous. There are also these animals, like lions…so you must take care. I was the one holding up the knife and the shield, so if everything goes wrong you are able to fight…so it was a trauma for us but, but we just had no alternatives” (Interviewee 16, 16th April 2018). Despite this experience, this young man did not fill in that he either experienced a stressful event or severe human suffering. However, through the interviews, adversary events like these could still be captured. Another common event was a life-threatening illness or injury, which eight of the participants have had happening to them and nine had witnessed it happen to someone else. Seven participants acknowledge that they themselves had gone through severe human suffering, while five had witnessed it.
Violence (no. 14; 6; 10; 11; 7; 8; 9; 16)

Another event that stands out is sudden violent death, which 10 of the participants had witnessed. The many direct experiences of violence are also confirmed through seven of them being physically assaulted, while five had witnessed it happening to someone else. In addition, 11 of the participants had been exposed to a war-zone through either witnessing it or being directly within the war-zone themselves. One had been held in captivity, while three had witnessed it and five had heard of it happening to someone else. Two of the youth had also been assaulted with a weapon, while five had witnessed it and five had heard about it. Other violent events that the South Sudanese youth had experienced were sexual assault or another unwanted or uncomfortable sexual experience, and causing serious injury, harm or death to someone else.

Loss of Family and Relatives (no. 15)

To lose someone close unexpectedly, is something that the majority of the youth had experienced (N=12). Within the interviews, the loss of family members and close relatives were frequently mentioned together with the negative effects that the loss had on the USC. To the question of how one felt today, one of the female participants answered “life is good but sometimes I feel like life is useless, yes. Because most of the time if you are happy, you accept everything as they are, then sometimes your relatives has been shot or been sick and then dead. So you feel like…what is the meaning of life. If every time if you want to be happy someone is going [passing away]” (Interviewee 9, 11th April, 2018).

One of the male interviewees told the author of how his close relatives were killed, he said “[the conflicts between communities]... is very common so most people die because of that. Like my uncle and another uncle that was very close...he was just being shot in cold blood on his way to his business” (Interviewee 14, 16th April, 2018). Another youth described the events before fleeing South Sudan, including the killing of his father. “First it was the war then...then it was my relative, even my father was shot and dead. They put our house [and the other houses] on fire” (Interviewee 16, 16th April, 2018).
Natural Disasters, Accidents and Other Hazards (no. 1; 2; 3; 4; 5)
Half of the youth had also experienced a natural disaster, and fire or explosion either directly or by witnessing it. Two of them had been in a transport accident, while four had witnessed it. To experience another serious accident, either at work, home or during a recreational activity, is an event that nine of the participants had experienced, personally or by witnessing it happen to someone else. The event that the least number of participants had experienced was exposure to toxic substances. Yet, three had witnessed it and two had heard of it happen to someone else.

Lack of Basic Needs
Moving away from the result from the LEC self-report and focusing on the interviews, there were a wide range of adversities and risk factors identified throughout the conversations with the young South Sudanese. One of the most common challenges for them was the lack of basic needs, with food as the major concern. The majority of the participants (N=12) told the author about the daily struggle to find food as they grew up in Kakuma and/or Nairobi. Several of the participants shared how they had to go to school without eating breakfast and sometimes leaving school knowing there would be nothing to eat when arriving back home after school.

One of the youth arriving to Kakuma at the age of 6, told the author how he and his friends already at that young age had to be innovative in how to find their daily meal of food. He recalled “we take uji [porridge] at school but when you go from school you have to look for a way to fight the way you can get your meal that day. We used to take one five litre jerry can and go fetch water somewhere else. It was about five kilometres. We walked there; it is not a river but a pass way where the flood is passing. So after the flood we go, and you scope aside so that you find water inside, so you go fetch water there. And at that time we sell it at 5 bob [5 Kenyan shillings]. And at that time you could buy Mandazi [a pastry] for 1 shilling, so for 5 shillings you can eat Mandazi, buy a simple meal. And then you are at ease for that day” (Interviewee 1, 5th April, 2018).

Another participant told the author of how he worked as a child to get money to buy food and clothes. He would work during the weekends and sometimes after school in workplaces such as construction sites. The lack of other basic needs, besides food, that
had caused risk factors for the participants as USC, were proper shelter, clothes and access to medical care.

**Expensive School Fees**

The challenge of expensive school fees was another major risk factor for the majority of the participants (N=9), which had caused them a lot of stress when growing up, and still did for many in terms of High School and College. Many of them had to stay home from school for periods of time, sometimes even a whole year, awaiting someone to support them with school fees. This was a great stress to them as the reason for many to be in Kenya was education. As they had to stay home they got behind the syllabus, which created challenges for them if they managed to return to school. One of the female participants described her poor situation growing up as an USC in Nairobi, including the challenge of school fees, saying “when I went to school there was no food, maybe our school fees were not paid…we will be sent home to go and bring school fees but you don’t have (so you just remain home)” (Interviewee 4, 5th April, 2018).

One of the male participants had his father supporting him with school fees until he could no longer afford that, the young man recalled “I remember when I was in form three, he was not [the father was not able to pay the school fees]… there was a time when I came out from school when I was in form three, then I came home and stayed for two months. Then that time I decided no, I will not stay at home, because if my dad lack something little, I can add” (Interviewee 6, 9th April, 2018). The boy went to talk with his school teachers from primary school and somehow he managed to get them to agree that he would go back to school and pay the fees later. The event demonstrates the value of education for the young South Sudanese USC, but also the strength and determination that most of them had to achieve their goals and to make a change in their lives.

Money for transportation to school was also a challenge for several of the participants, putting them at risk of not being able to attend school. One of the young men shared how he used to walk back from schools, in order not to miss out on education. The journey would take him long over an hour to walk, which was putting him in risk of traffic accidents as he was walking along a highly trafficked road. The walking would
also put him in risk of getting behind in school as there would be little strength left for doing homework.

**Linguistic Barriers**
A number of participants (N=4) also mentioned the adversity of linguistic barriers as they came to resettle in Kenya. The linguistic barriers would create feelings of exclusion and not understanding the people around. When asked which the major challenges were resettling in Kenya, one of the male participants responded “talking in different language, to not know. Me, I didn’t have any friends” (Interviewee 11, 11th April, 2018). Another participant told the author of how she felt when first arriving to Kenya, saying “first it was not that good, because for me, I was that young. I had to associate with them [the other people in Kakuma], especially talking to them in Swahili, it was quite difficult (Interviewee 5, 9th April, 2018).

**Harassments and lack of Documentation**
Many of the young South Sudanese participants were lacking basic documentations such as birth certificates, ID-cards, passports, and documentations showing their refugee status or proving their right to reside in Nairobi. To not have these documents composed a great stress and risk factor for them growing up as they knew that it would limit them in the future when applying for higher education and for different work positions. It also caused stress as they knew that if police caught them they might be harassed, jailed, sent back to Kakuma (for those registered there), or even deported back to South Sudan. Several of the respondents witnessed of the harassments from the police. Even if some of them had legal documentation, they still risked being harassed. One of the young men interviewed talked about how abusive the police are and how that creates a constant fear every day just walking on the streets. In addition to harassments from the police, the South Sudanese USC were also harassed by other residents where they lived. As some of them walked the streets, people would shout names after them and use abusive language to insult and intimidate them.

**News about South Sudan**
The last risk factor identified and presented in this subchapter, is the stress emerging from discouraging news and updates that the South Sudanese youth constantly had received regarding the situation in South Sudan, their home areas, and about families
and relatives. Through the interviews it became obvious how worried the participants had been and still were for their home country and their families and relatives residing in South Sudan. The negative effects that these stressing thoughts had on the adaptation and the well-being of the South Sudanese were also obvious. One of the young male participants expressed his concern for his siblings back in South Sudan, as he knew that they were not in a good situation and that no one was supporting them for education.

Another of the young men told the author of how he after some years in Kenya went back to South Sudan (still a young child) to see if he could find his parents, as he had left without telling them. However, as he returned to his home village his family was not to be found and the boy went back to Kenya. During the interview the author could see how the issue of not knowing if the family was still alive was fretting the young man. He kept coming back to the subject that he wanted to go back to South Sudan again to see if he could find his parents, but the insecurity in South Sudan had and was still hindering him from going. He said “I read what is happening back there in the country…so especially the road where is leading to our place where I come from, people are always being killed there, every day…because everywhere, people join rebel groups…they can even kill innocent. It give me really loosing hope of going back to South Sudan” (Interviewee 14, 16th April, 2018).

Many of the participants had similar experiences, and had to grow up without any contact with their parents, siblings, or other family members, not knowing where they were or if they were still alive. One of the female participants talked about how she looked at her future when arriving to Kenya and she expressed “I could see my future but it was kind of hard…every time you are here you hear of how people are fighting back there in Sudan, sometimes…it weakens you” (Interviewee 12, 11th April, 2018).

5.2.2 Vulnerability Factors

Many of the risk factors identified above can also be regarded as vulnerability factors, factors that can increase the effect of the risk. As for example, being an USC is not only one of the greatest risk factors but also one of the greatest vulnerability factors. To be separated from your caregiver makes a child even more vulnerable to become negatively affected by severe risks and challenges, as there might not be anyone to
protect, guide and support them through these adversities. The major vulnerability factors identified through the data collection will be presented below.

**Separation from family**
When asking the participants what the major vulnerabilities for them coming to Kenya as an USC were, none of them mentioned the lack of protection or lack of someone to provide for their basic needs. Instead, most of the interviewees referred to the social aspects of being without their parents. They mentioned the lack of parental love, and the feelings of loneliness and of being abandoned. The pain emerging from separation from parents and siblings was obvious. One of the interviewee expressed “the first day when I came here…you can’t get even a sleep. Because staying without them, just remember them, just remember the life you lived and now you came to a new one” (Interviewee 11, 11th April, 2018).

One of the young male respondents described how he felt when he first came to Kenya, saying “I was not feel really happy because I know I left my country, I left my mum, my dad, even my young sisters, because I was the first one, the first born in my family. So I left my little ones. I was really not really happy… sometimes when I remember my parents back home I feel like I am the only one…that my parents don’t care for me” (Interviewee 3, 5th April, 2018).

**Lack of mentor/adviser**
Another major vulnerability factor highlighted by the South Sudanese youth, was the lack of a mentor that naturally could have taken on the role as parent, someone that could give moral guidance and advises on the way forward. During the interviews it became clear how important it was for the youth to have a mentor present in their life, someone they could share their problems with. One of the young men said “you don’t have that support…sometimes you know there are some things that you want to share with your parents, but it is very difficult to share with someone [else]…maybe sometime some people don’t understand you” (Interviewee 6, 9th April, 2018). A female participant expressed that “sometimes you require their support, but they are not there for you (Interviewee 5, 9th April, 2018).
Great responsibilities
One of the male participants mentioned that one vulnerability factor for him, arriving to Kenya as an USC, was that he was exposed to great responsibilities, saying “because I came here with two sisters and I am the eldest, so I have the responsibility to take care of them, to guide them, and…look after them” (Interviewee 15, 16th April, 2018). Thus, without having someone to rely on, he still had to guide and take care of his younger sisters, which for him was making him more vulnerable to risks and adversities.

5.3 Protective factors
As the adversities, and risk and vulnerability factors have been provided above, this subchapter will present the protective factors identified through the interviews. The protective factors will be divided into internal factors (personal) and external factors (environmental) as presented within the conceptual framework (Gore and Eckenrode, 2000, p.34).

5.3.1 Internal factors
During the interviews there were three major protective factors identified that were more commonly occurring than the other protective factors identified. These three factors were: belief in God; focus, hard work and discipline; and the desire to help family and people in need of support. These most commonly occurring factors will be presented first, followed by other identified internal factors important for the resilience process for the South Sudanese USC.

Belief in God
During the interviews with the South Sudanese youth, the author of this thesis discovered what also many of the researchers in the U.S. discovered when conducting studies on USC from South Sudan/Sudan, namely what great value the protective factor of believing in a higher power/religiosity had on the resilience process for the target group. The majority of the participants (N=9) clearly expressed their belief in God as a source of motivation, comprehensibility and for gaining the strength to overcome the adversities and risks faced when resettling in Kenya as an USC. To the answer of how one regarded the future, one of the participants responded “I believe the only thing [is]
to be strong, have faith in God that even though you lack so many things, I just believe in myself, one day one time, I will get what I need” (Interviewee 3, 5th April, 2018). One of the female interviewees explained how she felt after resettling in Kenya “Somehow I got stressed but sometimes I came to think that maybe God knows, God knows…for me, all I can say, just all the time when I have a challenge I have to put it to God’s hands, so that God can take control of everything” (Interviewee 2, 5th April, 2018). When asked what kind of personality that could be helpful in overcoming difficulties in life one of the respondents answered “having discipline, being honest, putting God first, have confidence in what you do…even if it [adversities] happen to you, you just have to cope with it no matter how hard it is because everything happens with a reason, and above all, God is the one” (Interviewee 12, 11th April, 2018).

Focus, Hard Work and Discipline
To focus, have discipline and work hard was another important internal protective factor according to the young South Sudanese, as mentioned above. When asked what had helped in handling challenges and moving forward, one of the male participants responded, saying “I think mostly the hard work that I have put in my education and also one thing that have really helped me through my [adversities, is]…discipline” (Interviewee 10, 11th April, 2018). One of the female respondent answered “you have to focus and work towards your [goals], just be focused on that. And like that person, be strong. You have to focus and see, those people [people back in South Sudan] are suffering there but you are in a good place so as you study you remember your people back there and how they are living” (Interviewee 5, 9th April, 2018).

Help Family and People in Need
The author noted during the interviews that the majority of the participants (N=11), not only wanted to work and study hard in order to be able to help their families back in South Sudan, but also in order to go back and assist in developing South Sudan as a country. To help others in need was a strong internal protective factor for the participants, which helped them to overcome adversities. One of the young female participants was concerned about all the children around her in need of support, “there are so many children around me…I don’t want to someone that can maybe to go through what I went through. My future is to come and help my younger ones” (Interviewee 4, 9th April, 2018).
Another participant shared the dream she had been having since coming to Kenya as an USC, saying “I was thinking, when I grow up I would like to have an orphanage” (Interviewee 8, 11th April, 2018). One of the male interviewees, who got separated from his mother at a young age when fleeing the war in South Sudan, told the author, “…one day, one time [if] I meet with my mum, maybe I can save the country. Maybe after school I can start something like a school, an orphanage, so all these children cannot suffer. All these people who are not go to school, they can be able to know their right, not to be the same as I have. So that is my dream, I help someone” (Interviewee 16, 16th April, 2018). To the question of what motivated the youth to move forward, one of the young South Sudanese responded “I want to study hard to become, to help my family back at the home, because I know that they are not in a good condition. To help them to get a good place” (Interviewee 13, 16th April, 2018).

Self-confidence

To have self-confidence, including being strong and believing in oneself, was another important protective factor according to the participants. When asked what had been helpful when overcoming adversities, one of the young South Sudanese responded “to me I think the first thing is to trust yourself. Then after that you…be talkative with people, be open to people. That will help you a lot” (Interviewee 6, 9th April, 2018).

The author noticed during the interviews that the capability for the South Sudanese USC to gain self-esteem had many times been interconnected with external protective factors, such as engaging in society in different activities or interacting with other people. One of the participants described how UN agencies helped him to gain self-esteem, through interviews that they would conduct with him, he said “I was so disappointed, desperate, even that time I was thinking… I just feel like I die at once so that…yes actually when I came to realise it happened to everybody, all those challenges happened to everybody. But we can overcome by just gain self-esteem and be strong… for example, when I registered with UN, sometimes they call me for interview. So when I arrived to them they did encourage me that you can make it in life. So I gained confidence” (Interviewee 14, 16th April, 2018). Another interviewee said “…the thing that made me confident and feel free is that I joined [the hosting NGO]…I love football and playing with the small kids. So it made me forget about a lot of things, it made me to be free…I can remember that time back, I could not express myself, and also I feared talking in
front of people. At least in sports where I am today, I can organise something that can maybe make somebody to come and appreciate and tell me you have done something that makes sense. And that thing make me to at least, I got that confidence, I can do this, so I can move to next step” (Interviewee 1, 5th April, 2018).

Openness, Honesty and Respect
Other important internal protective factors that the participants highlighted were to be honest, open and friendly, and to respect and trust each other. One of the participants told the author, “for me to get to adapt this, to live a comfortable life, it’s just like accept what is around you, yourself and the environment around you. So make friends. It will be ok” (Interviewee 9, 11th April, 2018). Another of the young South Sudanese said “first of all you have to start with yourself, you love what you do and then after that, you share it with the society. And also you have to love others” (Interviewee 2, 5th April, 2018). To the question of how to move on from adversities, one of the male participant responded, “don’t…usitharau mtu mwingine [Kiswahili meaning ‘do not despise someone else’], don’t joke about others, trust and believe he is doing a good thing. Don’t take the negative things about people, don’t judge somebody how he is behaving, but you don’t know the inside how [he] is really thinking about his life” (Interviewee 3, 5th April, 2018).

Accept and Forget
This subchapter will end with enhancing one important protective internal factor that was identified by many of the South Sudanese youth, namely the ability to accept and forget adversities as they were encountered. The protective factor of suppressing traumatic and associated memories was also identified by Goodman (2004) in his resilience research on USC from Sudan/South Sudan. One of the interviewees said, “you must forget what maybe challenges you are going through and be focused, that is the most thing one can do in life. You just need to forget what has happened to you, your family and move on with life” (Interviewee 10, 11th April, 2018). One of the female participants told the author, “for me to conquer the problems I go through, is to just ignore everything because that’s the only way for me to move on. Because if I put the problems I have in mind, then I will not concentrate with my studies, so it will bring me to something else” (Interviewee 9, 11th April, 2018).
5.3.2 External factors

During the interviews there were three major external protective factors identified that were more commonly occurring than the others. These three factors were: education; support from others; and to understand and accept the new culture. After the presentation of these three major external protective factors, this subchapter will move on to present other external factors identified.

**Education**

Education was not only one of the main reasons for the majority of the participants to leave South Sudan, it was also one of the major external protective factors that strengthen the resilience process for them growing up as USCs in Kenya. Almost all of the young South Sudanese (N=14) said that education was the meaningful thing to them when they first arrived to Kenya. However, education was also a source of motivation for continuing to adapt and work hard, despite adversities that they faced being separated from their family and home country. One of the participants told the author how she first felt when arriving to Kenya and how education was the reason for her to remain in the new country, saying “I was too young...what I felt was I want to go back [to South Sudan], I cannot live here, I need my mum. There was no option to go back because I was sent to come and learn” (Interviewee 9, 11th April, 2018). Another participant talked about the importance of education “me myself, I was really disappointed of how...my country is having war, there is no development, there is no...so I must believe in myself. I am the one who is going to tell my country [to change]. So I was focused on education...education is the only key that can help me to, for our country...that situation” (Interviewee 3, 5th April, 2018).

**Support from Others**

The second major external protective factor identified was support from others. Almost all participants had as USC, some kind of financial support from family members or relatives in Kenya or abroad, from school teachers or coaches. Even if this financial support did not cover all the costs for the USC, at least for many it got them into High School. The financial support was not the only support that the South Sudanese USC valued, but also the moral support, to get advice from peers, teachers, coaches, and other people in society.
During the interviews, the author got the impression that this moral and advisory support was one of the major factors that helped the South Sudanese USC adapt and overcome adversities. As one of the participant responded to the question of how he had overcome the risks and adversities that he had faced, “…it is just my uncle, my friends, my teacher taught me how to undergo them [adversities], taught me right way to follow and the wrong way which you cannot follow” (Interviewee 11, 11th April, 2018). Another male participant expressed “…I grew as a person getting advice from other people, especially from my teachers at school…just motivation from friends and also when I was in school, I used to share my stories with teachers and they also motivated me and I gained a lot of courage” (Interviewee 14, 16th April, 2018).

Another interviewee highlighted the importance of society for the resilience process for USC, “If you don’t have parents or anyone to advice you, go to those meetings [community meetings/activities]. You get someone saying those really good points. Maybe they could tell you the same things as your parents. Even if you are an orphan, you are not an orphan at all, because you still have people in the community” (Interviewee 16, 16th April, 2018).

Understand and Accept the New Culture
The third major external protective factor for the South Sudanese USC had been to understand and accept the new culture in Kenya. One of the female interviewees explained how one could adapt successfully, saying “where you are going you have to live according to…how they are doing their culture, you must do what they are doing. That’s the first thing that will help you adapt to the people, accepting their culture first” (Interviewee 6, 9th April, 2018). Another young South Sudanese said “you just interact with the others, you learn more languages, to understand them and create more friends. And study their culture” (Interviewee 13, 16th April, 2018). One of the participants mentioned the importance of also bringing your own culture with you when resettling, “I think what makes it successful [the adaptation] is the environment, and how people are treated. And what you have [been] used to in your country, bringing the culture here, like now we have brought our dance to our school” (Interviewee 15, 16th April, 2018).
Interact and Participate in Activities

Another external protective factor was the importance of interacting with people and getting involved and participating in different activities. The youth explained how being active and integrating with society, instead of idling around, had helped them forget about adversities that they had faced. One of the young men told the author of how he adapted so well in Kenya because he did not only associate with other people from South Sudan, but was spending most of his time with Kenyans. This helped him to quickly learn the new culture and the Kenyan friends could also help him when he needed. He also described further how football had been a great support for him, “sometimes when I was in high school, when there was exams, I felt depressed. But when I moved to the field [football field], I got that depression was moving away. I got that, next time I might do it better, so I have to go back to books and read hard. So something like sport make someone to move, you forget so many things. It makes you want to focus” (Interviewee 1, 5th April, 2018).

One of the female participant confirmed the importance of sports as a protective factor, by saying “since I joined the football club, I didn’t have a lot of stress, I was not idle, I used to come here [to the hosting NGO] and dance, I used to go to the field and train some of the kids in football…so I can say I never got that time to get stressed because I used to always be busy. So [the hosting organisation] has helped a lot…it is better for a person to avoid to be idle, to volunteer in each and everything. And when you do that to the best maybe it can make you forget some things, and never, if you get a chance, never waste it or an opportunity. You never know what it will bring later on” (Interviewee 2, 5th April, 2018).

Security

The security in Kenya was also an external protective factor that was highlighted by a few of the participants. One of the male interviewees told the author how he felt when first arriving in Kenya from South Sudan, saying “totally I feel good, because there in South Sudan, because there is always war. I feel good because in Kenya there is peace, stability, so totally I feel good” (Interviewee 7, 9th April, 2018). The same interviewee also said that it was the security that made him able to adapt successfully resettling as an USC in Kenya.
5.4 Sense of Coherence

Within this subchapter, findings will be presented from the sense of coherence perspective, composed of the three components meaningfulness, comprehensibility, and manageability.

5.4.1 Meaningfulness

To the question if there was anything meaningful in life when first coming to Kenya, almost all of the participants (N=14) answered that education was the one meaningful thing to them. Education was the reason for the majority to leave South Sudan and also a source of motivation and purpose for moving forward and adapt to the new society. One of the participants expressed “as I started to go to school, I started to learn some things and I thought, at least I can do something from here, and be someone better in life” (Interviewee 2, 5th April, 2018). Another interviewee said, “the only thing I saw meaningful was education, because education is the only key to success, and that is what we have been told at school. It made me work hard” (Interviewee 12, 11th April, 2018).

Only one of the participants replied that there was nothing meaningful to her at the time of arrival in Kenya. Some participants also mentioned other sources of meaningfulness, including music, dance and sports. One of the female interviewees also experienced how the resettlement to Kenya brought a purpose to her, saying “I believed that now I am here, I can do something, have purpose” (Interviewee 5, 9th April, 2018). When the participants were asked what was meaningful to them today, education was still the most mentioned thing. Other sources of meaningfulness identified were belief in God, parents, achieving goals in life, being involved in society, and to be able to help parents and people back in South Sudan.

5.4.2 Comprehensibility

One of the interview questions was connected to comprehensibility, asking if the participant could understand why he/she had to go through adversities, what had caused these difficulties in life. Only a few of the interviewees (N=3) responded that they could not understand the reasons behind the adversities at all. However, there were quite a
high number of participants (N=8) who said that even if not all situations were comprehensible, some still were, such as the political instability and conflicts back in South Sudan. A few of the participants mentioned that their belief in God made them capable of understanding things “to me I think everything is God’s plan. That’s why I am saying, maybe when I left South Sudan, it was God’s plan for me to go and be something, then when I go back at least I go with something from here” (Interviewee 6, 9th April, 2018).

A few of these youth also said that they first did not understand the situation and adversities, but as they grew older they learned the reasons behind their struggles. Some of the young South Sudanese (N=5) were very clear on the reasons behind their adversities in life. One of the young men responded that he very well knew the reasons for him to leave his country and family behind and face the adversities of being an USC in Kenya, saying “of course back home, I think what had caused mostly…most boys are being, let’s say for example, sometime they are handling guns. That now becomes a problem because of the civil war that was back then happening in South Sudan. That is why my dad thought that it is good for me to be educated and at least become somebody that might help people [in South Sudan]” (Interviewee 10, 11th April, 2018). Another reasons for comprehensibility mentioned besides the conflicts in South Sudan, was the belief that challenges were part of life.

5.4.3 Manageability

Manageability was also referred to in one of the interview questions, asking the participants if they believed they were capable of handling the challenges they faced resettling in Kenya as USC. Only one respondent meant that he did not at the time of the resettlement believe that he was capable of handling the adversities that he faced. Several of the young South Sudanese (N=7) recalled that they first felt that the adversities were too much, but later on they found the strength to deal with and overcome them. One of the participants expressed “to me I felt it was too much at that time…after some months…I started to see that, at least I felt courage that I have to face it, because there is no other way” (Interviewee 6, 9th April, 2018). Many of the interviewees (N=7) did believe that they right from the start of resettling were capable of handling the adversities that they met as USC in Kenya. One of the respondent
replied “yes, I just felt that I can overcome these challenges, I can do better” (Interviewee 2, 5th April, 2018).

Many of the participants regarded challenges as a natural part of life, as one of the youth explained, saying “if you only concentrate in your life advantages, then you can fail…for you to succeed in life you must face disadvantages first before you face advantages, because life needs challenges, without those challenges, you will never succeed” (Interviewee 6, 9th April, 2018). One of the female participants reflected over the strength that she gained from being an USC, saying “staying without my parents was maybe making me a better person because you have learned how to cope with difficult things in your life” (Interviewee 12, 11th April, 2018).

Through the interviews the author noticed that the young participating South Sudanese, despite challenging upbringings, had an enormous amount of hope and faith for the future, that it would be bright and that they would achieve their dreams and goals. The importance of hope as a protective factor was highlighted by Jani, Underwood and Ranweilier (2015), and the author of this thesis really believed that this hope was one of the major reasons for the USC’s high capability in managing the risks and adversities that they had gone through (pp.1198-1199). Many of the participants told the author of how when they resettled in Kenya, they had great hopes for the future, and many still shared that view today. One of the young participant explained how he regarded his future as coming to Kenya, “so since I came to Kenya, because I see things are changing a little, not as in South Sudan, so that gave me a light, a hope that I can still make it in one day in future” (Interviewee 14, 16th April, 2018). To the questions of how the participants regarded their future today, one of the participants told the author of his clear plan ahead, “to live a good life, get a good job and just help those who cannot afford to help themselves” (Interviewee 11, 11th April, 2018).

As the findings have been presented in this chapter, the next chapter will focus on linking these findings with the conceptual framework chosen for this thesis.
6. Discussion

In this chapter a discussion will be provided, further analysing the findings from the previous chapter on the resilience processes for the South Sudanese USC participating in this research.

The findings make it clear that the South Sudanese youth participating in this research, had undergone and been exposed to several harmful events when growing up in South Sudan and later in Kenya as USC. Many of these risks co-occurred over long periods of time, thus composing a cumulative risk, which is far more threatening to a child’s development than the acute and single stressful events (Masten and Reed, 2005, pp.76-77; Luthar, 2006, p.742). Some of the co-occurring risks identified within the resilience process for the target group were: severe human suffering and stressful events; violence; lack of basic needs; and loss of family and relatives. The greatest risk of all for USC according to Borge (2011, p.76), the lack of a parent or primary caregiver, was not specifically mentioned as an adversity by the interviewees on the specific questions of major challenges. Yet, through the LEC-report and through the interviews, the loss of family members and the hardship of growing up without parents or any other vital caregivers was mentioned in regards to major vulnerabilities. Together with vulnerability and protective factors, risk factors are necessary for creating and understanding a resilience process (Cicchetti and Cohen, 1995, p.9; Borge, 2011, p.65). The necessity of risk factors was confirmed by some of the interviewees, acknowledging challenges and disadvantages as a natural part of life.

What is further on important to remember, is that an adversity does not automatically have a negative effect on a child’s development and adaptation process, but it can also have a strengthening effect (Rutter, 2012, p.335). That some of the adversities in life made the South Sudanese participants stronger was highlighted more than one time during the interviews, which also reflects the dynamic of a resilience process. Southwick et al. (2014) mention that resilience exists on a continuum, present to different degrees during life, which means that a risk might have a weakening effect at one point in life, while at another moment of life, it might have a strengthening effect (2014, p.2). The level of resilience varying over time was true for the participants, as they explained how they experienced life and adversities differently, depending on
where in life they were at the moment of the risk. Some of the participants described how they during their first years in Kenya, as USC, felt that the adversities that they met at that time were almost too much for them to overcome. However, as they adapted into the new society later on, they felt that life became more endurable. Another few of the South Sudanese interviewees experienced the opposite, feeling that life became more difficult as they grew older, rather than during their first years in Kenya.

This leads on to the vulnerability factors, as it is the amount of vulnerability factors versus protective factors that will determine whether the risk will have a positive or negative effect on the development and adaptation process of the child (Cicchetti and Cohen, 1995, p.9). The major vulnerability factors identified in this research were: separation from family; and lack of mentor/adviser. The level of vulnerability varies over time and with the personality and age of the child, which means that while some factors are a source of vulnerability to some children, they might be protective factors for others (Borge, 2011, p.82; Cicchetti and Cohen, 1995, p.9). An example of this within the findings is that while the majority of the young participants regarded the lack of parents and missing family members as the major vulnerability factors, one of the participants claimed that growing up without her parents made her a better and stronger person, as she learnt how to handle adversities on her own.

The protective factors identified within this case study, which is the major focus for this thesis, were very similar to the protective factors found in previous research on USC from Sudan/South Sudan resettling in the U.S. (see Luster, et al., 2010; Qin, et al., 2014; Goodman, 2004; Carlson, Cacciatore and Klimek, 2012; Jani, Underwood and Ranweiler, 2015), which shows in the importance of creating separate empirical data for individuals from different cultural, ethnical, and racial groups (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000, p.857). The most occurring protective factors for the young South Sudanese participating in this research were: belief in God; focus, hard work and discipline; the desire to help family and people in need of support; education; support from others; and to understand and accept the new culture. All these factors were also highlighted by the researchers of USC resettling in the U.S. To be engaged in the society and have moral support from others seemed to be almost life-saving protective factors for the participants, as the value of respecting, interacting and participating in the community was mentioned over and over again by the interviewees as reasons for them to
overcome adversities in life and moving forward. To be occupied (in sports and different activities) helped the participants to forget and suppress difficult feelings and thoughts and instead move on, which also was highlighted by Goodman (2004) in his research. The same author also focused on how the USC in his research had found strength in not being the only ones who faced a lot of adversities, but that they were part of a group where these struggles were shared together, which also was mentioned by a few of the participants in this study. To help family and people still suffering back in South Sudan was also a very important source for motivation, strength and hope both for the participants within this case study and for the participants within the research of Qin, et al. (2014) and Luster, et al. (2010).

To have religious faith was further one of the most important protective factors, as it was a source for not only motivation, but also for the three components of SOC: comprehension, meaningfulness, and manageability. The faith of the young South Sudanese was probably one of the main reasons for them being able to still have so much compassion and care for others, despite the hatred, violence and adversities that they had been exposed to in life. Education was further on an invaluable protective factor for the interviewees. It made them focus, work hard, and overcome adversities, as education was not only one of the major reasons for them to leave South Sudan, but also one of their major life goals and dreams. Most of them dreamed of getting a good education so that they could go back to South Sudan and change the situation for their country, people, and families. However, as Qin et al. (2014) noticed in their research, the author of this thesis also noted that sometimes the desire of helping family and others in need back in South Sudan, slightly appeared as a stress factor, which then possibly could turn into a risk factor, straining the resilience process for USC.

To have undergone such severe adversities and exposure to various risks, as the South Sudanese participants had experienced, and yet remain so strong, hopeful, caring and optimistic, is a testament of the possibility for the South Sudanese USC to develop strong resilience processes. The resilience process can be successful, even when they resettle in neighbouring countries where they continue to face a poor childhood environment, a protracted refugee situation and sometimes life-threatening adversities.
The SOC components of meaningfulness, comprehension and manageability, have proven to be a tool of great value in understanding the resilience process for the participants. The components also turned out to be relevant and important protective factors, enabling the young South Sudanese to overcome severe challenges and adapt into the environment of Nairobi. Even if the majority of the youth seemed to have managed to adapt well in Kenya, it does not exclude the existence of stress, and mental health issues in some of the participants. However, many mental health issues are normal reactions to severe adversities, and do not determine the level of resilience (Sleijpen, et al., 2013, p.2; Southwick, et al., 2014, p.3). Instead it is the decision to move forward, despite health issues and other challenges that reveals the strength of a person’s resilience (Southwick, et al., 2014, p.3).

In order to strengthen the resilience process for the target group, it is important to ensure that there are enough strong protective factors that can balance the resilience process when the USC are faced with risks and adversities. If the protective factors outweigh the vulnerability factors, a child is more likely to develop well and have a stronger resilience process (Cicchetti and Cohen, 1995, p.9). However, if the aim is to create an enhanced and long lasting resilience process, focus should also be put on transformational resilience, referring to efforts that address the root causes of risks and vulnerability (Sudmeier-Rieux, 2014, p.75). For the target group of South Sudanese USC in Kenya, these interventions would imply interventions including changes in the legislation for refugees residing in Kenya (create free movement and more opportunities for work and education), the provision of basic needs, and to put more efforts on creating peace and stability within South Sudan, so that the USC can return and reunite with their families.

There is a practical limitation with the concept of resilience in regards to individuals, as it tends to be abstract due to such a variety of definitions, as previously mentioned within the conceptual framework. However, the author of this thesis has tried above to demonstrate that resilience can be practically used within the humanitarian and development field, as it often refers back to ensuring that individuals’ basic needs and rights are met. Through the provision of food, shelter, education and psychosocial support within the community, vulnerable children exposed to severe risks and adversities can adapt and overcome, and even grow stronger than they were before.
In this chapter a discussion has been provided, linking the findings with the conceptual framework of this thesis. The upcoming last chapter will continue with a brief conclusion of the answers found to the research questions of this thesis.
7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Within this final chapter, a conclusion will be provided, summing up the findings collected through the case study of South Sudanese USC in Nairobi. The chapter will end with recommendations for humanitarian and development agencies, working with the target group in the region of East Africa, and recommendations for the academic field on topics for further research.

7.1 Conclusion

The main aims with this thesis have been to understand the resilience process for South Sudanese USC resettling in Nairobi, Kenya, and how this process can be enhanced. The aims have further been to provide preliminary empirical data on the target group in a non-western setting, as there is a great lack of such data on South Sudanese USC within the academic field. In order to achieve these aims, a qualitative case study was carried out in Nairobi, Kenya, including an extensive literature review, semi-structured interviews and the LEC questionnaire with 16 South Sudanese youth, who all had arrived to Kenya as USC. Throughout the case study, the findings revealed that the resilience process for these youth had been a dynamic process, where the resilience at some points in life were stronger, and at other points weaker, depending on the level of vulnerability and protective factors existent when the risk occurred. However, through the research it was shown that the participants had overcome great adversities and risks in life.

There were several internal and external protective factors identified that were believed to have been the source of the strength within their resilience process. The most commonly occurring protective factors were: a belief in God; focus, hard work and discipline; the desire to help family and people in need of support; education; support from others; and to understand and accept the new culture. Antonovsky’s SOC concept, composed of the components of meaningfulness, comprehensibility and manageability, also turned out to be an important and relevant tool for understanding the resilience process for the South Sudanese youth. The model also helped to explain some of the elements leading towards a successful adaptation and well-being despite the risks and adversities that the USC had been exposed to. The research also showed that resilience does not depend on the absence of ill-health. It is rather the protective factors and the
decision by the USC to keep moving forward that is the key to a successful resilience process, which can be made even if the child is suffering from mental health issues.

The most commonly occurring risk and vulnerability factors that were identified among the South Sudanese USC and that could be the source of weakening the resilience process were: violence; severe human suffering and stressful events; lack of basic needs; loss of family and relatives; lack of mentor/advisor; and separation from family. However, it is important to remember that resilience cannot exist without risks, and the risks can also contribute to the strengthening of resilience if there are enough strong protective factors in place to balance the vulnerability and risk factors. In order to build a long-lasting resilience process for the youth, focus need to be put on not only strengthening the protective factors, but also on addressing the root causes of risks and vulnerabilities. The third and last aim of this thesis was to provide concrete recommendations for how humanitarian and development agencies best can strengthen the resilience process for the target group. These recommendations will be presented below within the next sub chapter.

The author acknowledges that there were some limitations attached to the research, which were presented in the second chapter, including only capturing one locality. If more time were given, the study would also have benefited from repeating the research over a few years, from childhood up to adulthood, in order to follow up on the results and to understand the tendencies of the resilience processes of the South Sudanese USC. It would further have been interesting to increase the number of participants to see if the results would have remained the same.

7.2 Recommendations for Humanitarian and Development Agencies

Based on the findings from the research, the author below offers a set of recommendations on how humanitarian and development agencies can provide appropriate support to South Sudanese USC resettling in the East Africa region, leading to an enhanced resilience process for these young refugees. The recommendations are as following:
- To ensure South Sudanese USC access qualitative primary and secondary education (including help with school and transportation fees, school equipment, such as books, uniforms, and food during school hours).
- To ensure South Sudanese USC access basic needs (including food, shelter, clothes and medical care).
- To provide opportunities for South Sudanese USC to participate in sports and other social activities, that can enhance their resilience process and be a source of motivation and support.
- To ensure that each South Sudanese USC is connected with a mentor/advisor or other supporting adult that can provide advice, moral support, and encouragement.
- To assist South Sudanese USC with obtaining basic documentation (including birth certificates, passports, and national ID) that could legalise their resettlement and movement within Kenya, and also provide opportunities for higher education and work.
- To assist South Sudanese USC with search and possible reunification with family and relatives from South Sudan.

7.3 Recommendations for the Academic Field

The author would like to end this chapter and thesis with providing a few recommendations for further research on the topic of enhancing resilience for USC. As the world is facing an increased number of refugee USC, the first broad recommendation is for the academic field to continue to conduct resilience research that focuses on USC. This recommendation is based on the assumption that more research would imply the identification of more tools for measuring and understanding the resilience process for this target group of individuals, which also in the long term could lead to improved interventions by humanitarian and development actors aiming to assist USC. Within this broader recommendation the author wants to encourage research especially focused on USC resettling within non-western contexts, as there is a great lack of resilience research for these environments as most of the research being conducted is carried out within western settings.
A further recommendation is for the academic field to compare resilience research, where USC from one country/culture, resettled in a non-western setting, could be compared with USC from the same country/culture, resettled in a western setting, to see if the resilience process will differ and if the protective factors for enhancing the resilience process will be the same for the two groups. The last recommendation is for the academic field to continue resilience research specifically targeting USC from South Sudan, as the situation in the country is deteriorating and with it, the numbers of USC are growing. South Sudanese USC is a remarkable group of children often exposed to major life-threatening events. Yet they witness of great strength and resilience as they work hard to adapt, overcome, and build up a bright future for themselves, their families, home country, and for other people in need of a helping hand.
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Appendix 1: Consent for Participation

Project title: Towards an enhanced resilience process for South Sudanese unaccompanied and separated children: A case study from Nairobi, Kenya

I agree to participate in a research project by Anne Wachira, Master Student in International Humanitarian Action from Uppsala University in Sweden.

1. I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.

2. My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit coercion whatsoever to participate.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by researcher Anne Wachira. The interview all together will last approximately 45-60 minutes. I allow the researcher to take written notes during the interview. I also allow the audio recording of the interview. It is clear to me that in case I do not want the interview to be taped I am at any point of time fully entitled to withdraw from participation. There will be an interpreter available on my request.

4. I have the right not to answer any of the questions. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to withdraw from the interview.

5. I have been given the explicit guarantees that the researcher will not identify me by name and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.

6. I have read and understood the points and statements of this form. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

8. I have been given a copy of this consent form co-signed by the interviewer.

____________________________ ________________________
Participant’s Signature Date

____________________________ ________________________
Researcher’s Signature Date

For more information, please contact:
Anne Wachira, Researcher and student at Uppsala University, Sweden
Anne.Wachira.5707@student.uu.se
Appendix 2: Life Events Checklist

Listed below are a number of difficult or stressful things that sometimes happen to people. For each event check one or more of the boxes to the right to indicate that: (a) it happened to you personally, (b) you witnessed it happen to someone else, (c) you learned about it happening to someone close to you, (d) you’re not sure if it fits, or (e) it doesn’t apply to you.

Be sure to consider your entire life (growing up as well as adulthood) as you go through the list of events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Happened to me</th>
<th>Witnessed it</th>
<th>Learned about it</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Doesn’t apply</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Natural disaster (for example, flood, hurricane, tornado, earthquake)</td>
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<td>2. Fire or explosion</td>
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<td>3. Transportation accident (for example, car accident, boat accident, train wreck, plane crash)</td>
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<td>4. Serious accident at work, home, or during recreational activity</td>
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<td>5. Exposure to toxic substance (for example, dangerous chemicals, radiation)</td>
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<td>6. Physical assault (for example, being attacked, hit, slapped, kicked, beaten up)</td>
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<td>7. Assault with a weapon (for example, being shot, stabbed, threatened with a knife, gun, bomb)</td>
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<td>8. Sexual assault (rape, attempted rape, made to perform any type of sexual act through force or threat of harm)</td>
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<td>9. Other unwanted or uncomfortable sexual experience</td>
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<td>10. Combat or exposure to a war-zone (in the military or as a civilian)</td>
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<td>11. Captivity (for example, being kidnapped, abducted, held hostage, prisoner of war)</td>
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<td>12. Life-threatening illness or injury</td>
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<td>13. Severe human suffering</td>
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<td>14. Sudden, violent death (for example, homicide, suicide)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Sudden, unexpected death of someone close to you</td>
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<td>16. Serious injury, harm, or death you caused to someone else</td>
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<td>17. Any other very stressful event or experience</td>
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Available at: https://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/life-event-checklist-lec.pdf
Appendix 3: Interview Questions

1) Where in South Sudan did you live before you came to Kenya?
2) With whom did you live?
3) What tribe do you belong to?
4) What were the main reasons for you to leave South Sudan?
5) With whom did you travel to Kenya?
6) When and where did you arrive to Kenya?
7) How old were you when you arrived to Kenya?
8) How did you feel first when you arrived to Kenya?
9) What were the biggest challenges when you came to Kenya?
10) Did you believe that you were capable of handling these challenges?
11) Was there anything meaningful in your life at that time?
12) How did you think about your future back then?
13) Can you understand why difficult things have happened to you, what has caused them?
14) What kind of support and help have you got since your arrival to Kenya and by whom?
15) What have been the most challenging things for you during your stay in Kenya?
16) What have been your major vulnerabilities coming to Kenya as an unaccompanied or separated child?
17) What has helped you handle these challenges, to move forward (as for instance, persons, things, circumstances)?
18) Do you feel that you have gotten used to life in Kenya, that you have adapted to the society and your life?
19) How would you describe a successful adaptation?
20) How do you feel today?
21) What personality/characteristics do you think is helpful to have in order to be able to move on from the difficult things that have happened in life?
22) What things in the society or what circumstances are important for a person to be able to move on from difficult things that have happened in life?
23) What is important for you today in your life?
24) How do you think about your future?
25) Do you have any recommendations on how humanitarian and development organisations best can support South Sudanese separated and unaccompanied children arriving as refugees to Kenya?
# Appendix 4: List of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
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<th>Gender</th>
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