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WESTERN CAPE**

**AN EXPLORATION OF EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH  
EXITING FOSTER CARE SYSTEM**

**By**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's in Child and Family Studies Degree in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, Department of Social Work at the University of the Western Cape

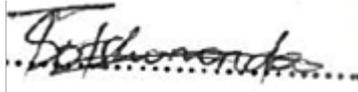
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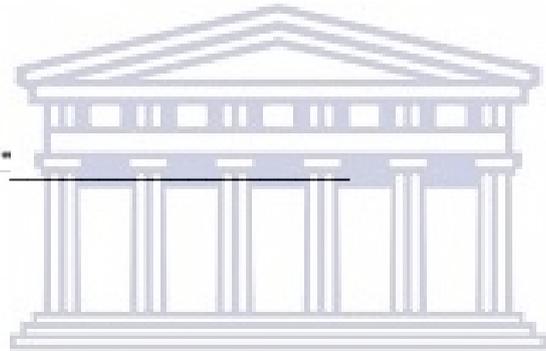
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## DECLARATION

I, Thozama Sotshononda, declare that the work on which this dissertation “**An exploration of experiences of youth exiting foster system**” is based on my original work, except when acknowledgements and references indicate otherwise. This dissertation is being submitted for a Master’s in Child and Family Studies Degree in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, Department of Social Work at the University of the Western Cape. This work has never been submitted as a part of, or in full, to any other university for examination.



Thozama Sotshononda



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This study is dedicated to my late grandfather Kupula Buyana. When he passed on in 2018, I was distracted and lost focus on the study. Sibakhulu, this is for you.

## **ABSTRACT**

Foster care is a major area of interest within the field of social work studies. The South African welfare system has not done enough to assist the youth exiting the system. This study aimed to explore and describe the experiences and support systems for youth exiting the foster care system. A qualitative exploratory-descriptive research approach was utilized with of focus group discussions, which were thematically analysed. The Humanities Social Science Research Ethics Committee ethically approved this study. Four themes were identified: insight into foster care system, challenges experienced by the youth exiting care, support needed by youth exiting care and challenges experienced by the social workers to manage foster care placements. The findings highlighted that there is a lack of knowledge about foster care, which resulted in poor connections in families, as well as poor management of the foster care grant. It is evident that the social workers are not visible for foster care supervision, and their difficulties to manage the foster care placement seem to be associated with a lack of resources, high caseload, the backlog of cases, and quality versus quantity in social services.

## KEYWORDS

Foster care

Experiences

Youth

Adolescent

Support System



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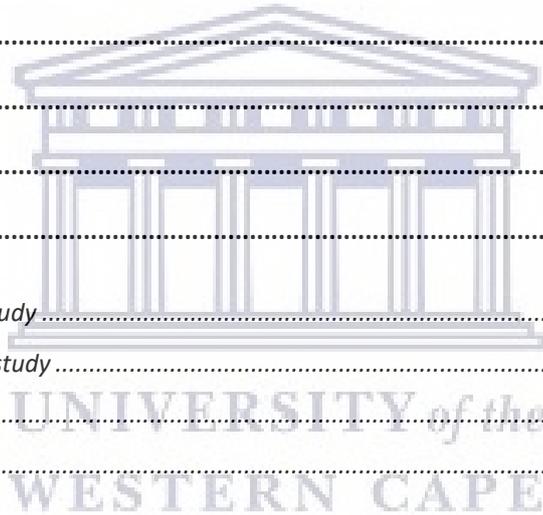
## ABBREVIATIONS

CSG	Child Support Grant
DSD	Department of Social Development
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IOL	Independent Online
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
OVC	Orphans and vulnerable children
PPCT	Process, Person, Context, Time
PYD	Positive Youth Development
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAGE	Sarah and George
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SOS	Societas Socialis
US	United States

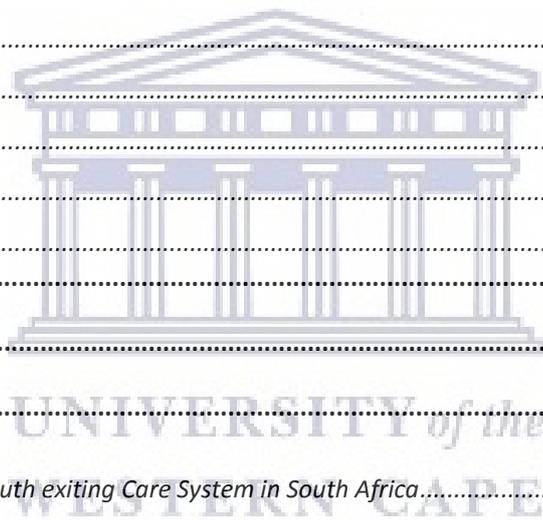


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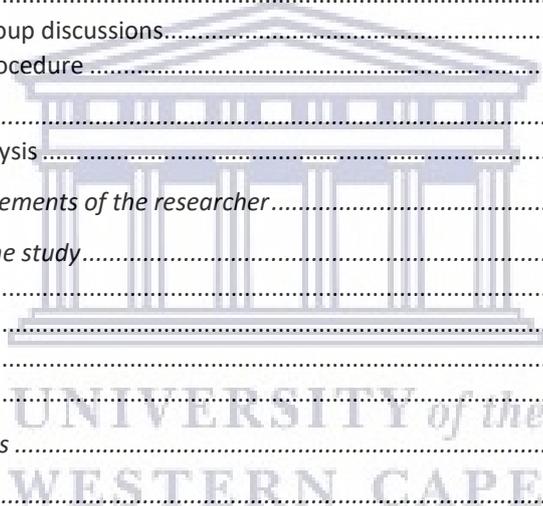
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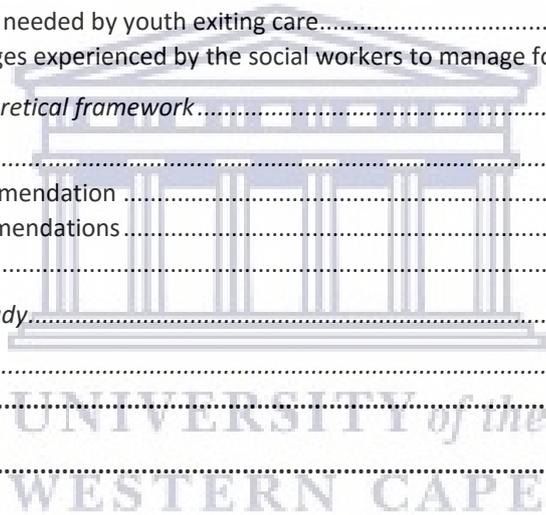
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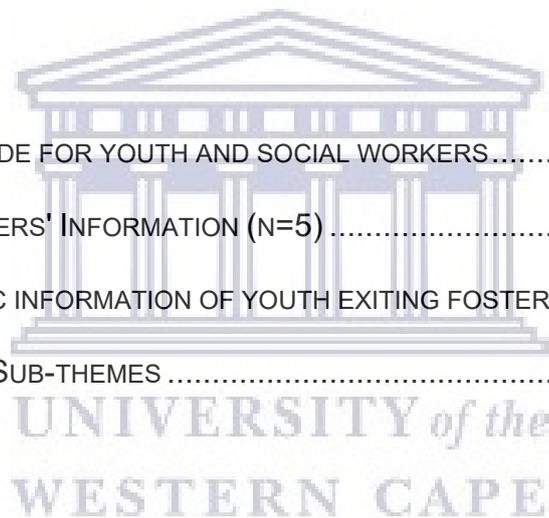


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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1 Introduction

Foster care is a major area of interest in the field of social work studies. It is one of the most significant discussions grounded in child and family studies. However, little research has been conducted in the area (Bond, 2018a; Bond, 2020). A qualitative study that explored possible services for young people who exit foster care highlighted the importance of independent living skills as part of the care-leaving preparations that should be identified by case managers who supervise in foster care (Bond, 2020). However, it should be noted that many young people in general are facing challenges related to financial, education and emotional issues that result in a high unemployment rate in South Africa (Van Breda & Dickens, 2016). Previous studies have indicated that the care leavers that are transitioning to early adulthood tend to be vulnerable and despair in life because they lack a support system in their families and welfare system (Bond, 2018a; Bond, 2020).

It has been accentuated that the young people are at risk of facing more struggles in life as they exit foster care and they are unprepared to deal with the outside world (Van Breda & Dickens, 2016). This indicated that some of the young people have been taken from their homes as they were neglected, and abandoned. This is consistent with Bond (2020) who shares about the absence of policies that support young people exiting foster care; however, there is increasing concern over the preparation of young people who are emerging adulthood in South Africa.

Despite the endeavour to build policies for care-leaver services, it has been noted that the care-leavers aging out of care services still experience more difficulties and drawbacks related to reasons for their placement in care and the inadequate monetary and staff to offer such care (Van Breda, 2018a). Pinkerton (2011) highlights that the socio-political antiquity of colonisation and institutionalised discrimination, and the cultural variety of the country seem to have influence the services. Recent studies have shown that youth exiting care in South Africa is a problem, as above half a million youngsters are placed in foster care (Hall, 2017; Jamieson, 2017; Van Breda, 2018b). This was evident in 2011/2012, as eighty percent of the young people were living with their relatives while 21 000 youngsters were placed in housing care (Hall, 2017; Jamieson, 2017; Van Breda, 2018b). This seems to be a serious problem for the current foster care system in South Africa because it is under-funded and under-resourced (Hall, 2017; Jamieson, 2017).

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Care-leavers' unpreparedness is a major problem facing the foster care services in not only the South African context but also globally (Reid & Ross, 2005). The reality of the South African youth in foster care is that there are no strategic plans in place to prepare them before they exit the foster care system (Bond, 2018a). This problem still exists in a democratic country, such as South Africa where good policies are formulated but the implementation of the policies seem difficult. The problem is that there are a high number of young people who are unprepared and lack of aftercare support as well as the absence of policies to support those leaving care services (Bond, 2018a; Bond, 2020).

Foster care is regarded as a temporary placement for children removed from their families' home due to family challenges at the time of the removal (U.S. Department

of Health and Human Services, 2010). Exposure to removal from families has been related to adverse effects among young people (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). Although the Children's Act 38 of 2005 supports child removal as a last resort, it is done due to the respect of a child's protection and family preservation.

For instance, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010, p.13) states that foster care refers to "24-hour substitute care for all children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the state agency has placement and care responsibility." In contrast, Goemans (2018) argues that the foster care system in a South African context provides services to children and young people who appear to be vulnerable members of society. Yet considerable literature published on care leavers from other countries show that adolescents are not prepared for adulthood (Reid & Ross, 2005; Schoeni & Ross, 2004). These studies have reported that young people transitioning out of these systems into adulthood are often overlooked and unprepared (Bond, 2018a; Bond & Van Breda, 2018b). Unwin and Hoggs (2012) show how research into foster care was mainly concerned with children and families. Thus, foster care has been identified as an enabler that seem to promote kindness and now it has become the placement of choice for the children in need of care.

Several studies have attempted to understand the need of expansion of foster care in recent years and highlighted that the Children's Act 38 of 2005 led to the amendment of the policy of 2000 that legalised the placement of children with extended family members. This follows the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2010), which reports that the South African Social Security Agency formally placed half a million children assisted by court order into foster care. According to UNICEF (UNICEF, 2010), about 80% of these children were placed with relatives. This

serves the mandate of the welfare sector that services should be provided to vulnerable individuals, families and communities to alleviate poverty and reduce unemployment (Patel, 2005). However, it should be noted that the welfare sector has been criticised for taking a long time to make amendments in their policies, for example, reducing unemployment among young people is still a major problem that affects foster care.

Previous studies have indicated that majority of the youth who need foster care are situated in the historically marginalised areas, which are influenced by the past, political affiliations, socio-economic factors (Hall, 2017; Nyasani, Sterberg & Smith, 2009; Thomas & Mabusela, 1991). However, it was noted that the issue of foster care is a global problem that affected both developed and developing countries who are grappling to meet the needs of the youth in the foster care system (Boyle, 2017; Hampshire, Porter, Agblorti, Robson, Munthali & Abane 2015; Hong, Li, Zhao, Stanton & Li, 2014; Kang-Yi & Adams, 2017; Nduwimana, Mukunzi, Ng, Kirk, Bizimana & Betancourt, 2017; Woodgate, Morakinyo & Martin, 2017).

## **1.2 The rationale of the study**

Foster care services are affected by a variety of factors for example socio-economic and political affiliations (Hall, 2017; Nyasani, Sterberg & Smith, 2009; Thomas & Mabusela, 1991). This indicates that the debate about foster care and the needs of young people exiting the services has gained fresh prominence. Many argue that there is a need for a programme that may help with preparation and aftercare support (Bond, 2018a; Bond, 2020; Boyle, 2017; Hampshire et al., 2015; Hong et al., 2014; Kang-Yi & Adams, 2017; Nduwimana et al., 2017; Woodgate et al., 2017).

This project on foster care was conceived during the time working for social services. As a social worker in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, I have witnessed youth exiting foster care grapple with the outside world while transitioning into education and the employment system of adulthood. Therefore, this study deviates from the previous studies that focussed on lived experiences of transitioning from foster care system to adulthood (Bond, 2020; Bond, 2017; Parker, 2013; Tanur, 2012; Walker, 2016). These studies highlighted that the transition from foster care to emerging adulthood have a negative influence on the children who end up homeless. However, Bond and Van Breda (2018b) supported by Tanur (2012) report that young people exiting from state care look for support that can assist them to cope with the changes and difficulties in their lives. Clearly, the studies highlight the importance of developing intervention strategies to support the youth exiting foster care. The rationale for this study provided evidence that may assist social workers and other allied health workers within the area of the child and families interested in addressing the challenges of young people exiting the facilities.

Youth who leave foster care with a positive mind are healthy, productive, and well-respected adults (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013, p.3). Therefore, it should be noted that the youth exiting foster care are more likely to succeed if they are exposed to productive conditions that prevent engaging in unhealthy risk behaviours and improve the likelihood of future positive outcome (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012).

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

One of the most significant discussions in child and family studies is the transition of young people exiting foster care from urban and rural areas in South Africa (Bond,

2020; Bond, 2018a; Bond & Van Breda, 2018b). Transitioning from foster care to emerging adulthood has been a controversial and much disputed subject within the field of social work because young people are unprepared to cope with the challenges related to physical, sexual, cognitive, social, and the emotional (Walker, 2016). Additionally, the adolescent as a developmental stage of transition between childhood and adulthood may be accompanied by unhealthy behaviours, which double the vulnerability of youth exiting the foster care system (Walker, 2016; Baugh, 2008). However, there are a limited number of empirical studies focussed on exploring and describing the lived experiences of youth exiting the foster care system in a South African context. In addition, little is known about a support system provided to youth exiting the foster care system. Previous studies highlighted youth exiting care face a lot of challenges and loose social support they had for years (Bond, 2010; Mamelani, 2013; Meyer, 2008; Oelofsen, 2015; Van Breda, 2018b). Therefore, there is a growing need to understand the insight experienced by the youth exiting foster care services.

#### **1.4 Research question**

What are the experiences and support system of youth exiting the foster care system in the Eastern Cape South Africa?

#### **1.5 Aim of the study**

The aim of the study is to explore and describe the experiences and support systems for youth exiting the foster care system.

#### **1.6 Objectives of the study**

- To explore and describe the youth's understanding of the concepts of "foster care" and "exiting system".

- To explore and describe the experiences of youth exiting the foster care system.
- To explore and describe the support system available for youth exiting foster care.
- To explore and describe the factors influencing youth exiting foster care.

## 1.7 Theoretical Framework

The underpinning theoretical frameworks for this study is the ecological systems theory and circle of courage. The ecological systems theory focusses on relationships between individuals and their surroundings that influence human development (Berk, 2000; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It comprises five environmental systems namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The interdependence between environmental systems is very important because it validates the need for interactions within the systems (Berk, 2007; Paquette & Ryan, 2001). This is an indication that there is a need to gain an understanding of the experiences and support provided to the youth exiting foster care in Buffalo City, in the Eastern Cape Province. The ecological systems theory provided social workers with the ability to develop programmes that may ameliorate the challenges faced that the youth exiting foster care are faced with in their daily lives. The Circle of Courage model has been found to be useful in understanding of the “Individual Development Plan (IDP) within South African statutory children’s services” (Bond, 2017; Maseko, 2017). The circle of courage consists of these caring principles; sense of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity as its core business.

## 1.8 Research Methodology

A qualitative research approach was used for the purpose of the study. Qualitative research is used to answer questions related to the complex nature of phenomena, to describing the phenomena from the participant's viewpoints (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011, p.64). This is further supported by Creswell's (2012, p.184) explanation that "qualitative researchers have a tendency to gather data in the area where participant's" are experiencing problems that influence their lives. It has been reported that the qualitative approach appears to allow researchers to advance and apply their interpersonal and intersubjectivity skills as part of the exploratory processes (Alase, 2017).

## 1.9 Research design

In explaining the importance of research design, Sileyew (2019) argues that research design is used as part of the methodology to provide an appropriate framework for a study. Sileyew (2019) calls research design the assembly of an inquiry; it is a rational matter rather than a logistical one. In this study, exploratory and descriptive design was used to discover and describe the experiences of youth exiting the foster care system. Creswell (2012) postulated that explorative design is directed to gain an understanding of a condition where there has been a lack of information or inadequate literature concerning the phenomenon. Nevertheless, De Vos et al. (2011, p.96) refer to the descriptive research design "as a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship, that focuses on the "how" and "why" questions.

## 1.10 Research Setting

The study was conducted within the Buffalo City Municipality, Department of Social Development, King William's Town. The research location was significant for the researcher because she was coming from Cape Town to conduct research in Eastern

Cape. The research location needed to be central to all the research participants, especially youth exiting the foster care system and need access to transportation.

### **1.11 Population**

Population refers to the total of persons, events, organisation units, case archives or other sample units with which the research problem is concerned (De Vos et al, 2011, p.223).

#### **1.11.1 Participant Selection and Recruitment**

In this study, the participants were selected using a purposive sampling method and the recruitment was done with the participants who were eligible and met the inclusion criteria for the study (Denscombe, 2014). This means that the selected participants had the relevant information and were knowledgeable about their experiences of exiting foster care (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Denscombe, 2014). The participants had to be social workers who provided services related to foster care in Buffalo City for the past three years. The youth had to be male and female between the ages of 18 to 20 and exited foster care.

### **1.12 Data Collection**

In this study, data collection was conducted using focus group discussions (FGDs) aided by an interview guide.

#### **1.12.1 Focus Group Discussions**

The focus group discussions are suitable when employing the explorative research design, as in the event of the current research study (Hatch, 2010, p.131). Accordingly, Fischer (2011, p.315) highlights that focus group discussions are used with “people from similar upbringings or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest to the

researcher”. The advantages and disadvantages of focus group discussions are discussed.

### **1.12.2 The advantage of focus groups**

Focus group discussions are supplest systems of data collection that afford the participants some opportunities to explain and build on each other’s responses while discovering their meaning, as they wish (Monette, Sullivan & De Jong, 2010, p. 246). This kind of data collection method was deemed relevant for the study because it can be conducted in an environment that was suitable and convenient for the social workers and youth. In addition, the focus group discussions were cost effective; the researcher was able to use shortest time to collect data (Kroll, Barbour & Harris, 2007, p. 691).

### **1.12.3 The disadvantage of focus groups**

Focus group discussions are known for prolonged conversations, which may lead to other aspects to be left out during data collection. Therefore, it is important that a researcher should be well prepared to facilitate the discussions to prevent participants from talking at the same time, which might influence the transcription process. Consequently, a lack of control on the side of the researcher during group discussions could result in waste time, and difficult in capturing of data (Hatch, 2010, p.131). Therefore, in the present study, the researcher reminded the participants that they give each other a chance to speak, wait for their turn while someone speaks. The researcher managed to audio-record the focus group discussions and kept field notes to ensure that data was not lost.

### 1.13 Trustworthiness of the study

Babbie and Mouton (2010) describe information that can be confirmed by means of reliability and confirmability as the foundation to improve the truth-value of the qualitative research. Trustworthiness of the study is recognised and enhanced by four elements of the criteria namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

**Credibility:** The data and results of the study were verified by the participants, as part of enhancing credibility. The researcher summarised the data and had a peer debriefing with the supervisor.

**Transferability:** The data was verified by means of transferability. Transferability is defined as the step to which the results of the study can be moved to additional responses, it is the interpretive equal of generalisability (Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004). The researcher used literature and dense descriptions of the context of the study setting to enhance the applicability of the findings.

**Confirmability:** Confirmability refers to the step to which the results of an investigation could be confirmed or verified by other researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Confirmability was recognised by means of a reflexive journal, which helped the researcher to keep track of her research study.

### 1.14 Ethical Statement

Ethical approval to conduct the anticipated research was acquired from the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape, (**Ethics Reference Number: HS17/8/21**), and the Eastern Cape: Director of Social Development that participated in the study. The researcher has informed all the participants who took part in the study that they had a right to withdraw any time. All

those who participated in the FGDs signed privacy a binding form that gives permission to participate in the study. The confidentiality and privacy of the participants were confirmed by providing pseudo names. Participants were sensitised about the nature and purpose of the study before the interviews took place. Participants were asked to give consent to audio-recordings of the interviews and to capture the information.

### 1.15 Definition of words

**Foster care:** According to Children's Act 38 of 2005, foster care is a form of alternative placement a children's court can order.

**Experiences:** According to the Cambridge International dictionary of English (1995), experience is the process of getting knowledge or skill doing, seeing, or feeling things.

**Youth:** The African Union (2006) describes youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Therefore, the present study will use youth, care-leavers, and young people interchangeable.

**Adolescent:** Evans (2014, p. 216) reports, "clients aged between thirteen and twenty-one years".

**Support system:** Perry (2006) asserted that support system are people providing support to that specific person, it can be social workers, therapist and family members or church members.

## 1.16 Outline of the study

**Chapter One:** outlines the study, providing the setting and upbringing of youth exiting the foster care system. It grants an outline of the significance and basis of the study, describes the research question. The chapter concisely presents the theory on that underpins the study and the functionality of research approach.

**Chapter Two:** theoretical framework is described into detail based on bio-ecological systems theory and circle of courage.

**Chapter Three:** This section presents literature review on the experiences, challenges and outcomes associated with youth exiting foster care. Furthermore, this chapter presents the policies and legislations related to youth leaving the foster care system.

**Chapter Four:** Presents the research method used in this study. A comprehensive qualitative method, used in the present study, as well as all the appropriate elements for research methodology are described and substantiated.

**Chapter Five:** The findings of the current study are presented according to the identified themes and sub-themes, and discussed and substantiated with existing literature and theories.

**Chapter Six:** The themes from the previous chapter and recommendations are presented to provide a conclusion of the study.

## 1.17 Summary

Chapter one aided as a summary of the study. It briefly introduced to the goal of the study and theoretical framework within which the study was conducted. The following chapter demonstrates the theoretical framework used in the research linked to the study. The chapter will elaborate on the Bronfenbrenner bio-ecological systems theory.



# CHAPTER TWO

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2 Introduction

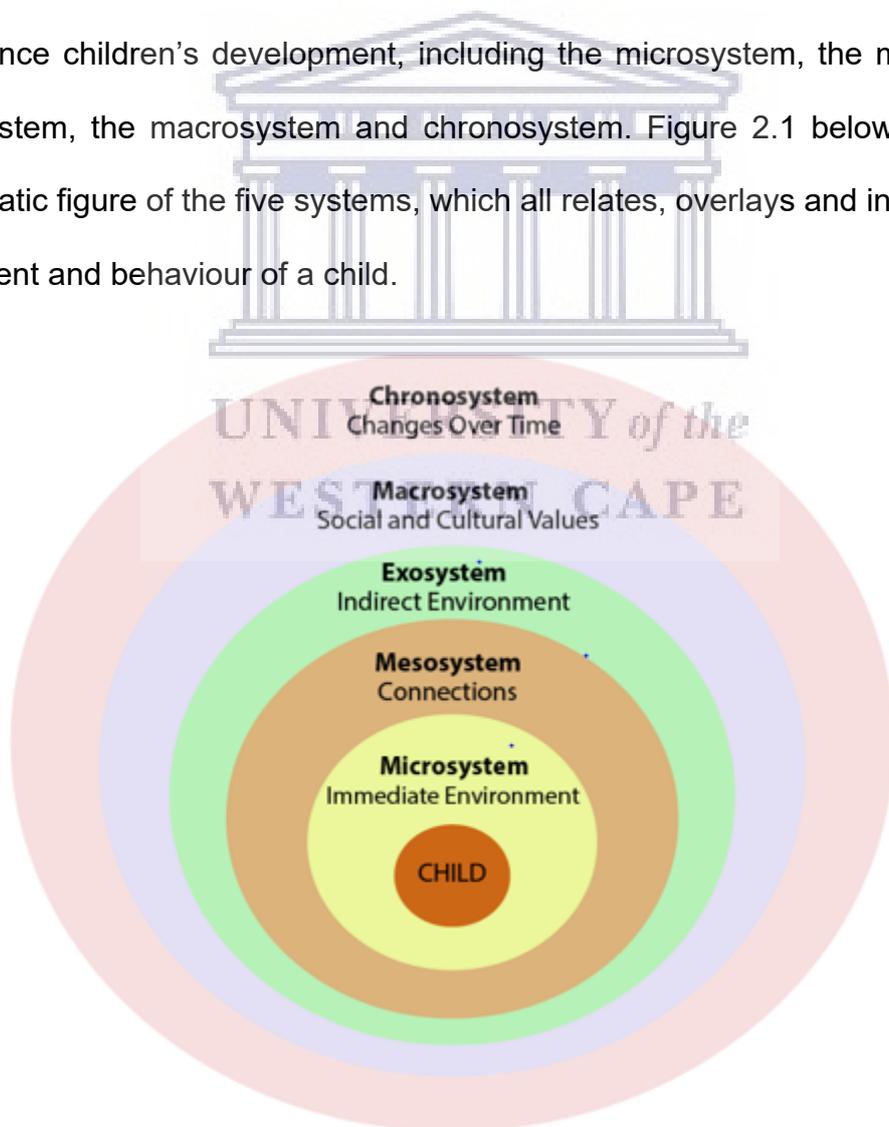
The earlier chapter delivered an overall outline of the study in relation to foster care and youth. The second chapter presents the theoretical frameworks that guided the current study. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory and the circle of courage model are the theoretical frameworks that underpin the conceptualisation of foster care.

#### 2.1 History of Bio-ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) is a recognised scholar who developed the ecological system theory, which was later named bio-ecological system theory. Bronfenbrenner's theory has been known for nearly half a century (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The popularity of the model began in the 1980's, in the decade after its major formulation. The first period was in the 1970's with the publication of the 'The Ecology of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), where Bronfenbrenner (1979) laid his interest on human development and saw a gap that environment is not included in philosophies of that time. Furthermore, the ecological systems theory was adopted to guide the understanding of the influence that families have on their children's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). However, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) notion on child development should be seen as a holistic approach that does not only focus on the child but to his or her surroundings. The research study focuses on youth exiting foster care system. These youth exiting foster care emanated from families that

seemed to be dysfunctional due to different reasons, which influenced the development of the child. Bronfenbrenner proposes that the bio-ecological model for human development should be studied with an understanding of the interaction of five interrelated levels; the process, the person, the context and the time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Therefore, the bio-ecological system theory uses different forms of connection and settings to assist with the development of a person. In this theory, human growth and development is viewed within a person-in-environment transactional interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified levels of the environment that influence children's development, including the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and chronosystem. Figure 2.1 below presents a diagrammatic figure of the five systems, which all relates, overlays and influences the development and behaviour of a child.



**Figure 2:1 Layers of the Bio-ecological Theoretical Framework (Guy-Evans, 2020)**

## **2.2 Background of bio-ecological systems theory on families**

This study focuses on the youth exiting the foster care system, who are not seen as a priority to the welfare system of South Africa (Schmid, 2006). It is reported that the youth in South Africa are exposed to gangsters', unemployment, poverty and other social issues like HIV/AIDS (Steyn, Badenhorst & Kamper, 2010). These socio-political factors perpetuate the turmoil of the youth living below the poverty line, hence, the young people in general engage in unhealthy activities (The Daily Vox Team, 2016). The ecological systems theory enables an understanding of the individuals' developmental needs within their environment (Berk, 2000). The ecological systems model comprises four environmental contexts that are used to understand a human development namely, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.

**Microsystem:** A level that connects to the children with the structures that promote interactions within their families. Therefore, the microsystem incorporates the relationships and interactions that enable a child to connect with the immediate environments (Berk, 2000). In this research study, the child would be the youth exiting the foster care system, who find it challenging to transition from being an adolescent to adulthood. The surroundings of the youth incorporate the foster parents who play an important role to nurture the child and protect her/him from the brutality of the environment where the child is raised.

**Mesosystem:** this level related to how the diverse parts of a child's microsystem work collectively for the sake of the child's development and well-being. For example, parental involvement in a child's school, such as going to parent-teacher conferences and observing their child's soccer competitions, this will help confirm the child's overall growth (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). At this stage of the child, it shows the significance of the partnership between all stakeholders that play an important part in the child's upbringing. The school environment is there to educate the child academically. The family environment is there to support and nurture the child, and the church is there to mould the morality and spiritual well-being of the child.

**Exosystem:** This layer involves a larger social system whereby children are not fully engage in, however, they are considered part of the system. It is indicated that the structures that are found in the exosystem tend to influence the child's development while interacting with some of the structures in the microsystem (Berk, 2000). Therefore, the exosystem is important because the intervention from the welfare systems of the child are valued. In relation to the current study, the youth exiting the system need a properly planned transition process so that they will be prepared for the outside world and adulthood. The properly planned transition process need to be strengthen with welfare policies that specialises in programmes that assist the youth with the transition, as it is a journey they are about to embark on and it is difficult.

**Macrosystem:** This layer is considered as the outermost level that makes up the child's environment. The macrosystem within the ecological framework represents the cultural values, customs, and laws that are used to guide the child (Berk, 2000). The values are constructed in the macrosystem are linked with the interactions of all other

layers. For example, it is a belief that parents should be solely responsible for raising their children within the culture of the family; however, it should be noted that culture is less likely to provide resources to help parents (Children's Act 38 of 2005). This affects the structures in which the parent's function. The parents' ability or inability to carry out their responsibilities towards their children within the context of the child's microsystem is likewise affected. In this study, the youth seem to be neglected by their parents, and some are orphans and vulnerable, which resulted in them to go into the foster care system. On the other hand, it should be noted that the culture of *Ubuntu* could provide resources to the parents so that they raise their children with care. This indicates that culture can be a source of resilience among families (Panter-Brick, 2015).

However, there was an improvement of the model that occurred when the fifth level (i.e., chronosystem) was added. The chronosystem involves the changes that ensued at the personal and the environment level. It has been highlighted that the changes are affected with the involvement of the biological aspects of a person (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Subsequently, the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) four concepts and their interactions form a foundation for the theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

**Chronosystem:** This level encompasses the dimension of time, as it relates to a child's environments and events that take place in the child's life. The time within this system can be linked to the external factors, such a parent's death. It can also be related to the internal factors, such as the physiological changes that occur with the aging of a child. As children get older, they may react differently to environmental changes and may be more able to determine more how that change will influence them (Berk, 2000).

**Process:** This fifth level of the model highlights the importance of the proximal processes that facilitate the human development guided by two dominant propositions of the bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

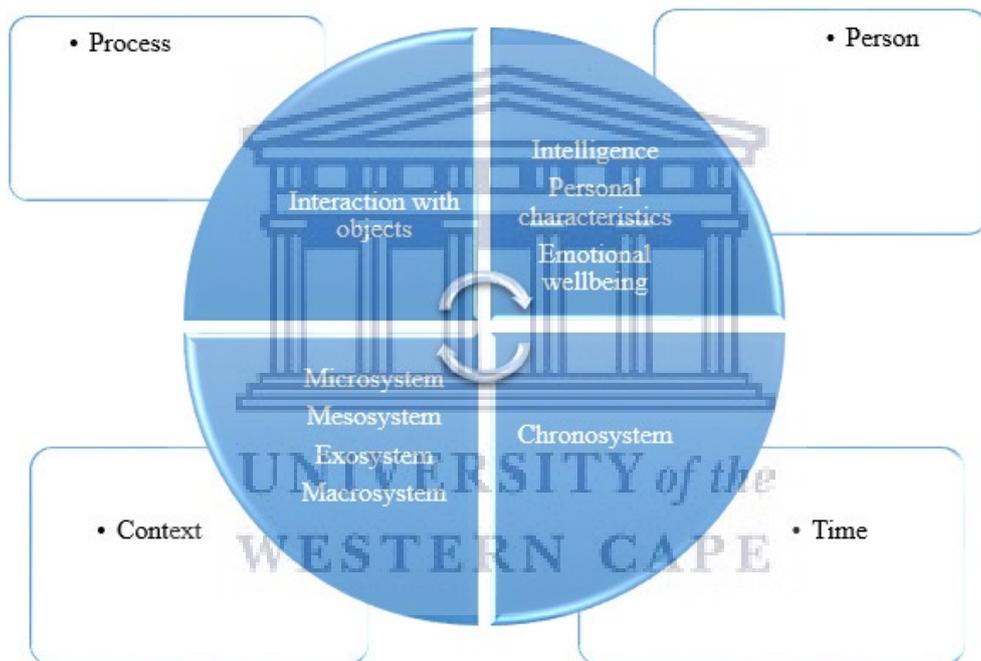
**Person:** In this model, the personal characteristics are related to demand; resources and force are acknowledged, as important part of the social interactions (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). These personal characteristics are inseparable from the individuals' actions because they are always part of any social situation. *Demand* characteristics are considered as personal stimulus that act as an immediate stimulus to another person, such as age, gender, skin colour, and physical appearance. It may influence initial interactions because of the expectations formed immediately (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). *Resources* are characteristics that relate partly to mental and emotional resources, such as past experiences, skills, intelligence and social, and material resources, such as food, housing, caring parents, educational opportunities appropriate to the needs of society. *Force* characteristics are those that concern different temperament, inspiration, hardships, motivation, and perseverance (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

**Context:** act as a source of information with which the person interacts at various levels of complexity (Magnusson, 1995). Context was therefore divided into four levels of interactions, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Microsystem constitutes of relationship between teachers and student; mesosystem deals with family relationship; exosystem working with other stakeholders like teachers and schools to conduct meetings (Koller, dos Santos Palludo & Morrais, 2016).

**Time:** encountered the question of time and its natural influence on human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). He structured the concept of chronosystem,

establishing a research model that allows examining the influences on the development of the person and changes over time in the environment in which the person lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Time is crucial in the development from transformation, discontinues, and continues characterises of the life cycle (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

### Bio-ecological Model



**Figure 2:2 A detailed diagram of the Process, Person, Context, Time Model (Bronfenbrenner, 2001)**

## 2.3 Principles of bio-ecological system theory

### 2.3.1 The microsystem

This is the child's immediate surroundings. The idea of the microsystem is a part of the ecological systems theory, which says that a child's development is best understood by examining the context of the child's environmental influences. This involves daily activities or interactions in the immediate surroundings, for example, home, church, peer group, neighbourhood (Berk, 2000).

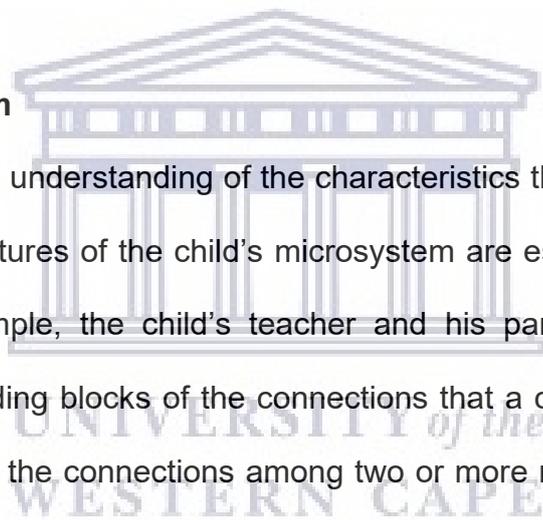
The microsystem include family, school, neighbourhood, or childcare environments. In this layer, relationships influence child's development in two-way directions, which can be away from the child and towards the child. For example, a child's parents may affect his/her beliefs and behaviour; however, the child also affects the behaviour and beliefs of the parent. Bronfenbrenner calls these bi-directional influences, and he shows how they occur among all levels of the environment. The interaction of structures within a layer and interactions of structures between layers is key to this theory. At the microsystem level, bi-directional influences are strongest and have the greatest impact on the child. However, the interactions at outer levels influence the inner structures (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

Brown's (2014) ideology on culture is vital in finding ideal foster household that will assist the child's potential to flourish. The foster household play a significant role in the development of the child. For example if the fostering household is dysfunctional it will influence the child negatively and some of the developmental traits of the will be affected. In many foster care supervision cases, there is the challenge of break down, where the foster family is no longer interested in caring for the child because of

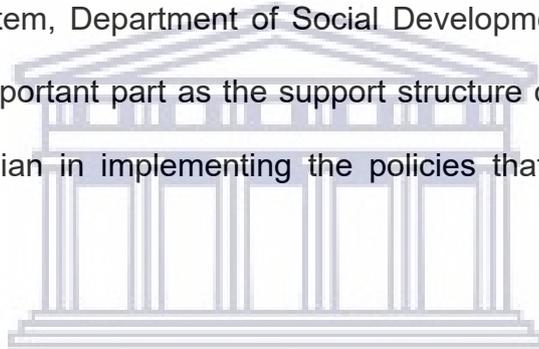
misunderstandings and behaviour caused by the child. Most of the time, the break down is caused by the transparency of financial expenditures of the foster parent where the child is no longer involved in the budgeting of the foster care grant. There are times that the youth tend to demand money from the foster parent and forget that their foster parent agreed under oath to care for the child (Children's Act 38 of 2005, section 181). Peer pressure is another factor in children in foster care as they compare themselves to their peers. In relation to the bio-ecological systems theory Bronfenbrenner (1979) understand that impact caused by families on children's development.

### **2.3.2 The mesosystem**

Figure 2.1 illustrates the understanding of the characteristics that constitutes the first layer. The support structures of the child's microsystem are established in this layer (Berk, 2000). For example, the child's teacher and his parents, church and his neighbourhood are building blocks of the connections that a child needs in life. The mesosystem represents the connections among two or more microsystems in which children are active participants, such as transactions and interactions between the family and their peers (Paat, 2013). This ecological setting, which functions as a linkage between two lower-level ecological settings, can jointly influence children's social outcomes in society (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The child development network expand in one or two settings, for example a child develop in school by means of education, develops at home by means instilling humanity. The school, family and church are part of (Guhn & Goelman, 2010). The poor family relations between the child and the school or with the school may have a negative impact on the child and end up exposed to behavioural problems (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).



In relation to this study, the most affected person is the youth who lost both parents and ended up in foster care system. These children need care and protection, as it is enshrined in Section 150 (1) (a) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. Therefore, these children are identified as vulnerable orphans child (OVC) according to a South African context. The vulnerability of the child can lead the involvement in criminal activities and substance abuse (Cashmore & Paxman, 2006; Mendes, 2009; Stein, 2008). The connections of the children with the social welfare are essential when they need someone who can advocate for their needs. The involvement of other stakeholders such as the justice system, Department of Social Development and other relevant stakeholders play an important part as the support structure of the child. The social workers are the custodian in implementing the policies that are relevant to child protection.



### **2.3.3 The exosystem**

The exosystem level includes other people and places where an individual may not interact often, but that still has a large effect on her, such as spouse's workplace, extended family members, the neighbourhood, etc. (Boon, Cottrell, King, Stevenson & Millar, 2012). For example, if an extended family member is laid off from work, this may have a negative spill over effect (Boon et al., 2012). Figure 2.1 illustrates the exosystem, which follows the mesosystem. This level affects the child indirectly, without involvement (Paquette & Ryan, 2001), for example, the child's parent workplace. Presume a child is more attached to his father than his mother. If the father goes overseas to work for some months, there may be commotion among the mother and the child's social relationship and this occasion may result to a tighter bond

between the father and the child. Parent workplace schedules or community-based family resources are examples (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The child may not be directly involved at this level, but he does feel the positive or negative force involved with the interaction with his own system (Berk, 2000). In relation to this study, youth who are exiting the foster care system feel a positive or negative involvement with the interactions of their own system. The lack of state funding that was available to them during the period they were found in need of care and protection becomes a challenge. The fear of exiting the system and losing the financial stability provided for by the foster care grant is now a reality. The South African Constitution highlights those adolescents who are no longer in need of care and protection, now regards them as adults.

#### **2.3.4 The macrosystem**

The following level is the macrosystem that is broadly described by Bronfenbrenner (1977) as consisting of all the social issues that impact the upbringing of the child for example socio-economic freedom, political affiliations and laws that govern the country (Berk, 2000; Guhn & Goelman, 2010; Paat, 2013). The environment in which the child is raised have impact in her development for example, if the child is raised in an environment that abuses alcohol the child could be easily influence by the deed (Paat, 2013). Culture has an impact on the development of the child because certain community obeys certain rituals. The cultural contexts include the socio-economic prominence of the person and or his/her family, his/her ethnicity or race and living in a still developing or a third world country. For example, being born to a poor family makes a person work harder every day (Berk, 2000).

In relation to the study, youth exiting the foster care system get into the foster care system due to the reasons described in Section 150 (1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. The youth exiting the foster care come from poor families who find it difficult to raise children who lost parents, and look for assistance from the social welfare organization. South Africa is a developing country, which is governed by the Constitution and the policies that govern the social welfare system.

### **2.3.5 The chronosystem**

This level comprises the changes and shifts in one's lifecycle. This may also include the socio-historical settings that may influence a person. In addition, Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined the chronosystem as the phases or stages of development of the child and events happening in the life time of the child, for example when assessing a child you start at birth to current and be able to associate an event with the behaviour (Guhn & Goelman, 2010). This covers the relations of the child in the environment for example who is connected to the child. Things that can affect the child may rise from the inside like losing a loved one, physical changes will be regarded as outer because it is the things that are visible. When the children are growing are able to control what can influence them for example they can control not to engage in substances (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

In relation to this study, the youth in foster care are affected by external elements such as losing parents, difficulties and internal physiological changes, as they are no longer regarded as a child because they are in the youth stage of development. South Africa has a history of bloodshed, split for the youth of today to be free, through the sacrifices made by our forefathers for youth to have access to free education, and other social

benefits like affordable housing structures. Youth exiting foster care are unemployed and not skilled enough to enter the workplace, and the political influencers have no plan in place to assist youth to close the gap of unemployment (Shaw, Steyn & Simeon, 2020).

## **2.4 Circle of Courage Model**

The Circle of Courage model is the second theory that guided the study, as it is the underpinning framework that has been found to be useful in understanding the “Individual Development Plan (IDP) within South African statutory children’s services” (Bond, 2017; Maseko, 2017). In addition, the Circle of Courage was adopted in the present study for its multipurpose function. It has been used in diverse backgrounds such as family, schools, peer group treatment, mental health and juvenile justice as well as faith-based programs (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Jackson, 2014). The Circle of Courage comprises four elements namely, independence, sense of belonging, mastery and generosity (Brendtro et al., 2014; Brendtro, Mitchell & McCall, 2009). These elements of the Circle of Courage model enable youth to develop, succeed and thrive in any setting when they are faced with difficulties. Additionally, the elements of Circle of Courage model are connected with the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Bond, 2017; Maseko, 2017; Brendtro, Brokenleg & van Bockern, 2014).

Previous studies in the field youth transitioning out of care have highlighted that the elements of Circle of Courage tend to promote Positive Youth Development (PYD), adaptation and resilience during the time of hardship (Bond, 2017; Maseko, 2017; Brendtro et al., 2014).

### **2.4.1 Belonging**

Belonging is one dimension that helps youth to strive in dealing with social problems related to alienation and rejection. According to Brendtro, Brokenleg and Bocken (2005), the dimension of belonging is crucial in the lives of youth because it provides opportunities to establish trusting relationships and connections with others. It has been indicated that an environment that promotes belonging tend to enable youth to develop empathy, acceptance and appreciation of differences (Brown, 2005). In the Circle of Courage, belonging is considered crucial because it provides a sense of connection and relatedness, which equates to safety and belongingness in Maslow's hierarchy. However, it should be noted that young people who are grappling with their belonging because of broken relationships might present with one or more social problem that influence their connections with others. For instance, young people who have poor social connections with others tend to be "emotionally and morally adrift" (Brendtro et al., 2005, p.131). In addition to emotionally and morally adrift, the young people end up engaging in unhealthy occupations related to crime, infringed others' rights, bullying and violence. As a result, these unhealthy occupations influence the young people's existence, quality of life, development and well-being (Brendtro et al., 2005).

### **2.4.2 Mastery**

In relation to mastery, Brendtro et al. (2005) argue that mastery is a dimension where young people are afforded opportunities to solve problems and meet their goals based on their needs and aspirations. In addition, mastery is important in the circle of courage environment because it fosters young people to develop their full potential and willingness to learn new skills and knowledge of how to deal with challenges and self-management. This echoes Brown (2005) who concurs that belonging to a group of

families that are grounded in culture enable young people to develop their “competence in social, physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual domains” (p.3). Mastery is also viewed, as the dimension of Circle of Courage that relates with esteem in the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. However, previous studies have indicated that young people who did not succeed to achieve a sense of mastery appear to have low self-esteem (Bond, 2017; Maseko, 2017; Brown, 2005).

### **2.4.3 Independence**

The Circle of Courage model involves independence as one of the dimensions that afford young people an opportunity to build self-control and responsibility (Brendtro et al., 2005). In this model, independence enables young people to exercise their autonomy and make informed decisions related to their existence and one’s life a success by engaging in occupations that are meaningful and purposeful (Brown, 2005). Independence is significant in young people’s lives because it enhances their sense of agent and take responsibility of their actions and choices they make in life (Brendtro, Brokenleg & van Bockern, 2014). Subsequently, the Circle of Courage involves independence whereby individuals make decisions guided by their autonomy, which builds on self-actualisation, as one of the needs described in Maslow’s hierarchy. However, the young people who have no sense of independence are more likely to blame others if they fail in life because of disorganised actions.

### **2.4.4 Generosity**

In explaining generosity, Brendtro et al. (2005, p.131) assert that generosity is an attribute that helps young people “to develop their natural abilities to show care and contribute to others”. Therefore, the Circle of Courage accentuates the value of generosity that promotes sharing with others, as part of altruistic nature without expecting to be paid for the service rendered to individuals and groups who stay in the

microsystem. This is related to the acts of random kindness, which helps young people learn how to contribute to others and promote positive behaviour (Brown, 2005). The generosity element is correlated with the human needs of love and belonging as explained in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It also cultivates a sense of concern and respect for other people and those who are generous are more likely to find meaning and purpose of their live while helping others (Brown, 2005).

## 2.4 Summary

This section defined bio-ecological systems theory, its meaning and applicability to this study. Bio-ecological systems theory is built because the surroundings is a vital power in growth, and the emerging child is rooted in a sequence of complex and interactive systems. The surroundings and its instant settings vigorously shape the result of a child's life. In view of the external layers of the systems, all the layers are influencing the developing child and the part of good parenting, which lays a steady foundation, cannot be over-emphasised, as a failure in the immediate microsystem leads to a child not developing resiliency in interacting with the outer layers. In the following chapter, the literature review will offer vision into other pertinent research conducted on the topic.

# CHAPTER THREE

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3 Introduction

The literature review for this study focused on the context of foster care in South Africa, and the factors that lead children to be placed in alternative care. The meaning of an adolescent in South African context and internationally and the inclusion of Erikson's developmental stages. The experiences of youth exiting care and the challenges they encounter during foster care placement are discussed. Policies and legislations that focus on youth exiting the care in South Africa and internationally are also presented.

#### 3.1 Unemployment of youth exiting Care System in South Africa

South African youth are facing hardship due to the high unemployment rate, and this makes things difficult for them to make ends meet. Findings from a systematic appraisal on South African context highlights the challenges faced by youth exiting care and various contributing factors that affect the transition (Van Breda, 2018). However, Bond (2017) argues that the environment where the youth return to is influenced by crime, substance abuse and other socio-economic matters.

Unemployment among 15-24 year old in South Africa has reached its maximum peak (Stats SA, 2017). South Africa has the highest unemployment rate among youth globally (World Data Bank, 2018). Most of unemployed youth have not finished secondary school education and those who are fortunate to finish secondary education were employed in low-skilled vacancies and earn low salaries (Stats SA, 2017).

As they get ready to leaving the foster care system, youth in care needed to be linked with relevant resources that will assist them with preparations and follow-up services (Department of Social Development, 2010). However, recent research accentuate that that there is little preparation done for youth leaving foster care and Shaw et al. (2020, p.1) indicate that “there is a need for programs to prepare youth for ageing out of foster care in South Africa”.

Bond (2018a) concurs that the young adults are living in an environment that is not conducive for their development in South Africa. This is a challenge for the youth who are exiting foster care because they are still experiencing hardships with the transitional services (Bond, 2018a). This contradicts with the recommendations of continuity of support for the young people, as they exit foster care (White Paper for Social Welfare [RSA], 1997; Children’s Act 38 of 2005).

### **3.2 Foster care**

The youth who move from the foster care system in South Africa are not receiving the attention they deserve, despite that the global foster care system do take care of the vulnerable members of society (Goemans, 2018). Rymph (2017, p.12) explains that “indeed the origins of foster care reveal that earlier systems of caring for dependent children, such as indenture or boarding out, could serve as forms of assistance to poor families who took in children”. Family foster care began as an effort to “rescue” children who are “dependent” or whose parents are “inadequate” and relying on charity (Pecora, Whittaker, Maluccio, & Barth, 2012, p.195). The foster care system today includes thousands of genuinely caring and committed foster parents and social workers who devote their lives to the low prestige work of serving foster children (Rymph, 2017, p. 2).

Thirty per cent of the nation's homeless population has spent time in foster care (Rymph, 2017). In addition, foster care services existed in the 1930's; however, they did not yet constitute a system. Yet, it was not a professional, efficient, caring one or an anonymous, heartless, dysfunctional one. When parents are poor, or ill or overwhelmed, or neglectful, or powerless, they often lack the resources, the ability, or the legal right to hold onto their children (Rymph, 2017, p. 2).

Jores (2013, p.112) argues, "ordinarily, foster care to a temporary alternative care arrangement for children deprived of a family environment. The affected children are placed in the care of unrelated individuals, awaiting re-unification with their family or the completion of a more permanent form of alternative care such as adoption". However, many children in need of alternative care in South Africa are in foster care with over ninety per cent of such placements being with relatives, usually grandmothers (Jores, 2013, p.112).

In South African context, it has been noted that foster care grant tends to be the "only source of income that provides for the family" (Shaw et al., 2020, p.3). This has been found to be drive that makes some households to engage in informal arrangements for foster care arrangements so that they may access grants (Jores, 2013). Thus, foster care grant is perceive as an enabler that "relieves families from experiencing poverty" (Shaw et al., 2020, p.3). However, Jores (2013, p.113) highlights that the financial gain tends to be a priority over and above the care and protection of the children.

The foster care system today includes thousands of genuinely caring and committed foster parents and social workers who dedicate their lives to the low prestige work of serving foster children (Rymph, 2017). Yet, the system is widely criticised for failing

the children and families, it is intended to help (Rymph, 2017). In most cases when the families experience abrupt challenges in their lives and children are the ones who pay the price, for example, when there are challenges related to negligence and children are removed from their homes to the environment. Nevertheless, Mitchell-Welch (2014, p.11) indicated “the history of foster care has evolved over the years and is viewed by some people as an institution that ruins the lives of children, while other people recognise the foster care system as an institution that assist children in becoming more productive citizens”.

Parents could not care for their children for a myriad of reasons are placed in orphanages or unsubsidised foster families, either permanently or until the parents recovered and returned for them. In the 1960s, the foster care system began focussing on detecting and preventing child abuse, a major reason why children are removed from their families” (Coleman and Ganong, 2014, p.5). Therefore, it should be noted that the welfare system in the past used to focus on crisis intervention, not the prevention measures. Thus, it is relevant for this era to protect children from any abuse by making use of foster care services.

There are three ways of understanding foster care during mid-twentieth century, which comprise shared in Rymph (2017, p.5). These three ways include, firstly, public obligation that views foster care as a means for society to fulfil its responsibilities (moral and legal) to ensure the welfare of dependent children. Secondly, a component of the household economy that foster care, as a strategy used by families (both families of birth and foster families) to address realities of their own economic circumstances. Lastly, a type of family that foster care, it is viewed as a “practice that created alternative family forms, relationships, and even bonds of love” (Rymph, 2017, p. 5).

### **3.3 Factors leading children to be placed in alternative care**

According to Section 150 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, the emphasis is on the identification of a child needing care and protection. The social welfare agencies that render protection services focuses on the Children's Act 38 of 2005 in order to provide guidance, when they assess foster care cases as enshrined in Section 150. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 indicates that a child is considered for foster care if he/she meets the following criteria. Firstly, a child qualifies when both parents are deceased and the child is left with no socio-economic support. Secondly, when the child shows extreme behaviour challenges that the parent cannot be able to change the child. Thirdly, a child is eligible for foster care when a child is exposed to child labour and substance abuse with no rehabilitation support in place. Furthermore, when the child is abused physical or mentally and when the child lives in harmful circumstances that will leave the child vulnerable. All these indicate that an investigation by a social worker is needed if the child is found in need of care and protection due to the above-mentioned circumstances (Children's Act 38 of 2005, section 150).

### **3.4 Role of social workers in foster care**

The child social worker is accountable for the care plan and for safeguarding, that welfare is safeguarded and endorsed, that they are properly cared for and accurately educated, and that they are getting good health care and upholding suitable contact with their family (Fisher, 2016). They must visit the child or young person in a placement at regular, stated recesses, and decent practice specifies that they should form a meaningful rapport with the child, so they may better understand them (Fisher, 2016).

These are their core tasks and duties in their working partnership with foster carers:

- Visit the youngster in placement.
- Make sure that the foster care has all the information they need to care for the child, e.g. history, likes and dislikes, accomplishments.
- Include the foster carer in consultations about the strategy for the child, counting case appraisals, care preparation meetings and other seminars of professionals.
- Ensure that a placement plan is decided with the foster carer, and this comprises full particulars of preparation to delegate authority (Fisher, 2016).
- Confirm that the foster carer knows contact arrangements in writing.
- Attest that the foster carer is summoned to join meetings and appointments concerning the child's schooling and health, such as personal education and health, personal education plan, seminars, appraisals of exceptional educational needs, school conferences, and conferences with health professionals (Fisher, 2016).

## 3.5 ADOLESCENT

### 3.5.1 The concept of adolescence

This study focus on the adolescence life stage, as part youth exiting foster care and their transition to early adulthood. Adolescence is a life stage that is unique that involves development, experimentation and an insightful period of social, psychological, economic and biological transition (Banati & Lansford, 2018). However, children do not take a straight path to adulthood because of the trials they are faced with in their lives and opportunities available during the adolescent period and how these form the journey of life (Banati & Lansford, 2018). Adolescence is the stage

between childhood and maturity and happens in the period from the start of adolescence until the age of 18 (Crone & Dahl, 2012). Therefore, the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood is characterised by feeling in-between, identity exploration, self-focus, and exploring possibilities (Munson, Lee, Miller, Cole & Nedelcu, 2013). The adolescence life stage can be understood using the Erikson stages of psychosocial development.

### **3.5.2 Erikson stages of development**

**Stage 1:** Trust versus mistrust, this stage focuses on building a rapport and relationships between the caregiver and the child. The environment where the child is raised play a significant role to understand the language of trusting his or her community (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2006). The first year of life for the child is crucial because he or she learns more about being loved and cared for (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2006).

**Stage 2:** Autonomy versus doubt: phase two distances the second and third years of life, the period which Freudian theory calls the anal stage. Erikson sees here the emergence of autonomy. This independence dimension constructs upon the child's new motor and psychological capabilities (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2006). At this step, the child can do outdoor physical activities such as climbing, drop, push and pull. If the child misses this stage of being decisive without any interference from caregiver, he or she will suffer making future decisions (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2006).

**Stage 3:** Initiative versus guilt: in this stage, the child develops a sense of purpose and direction or is overly controlled by the parents and made to feel constrained or guilty. The child is learning most of the things on his own and through trial and error like riding a tricycle (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2006). Erikson argues that the child is likely

to do wrong things intentional in order to see the parents' reaction. Whether the child will leave this phase, his sense of inventiveness far outbalancing his sense of guilt, depends to a substantial degree upon how parents reply to his self-initiated actions (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2006).

**Stage 4:** Industry versus role confusion: this stage is associated with school going age; Erikson describes it as latency phase (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2006). It is stage where children become affectionate with their parents, for example, a boy child will be more attached to his mother and the girl child will be more attached to her mother. In this stage, a child can differentiate between right and wrong and acknowledges the consequences of her conduct (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2006).

**Stage 5:** Identity versus confusion, this is the stage whereby social relationships are considered important in the lives of adolescents. In this stage, an adolescent learns to develop a sense of identity that has an influence on behaviour development in life. This stage assists adolescents to develop a sense of self and feelings of independence while taking control of their lives. However, it is important to note that some adolescents failed to achieve the milestones, which results in insecurities and confusion about their identity and future. Additionally, these adolescents might struggle to transition to the next stage of intimacy.

**Stage 6:** Intimacy versus isolation: it is at this stage of development where maturity is tested by forming intimate relationship or social isolation. For these phases defined hereafter, traditional psychoanalysis has nothing new or major to say (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2006). It is vital that a young person had a sense of identity, which assist him or her to achieve his or her goals (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2006). Erikson proposes that it is at this stage where a young person can initiate intimacy whereas at the same

time it could be neglected. This stage acknowledges the parents contributions instilling the morality of the young person (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 2006).

Erikson psychosocial developmental stages are applicable for the present study because of its focussed on the youth exiting foster care, as they transition from stage 5 to stage 6.

### **3.5.3 Adolescents in an African Context**

In an African context, adolescents are viewed by means of blood connections, matrimonial ties, sharing common ancestral background, and socio-economic factors (Nsamenang, 2004). Therefore, Nsamenang (2004) suggests that young persons are active representatives that engage with the world in their normal way and develop in the socio-cultural zone. It is crucial to highlight that when adolescents reach a certain stage, there are rituals, which are performed in order for the help the individuals to understand the stage that they are in their development. The adolescents are taught about the roles and responsibilities that are expected within that stage. However, it should be noted that the teachings are different for every cultural clan, for example, for Nguni's a girl going through "ukuthomba" and boys go through initiation as a rite of passage (Dziro, 2019). In the meantime, adolescence is a stage that guide individuals to construct their personal identity and belonging to that particular African culture (Nsamenang, 2004).

Previous studies (Arndt & Naude, 2016; Booth, 2004) indicated that African people no longer adhere to most of their rituals because there is an influence from Western culture and modernisation, which affect education and socialisation. The cultural system is changing because of time and the communities are adopting cultural practices, cultural norms and adapt to new cultures (Jacobs, 2013). Therefore, the

young people reside in diverse communities while they need to be obedient to their ancestral background (Arndt & Naude, 2016; Jacobs, 2013).

#### **3.5.4 Adolescents in a South African Context**

The adolescents who are transitioning from puberty stage to emerging adulthood in South Africa context tend to encounter many challenges that influence their health, quality of life and well-being. Joblessness is an enormous challenge for youth between 15 and 24 years, which is a quarter of the youth community (Dawson, 2014). Unemployment ratio of youth below 25 years of age is the half of youth, accounting to the thirty percent of people with no income (Dawson, 2014). This is a concern that is affecting the youth and emerging adults because joblessness have emanated from the international collapse of currents (Statistics South Africa, 2015). Additionally, the joblessness issue has got worse because of the surrounded organisational errors in the job markets that resulted from the change between skills and obtainable jobs (Statistics South Africa, 2015).

The individuals who are Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET) are estimated to 15 million of young South Africans who are between 15 and 24 years of age according to the statistic's concluded by (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2017). The number of women has increased than that of men who manages to obtain senior certificate in South Africa (Department of Higher Education and Training). Transitioning into adulthood for young people is a complex challenge that influence their goals about future selves. As the gap is broadening among young people, achievement of adulthood markers, such as freedom, marital, setting up a household and starting a family are hindered by the unavailability of employment opportunities and inability to access occupation and training (Dawson, 2014). South Africa's joblessness and poverty has reached its peak, which resulted, to families

caring for orphans to incur more financial responsibilities (Dawson, 2014; Mattes, 2012). Consequently, Hall and Sambu (2016) highlighted that the number of children who lost their parents had reached three million in 2014. This serious problem affects families and young people who are depending on foster care for financial supports and resources.

### **3.6 Youth Exiting Care**

In a South African context, it is clear that youth leaving care need a strong positive outcomes and achievements so that they may face the challenges of exiting foster care. The youth perceive their success in life, as an achievement when they are financial stable, having family relationship and a stable occupation (Muller, van Rensburg & Makobe, 2003). However, the youth who are exiting foster care seemed to struggle with their success because they are unprepared for the transition.

It was noted in previous studies that 75% of youth exiting care had poor living conditions, as they were living in shacks for one to seven years after exit (Maposa, 2010; Maposa & Louw-Potgieter, 2012). As a result, it was found that 50% of the youth exiting residential care resort to return to their relatives because they could not cope with the challenges related to accommodation (Bond, 2010), which has increased from the 25% that was identified by Miller (2004). Oelofsen (2015) highlights that the youth in foster care received financial support; however, there were conditions attached such as having a child can result in withdrawal of support. This problem resulted some of the youth to exit foster care and to co-habit with their partners.

The unemployment rate of youth exiting Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCCs) can have a negative influence on their lives, which eventually led them to engage in illegal

activities like committing crime (Dickens, 2015). In contrast, Bond (2010) findings indicated that youth who exited residential care were searching for employment in their first year of exiting the welfare system while furthering their studies. Other studies corroborated with Bond (2017) that the youth exiting foster care are faced with many challenges related to crime, unemployment, violence and family disruptions, which indicated that no drastic changes happen after leaving care (Miller, 2004; Dickens, 2016; Maposa, 2010; Maposa & Louw-Potgieter, 2012).

Concerning the youth's education, Van Breda and Dickens (2015) revealed that the youth in CYCCs tend to produce poor results in their educational activities. This is evident in Van Breda and Dickens' (2015) findings that indicated that 70% of the youth managed to complete grade 9 or even lesser grade whereas 20% were in grade 12. The findings highlighted that some of the youth in CYCCs do not consider the importance of education. Furthermore, previous studies showed that the youth leaving CYCCs shows less interest in education to obtain a high school qualification (Maposa, 2010; Maposa & Louw-Potgieter, 2012; Dickens, 2015; Van Breda, 2015c).

In Africa, it has been reported that most orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) are depending on their relatives and other community members for assistance; however, this kind of care is faced with some challenges resulting in many OVC being homeless and live in child-headed households (Van Breda & Frimpong-Manso, 2020b). This a similar problem that the care-leavers had to deal with in their lives, as the policies, practice, and research agendas tend to be very slow in addressing their problems (Pinkerton, 2011; Van Breda & Frimpong-Manso, 2020b). Therefore, recent studies have indicated some interests in the field of emerging adulthood of the youth exiting foster care in Africa and Ireland (Bond, 2020; van Breda & Pinkerton, 2020a; van Breda & Frimpong-Manso, 2020b). These studies highlighted that young people

emerging into adulthood “need to transition through a structured process that prepares them for managing the demands of adult world outside care” (van Breda & Frimpong-Manso, 2020b, p.4).

### **3.6.1 Experiences of youth exiting care**

The experiences of youth exiting residential care are commonly compounded of poor planning and social support that influence their lives (Bond, 2010; Mamelani, 2013; Meyer, 2008; Oelofsen, 2015). Due to the shortage of innovations, youth transitioning from care have difficulty to be optimistic about the future due to lack of strategic programs that focus on youth development (Mamelani, 2013). When the period of leaving care approaches they become nervous and indecisive (Bond, 2010) and feeling down and affect family connections (Oelofsen, 2015; Meyer, 2008). However, in some research work done for youth exiting care, it was noted that some of the youth felt prepared and equipped to be independent and a few felt agitated (Dickens et al., 2013; Dickens & Marx, 2014). In a study by Miller (2004), youth exiting care felt ready to leave care and be independent even though others felt uneasy about the decision.

Youth exiting care revealed that at the time of leaving, they were aware and fully empowered concerning the exit from care (Meyer, 2008; Oelofsen, 2015), for instance, creating economic choices and utilising public transport. In contrast some of the previous studies have indicated that the youth that exited residential care and CYCCs are discriminated because they were part of care systems (Bond, 2010; Meyer, 2008; Oelofsen, 2015) and other people took advantage of their vulnerability (Mamelani, 2013). Consequently, Mamelani (2013) shared that the youth’s identity, self-esteem and developmental growth seemed to be affected by their experiences of exiting foster

care. This negatively influenced the youth's well-being because they grappled with developing affectionate relationship, as part of transition to emerging adulthood.

### **3.6.2 Challenges of youth exiting care**

There are many challenges that the youth exiting care need to deal with in their daily lives, which include accommodation problems, unemployment, and financial dependence (Sulimani-Aidan, 2014; Sekibo, 2020). These challenges result in the youth to engage unhealthy risk behaviours such as abusing substance and drugs, alcohol, and criminal activities, which show that they are struggling to adjust to the transition process and they end up being incarcerated (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006). In addition, the youth exiting care face challenges like joblessness, destitute, abuse and social segregation (Maposa & Louw-Potgieter, 2012) as well as emotional difficulties (Sulimani-Aidin, 2014). For instance, Sulimani-Aidin (2014) indicated that young people who have been reunified with their families from the welfare system find it challenging to readjust to their families and society. Some the aspects that influenced the youth to readjust were the “forgotten values, habits and behavioural styles” of their families (Sulimani-Aidin, 2014, p.43).

Job security was among the challenges that appeared to trouble the youth exiting care because they had no financial support (Selwyn, 2015; Pryce, Jones, Wildman, Thomas, Okrzesik & Kaufka-Walts, 2016). Consequently, a lack of job security led the youth to be “left with much of free time, which resulted in boredom, emptiness and idleness” (Sulimani-Aidin, 2014, p.42). This could be one of the reasons that influenced the youth exiting foster care from securing job opportunities because they have little experience and skills for labour market (Pryce et al., 2016). Hence, Van

Breda and Frimpong-Manso (2020) suggested that youth should be assisted with “basic living skills, increasing their employability through acquisition of practical entrepreneurial or vocational skills” (p.4) so that they address some of their challenges.

### **3.6.3 Outcomes associated with youth exiting care**

There are outcomes associated with the youth exiting care, which are used to determine the success and future. The outcomes comprise “self-supporting accommodation, education for employment, financial security, drugs- and alcohol-free as well as crime free” (Dickens & Marx, 2020, p.68). These outcomes are measured based on Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) and engagement in Education, Employment, and Training (EET) (Dickens & Marx, 2020). It is reported that care leavers who are NEET tend to experience “psychological, emotional, financial, and health challenges” (Dickens & Marx, 2020, p.64).

#### *3.6.3.1 Self-supporting accommodation outcome*

The self-supporting accommodation outcome of the care-leavers is assessed based on their living conditions, which include a formal dwelling, informal dwelling, family, alone/with friends and homeless (Dickens & Marx, 2020). It has been reported that finding accommodation tends to be a problem for some of the care leavers (Dixon, 2008; Pinkerton & Rooney, 2014; Häggman-Laitila et al., 2020). This is a difficult journey for youth exiting the system because they are unprepared enough for the transition to adulthood and there is little support from their partners (Rogers, 2011; Stein, 2008). A study by Suliman-Aidin (2014) reported that young people had trouble, as they had nowhere to stay during their transition to independent living.

### 3.6.3.2 *Education for employment outcome*

In this outcome, the care leavers are assessed whether they are working, working full time, working part time, studying, studying full time, studying part time, desire to work, went for job interview and applied for a course (Dickens & Marx, 2020). These domains of education for employment outcome highlight the transition that care leavers need to be prepared for prior to exiting care. However, it became clear that the youth between the ages of 15 and 25 find it difficult to complete grade 12, which is the half of the youth population of the country and education fraternity is questionable for this outcome (Statistics South Africa, 2015). Dickens (2016) shared that the South African youth seemed to be not interested in empowering themselves in terms of knowledge because few of them did not complete grade 12. The challenge of the South African youth who are not empowered with education had increased between 2008 and 2015, which contributed to rate of care leavers who joined the unemployed youth (Statistics, 2015).

Research has shown that the youth with no high school certificate are faced with difficulties to secure jobs because they little knowledge about requirements of employments (Stott, 2013). A lack of skills and experience among the care leavers because they struggle to face the demands of the job market (Stott, 2013; Dziro, 2020). Due to high rate of unemployment among youth exiting care, it is clear that the care leavers who are NEET will struggle to alleviate poverty in their household (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Henig, 2009; Miller & Potter, 2007).

Education of young women appears to be a problem because they tend to be deprived opportunities in case they bear children at the adolescence stage and they end up dropping out of school compared to young men (Miller & Porter, 2007). Young men are not deprived opportunities because they have children but they find it challenging

to secure employment. However, there are times that young men get involved in criminal activities and obtain a criminal record, as a result employment and financial security because a challenge for them (Miller & Porter, 2007).

### 3.6.3.3 *Financial security outcome*

This outcome deals with the financial vulnerability that the care leavers had to face on their daily lives in relation to no income/resort to crime, rely on family, no food and bank account (Dickens & Marx, 2020). In circumstances where support is given to youth exiting care to improve their learning they find it challenging to be involved in projects due to monetary, or social problems (Unrau, Font & Rawls, 2012; Dziro, 2020; Häggman-Laitila et al., 2020). It has been reported that the youth have no funds that they may use to search for a job and posting documents when applying for jobs (Department of Policy Research Unit & Centre for Social Development in Africa, 2016).

A lack of Child Support Grant payments by the social welfare services after the young person turn 18 appeared as one of the problems that influenced the financial security of the care leavers in a South African context (Patel, Graham, Baldry, & Mgehe, 2016). Young employment searchers experience extensive financial difficulties to enter job market, as everything requires money for example making copy for submission for a job advert (DPRU & CDSA, 2016, Patel et al., 2016).

Relying on family is identified as one of the domains of financial vulnerability among the care leavers transitioning to emerging adulthood (Dickens & Marx, 2020). It was noted that some of the young people lend money from their family members; however, when they fail to reimburse the money as promised, it result in conflicts that affect the family relationship (DPRU & CDSA, 2016). Nevertheless, the absence of education

and money are not the only obstacles that influenced the care-leavers who need employment (Bond, 2017).

#### *3.6.3.4 Drugs- and alcohol-free outcome*

This outcome focuses on the drug- and alcohol-free that care leavers engage in as they transition to emerging adulthood. Alderson and colleagues (2019) highlighted that the risk of drug and alcohol use has increased among the care leavers, which is viewed as a public health and social problem. In a retrospective document analysis that described the health behaviours of Finish young people who left aftercare service by the end of April 2015, Häggman-Laitila and colleagues (2020) found that smoking and substance use were among the concerns that influenced the care leavers. Furthermore, it was found that two-thirds of the care leavers engaged in the activity of substance use, which was perceived as an enabler that resulted a variety of problems in their daily lives, health and well-being. Therefore, Häggman-Laitila et al. (2020) suggest that multidisciplinary collaboration should be established to prevent risks behaviours among the care leavers.

#### *3.6.3.5 Crime free outcome*

The issue of crime among the young people who happened to be exposed to foster care is a concern that has been raised by Van Breda (2020c). It is highlighted that the young people who engage in criminal activities tend to be in conflict with the law (Van Breda, 2020c). A mixed method study that investigated the young people patterns of criminal engagement over time and found that the young adults who reported being in regular crime tend to be incarcerated (Van Breda, 2020c). Hence, it is recommended

that part of the preparation for exiting foster care should incorporate crime prevention interventions.

### **3.6.4 Transition process into adulthood of the youth exiting Child and Youth Care Centers**

The process of transition into adulthood remains a concern that led many researchers in the field of emerging adulthood to highlight that young people “are ill-prepared for life after foster care” (Shaw, Steyn & Simeon, 2020). Recent studies further indicated that the transition into adulthood seemed to be a scary process that the care leavers have to deal with in their journey of exiting CYCCs (Bond, 2020; Shaw et al., 2020). However, the process of exiting the CYCCs is not different from foster care because not only the youth are frightened but the social workers too found it difficult to prepare the young people. This has been reported by recent studies (Bond, 2020; Shaw et al., 2020; Van Breda & Frimpong-Manso, 2020c), which indicated that there are existing guidelines, policies and programmes that the social workers may use in the provision of the services. Therefore, Van Breda and Frimpong-Manso (2020c) suggest that the transition process should prepare the young people with independent living skills that would help them after they exited foster care. The independent skills consist of “basic living skills” that may assist the young people to deal with the “negative outcomes related to stigma, discrimination, and lack of social support” (Van Breda & Frimpong-Manso, 2020c, p.65). On the other hand, Dickens and Marx (2020) suggest that young people should be provided with opportunities to enhance their employability through practical skills including “plumbing, electrics, motor maintenance, and building” (p.70). These suggestions are important for young people during aftercare as they may enable them to have a sense of belonging in order to cope with transition to adulthood. Furthermore, the basic living skills together with the practical skills could assist the

young people with necessary information in order to meet their goals and enhance their self-confidence to deal with any challenges that comes on their way (Van Breda, 2015).

### **3.6.5 Resilience in youth exiting care**

In explaining resilience, Van Breda and Frimpong-Manso (2020) viewed resilience as the ability of the youth exiting foster care to adapt and cope with the challenges of aftercare. In contrast, Wright, Masten, and Narayan (2013) view resiliency as the aptitude to improve, and demonstrate positive adaptation in the face of significant risk or adversity. Therefore, Bond (2017) argues that resilience is a component of self-awareness that assist young people to develop a sense of autonomy and agency. This is in alignment with the element of independence in circle of courage, which promotes young people to have freedom of choice and make informed decisions. Hence, Bond (2017) found that engagement in extramural activities such as sport tend to provide an opportunity for the young people to learn discipline and respect authority. These kind of activities enhanced the resilience of the young people, as they were able to experience a sense of belonging and avoid engaging in criminal activities.

The challenges that youth exiting care incur in their lives tend to train them to cope with the life stressors (Pinkerton & Rooney, 2014). Previous studies revealed that availability of social factors including social support, positive relationships and resources assist young people to experience their transition as a successful because they are able to cope with the challenges (Frimpong-Manso, 2015; Van Breda & Frimpong-Manso, 2020). Therefore, the transition process to adulthood may not necessarily be smooth; however, the young people need to be guided by professionals and other organisations so that they may address some of the challenges (Cohen, 2011; Rogers, 2011).

Studies that focussed on the importance of the resilience have indicated that young people with better future orientation tend to “exhibit resilience by navigating towards better outcomes” (Van Breda & Frimpong-Manso, 2020, p.65; Theron & Theron, 2011). Despite the fact that limited studies have examined care-leavers views of their future; however, the notion of resiliencies is very important in order to gain insight into the strategies that the young people use to deal with their challenges.

### **3.7 Policies and legislation for youth leaving care**

This section deals with the policies and legislation for supporting youth leaving care from the international and national contexts.

#### **3.7.1 International Policies and Legislation**

The international policies and legislation that guide the transition process for care leavers seemed to be blurry, which affect the young people towards emerging adulthood (Strahl, Van Breda, Mann-Feder, & Schröder, 2020; Bond, 2018a). This is a concern because the care leavers are “no longer benefiting from the protection of child welfare policy and legislation” (Strahl et al., 2020, p.1). Consequently, the care leavers who are ill-equipped for the transition to emerging adulthood struggle with unaddressed educational needs, accommodation, job security, financial security, well-being and engagement in criminal activities and substance abuse (Van Breda, 2020c; Strahl et al., 2020; Bond, 2018a).

A recent mixed methods study mapped care-leaving policy and legislation and its impact on selected aspects of care-leavers’ experiences across 36 countries including America, Europe and Asia, Africa and Australia (Strahl et al., 2020). The findings of the recent study indicated that care-leaving policies and legislation do exist in other countries; however, a concern is that some of these countries provide limited aftercare

services (Strahl et al., 2020). Additionally, the findings are consistent with other studies that reported high rate of vulnerability among care-leavers (Bond, 2018a; Moodley et al., 2020; Sulimani-Aidan, 2014). Strahl et al.'s (2020) study revealed that there are few countries with aftercare legislation while others had rudimentary legislation.

Challenges that were identified from the international countries consist of employment, education, housing or poverty, isolation or loneliness, mental health and delinquency substance abuse.

### **3.7.2 South African policies and legislation**

The issue of South Africa policies and legislation that support youth leaving care has been identified as the challenging one for social welfare services (Bond, 2015; Bond, 2020; Bond, 2018a; Van Breda & Frimpong-Manso, 2020). Accordingly, it was noted that the absence of the policy that support a compulsory preparation of the youth exiting care influenced the transition process. The matter is in its initial stage where researchers are more interested on the checking the reason of not having one instead of creating a policy (Bond, 2015). Some countries like USA, UK, and Australia seemed to have good policies that can be adopted and adapted in order to support the preparation of the young people exiting care (Bond, 2015). Research into policy for supporting care leavers has a long history; however, Bond (2015) and Strahl et al. (2020) still reveal that South Africa's policy for youth exiting care seemed to be rudimentary, which affects the continuity of care for the young people. Therefore, Bond (2018a) highlights that serious discussions and analysis of policies and legislations for care after exiting emerged during the 1970s; however, they failed to develop proper guidelines and programmes. Therefore, a number of authors argued that the absence of the legislation and policies expose the young people to risks behaviours that result in criminal activities (Bond, 2020; Shaw et al., 2020; Van Breda, 2020c).

Recent evidence suggests that the nonexistence of services to support young people who exit foster care “is a neglect of the state’s responsibility as corporate parent”, which can be viewed as social justice issue (Bond, 2018a, p.76 & 83; Strahl et al., 2020). A more substantial evidence about the social justice is found in Bond’s (2018a) and Strahl et al.’s (2020) articles, which accentuated that young people were unprepared to deal with independent living because of “denied equal economic and social grants” (Bond, 2018a, p.84). Collectively, these studies (Bond, 2018a; Strahl et al., 2020) outline a critical role for policy makers and lawmakers in considering the human well-being of young people exiting care, as a social justice issue.

In view of all that has been mentioned so far about the significance of social justice, it is clear that the care leavers should be viewed based on the six dimensions of human well-being namely, health, personal security, cognitive capacities for reasoning, social respect, deep personal attachments and self-determination (Faden & Powers, 2008, p.151). These dimensions are interlinked, therefore, if it happens that one of dimensions is missing or not activated the person’s well-being will be affected. Additionally, these dimensions seemed to promote independent moral significance among people; however, Moodley and colleagues (2020) suggested that “independent living needs to shift to interdependence and Ubuntu” (p.45). The shift to interdependence and Ubuntu is pertinent in the human well-being of the care leavers because it is consistent the element of belonging in the circle of courage. The evidence reviewed here seems to suggest a relevant role for all stakeholders to collaborate in the development of strategies that may be used to address societal and economic inequalities that young people need to deal with in their daily lives.

### 3.8 Summary

This chapter focussed on the reviews conducted by other researchers on similar topics of the youth exiting care system (care-leavers). Preparation of youth exiting care is still a challenge in other countries including South Africa because there are no proper and concrete plans in place by the government. The youth exiting care have similar challenges as they leave these centres without proper preparations and awareness of challenges outside care centres. Other countries seem to have proper strategies and plans in place to assist their youth to overcome those challenges when they leave care.



# CHAPTER FOUR

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the reviewed literature concerning foster care and transition. Therefore, this chapter unpacks the research methodology that was implemented in the study. Furthermore, this chapter describes the research processes that were followed for the fulfilment of the study, which included the research paradigm, approach, design, participant selection and recruitment. In this chapter, the processes of data gathering, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethics are presented.

- This study aimed to explore and describe the experiences and support systems for youth exiting the foster care system.
- In order to achieve this aim, the researcher formulated objectives to understand the concepts of “foster care” and “exiting system”. Additionally, to explore and describe the experiences, support system and factors related to youth exiting the foster care system.

#### 4.1 Research Methodology

Kothari (2004) explicates that research practice is striving to find solutions to a problem by means of investigation. The research study need to be conducted in order to solve a challenge. Jonker and Pennink (2010) explicate that researchers use research methodology in order to solve research challenges by following processes and procedures. The term research methodology; therefore refers to a scientific approach used to solve a research problem. It includes all those methods and techniques used in the implementation of the research study (Jonker & Pennink, 2010).

## 4.2 Social constructivism worldview

The social constructivism worldview is a foundation for qualitative research because people seek to understand their world and construct their personal meanings based on their experiences (Creswell, 2013). It is considered as one of the worldviews that stresses the significance of culture and context in understanding what is happening in society in order to create knowledge (Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997). Therefore, social constructivism is fabricated within the conventions that guide reality, knowledge, and learning (Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997). Regarding the reality assumption, it is highlighted that social constructivists consider that reality is made up of the human activity and engagement in their society. Therefore, the members of society invent the properties of the world through a collective effort of everyone involved (Kukla, 2000). Consequently, the social constructivist indicates that the reality cannot be discovered, as it does not exist before its social invention.

In relation to knowledge assumption, the social constructivists accept as true that knowledge is also a human product, which is socially and culturally constructed (Ernest, 1999; Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Floden, 1994). Accordingly, individuals tend to construct their meaning through their engagement in interactions with each other in the environment they live in that promotes social cohesion. It is clear that both environment and the interactions that people have with others form part of the external forces that influence individuals' knowledge and behaviour (McMahon, 1997). Thus, the social constructivism worldview is an important part of qualitative research approach because individuals engaged in social activities that enable interactions and meaningful for learning.

### 4.3 Research Approach

In explaining the research approach, Hennick, Hutter and Bailey (2011) indicate that qualitative research approach is used to explain research procedures in a proposed study. In comprehensive terms, qualitative research permits the researcher to follow different designs to collect information and be vigilant of any movements made by participants during the interviews (Hennick et al., 2011). Qualitative research is based on the conversations and engagements that provide people with opportunities to use their verbal and non-verbal communication skills during the research processes (De Vos et al., 2011, p. 307).

In qualitative research, the researcher observes the participants' worries and their perspectives to comprehend the meaning and clarifications they give to behaviour, events and objects. Kumar (2005) states that the research process involves a variety of steps that are needed for qualitative approach. Creswell's (2007) understanding of qualitative research approach promotes the respect of humanity within a research setting that affords participants to share their experiences related to the phenomenon of the study such as foster care. Qualitative research is a work in progress that is informative to its users.

### 4.4 Research design

Problem formulation guide the researcher to identify a suitable research design to answer the research question (Mooi & Sarstedt, 2011). In the current study, the posed research question was as follows: *What are the experiences of youth exiting the foster care system in Buffalo City Municipality?* The research question directs the construction of the aim as to explore and describe the experiences and support systems for youth exiting the foster care system. By making use of explorative and

descriptive design, it assisted the researcher to plan and structure the study through the process of accessing the participants who had the knowledge to answer the research question (Brockopp & Hasting-Tolsma, 2003).

#### **4.4.1 Explorative research design**

The explorative research design was used to understand the challenges that can help welfare organisations to formulate their problems (Mooi & Serstedt, 2011). Paneerslvam (2004) indicates that this design can be used to discover circumstances where there is lack of information. In order to understand the concept of foster care and exiting using the explorative design was suitable for this study as it explored the experiences of youth exiting the foster care system. To explore assisted the researcher to understand the setting and the participants in order to gain more information (Wiles, Pain & Crow, 2010).

#### **4.4.2 Descriptive research design**

A descriptive design is related to an explorative design, but the emphasis is on precisely describing the phenomenon being researched. De Vaus (2001) explains that descriptive research are concerned about describing the phenomenon of individuals or group while Bhattacharyya (2006) agrees that the design offers a guide on how the study will be conducted and implemented. Gravetter and Forzano (2011) explain that the design answer the question of what transpired during the research study.

#### **4.5 Participant's selection and recruitment**

In defining research population, Cunningham, Weathington and Pittenger (2013) state that a population in social research is "a collection of people or of non-human entities

that share one or more characteristics”. Elaborating further, Sagaard (2010) indicates that for the population to be recognisable a sampling frame need to be acknowledged.

#### **4.5.1 Sampling**

During the sampling process, the researcher is responsible for the selection of participants who are willing to participate in the study (Gravetter & Forzano, 2011). The researcher’s choice of selecting the participants is guided by the need to address the research question (Creswell, 2009). Consequently, this study used purposive sampling to select the participants, as it is recommended in a qualitative study (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). According to Palinkas et al. (2015), purposive sampling is used in a research study for the identification and selection of appropriate participants who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon of the research problem. The researcher followed a process of selecting the population by making use of purposive sampling and inclusion criteria (Monette, Sullivan & De Jong, 2010; Palinkas et al., 2015). Eligible participants (n=12) who met the inclusion criteria were selected: as they were youth exiting the foster care system; male and female between 18 and 21 years; were residing in Buffalo City Municipality. Social workers (n=5) who were employed to provide foster care supervision for the period of more than three years were selected. In total, participants (n=17) were recruited in Buffalo City Municipality, in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

#### **4.6 Data collection**

In this study, data collection was conducted through focus group discussions. The focus group discussions were chosen because the participants were allowed to share their views and opinions with the researcher. According to Denscombe (2014), focus

group consists of a small number of people who are interested to answer the research question that is investigated. It offers a conducive environment for the participants to reflect on the research question. Greeff (2002) describes a focus group as a planned debate with a purpose to achieve a goal by means of interaction between participants. In addition, Greeff (2002) explains that focus group is a research tool used in a qualitative study to gather information to a specific topic. The advantage of using the focus group discussions was that an interview schedule and techniques can be employed to guide the process of data collection and communication skills (De Voss et al., 2011). Qualitative research depend on four approaches of data gathering, namely: partaker view, lookout, detailed interviewing and notes recording (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). The information gathering method used in this research study was a focus group for social workers due to time constraints to conduct semi-structured interviews. The focus group was used for youth exiting the foster care system.

#### **4.6.1 Interview guide**

Smith (2005) argues that a researcher make use of interview guide to facilitate focus group discussions in order to collect relevant information from the participants. The participants had an opportunity to share their stories related to the research study (De Voss et al., 2011). The interview guide assisted the researcher to formulate a structure to use in order for the participants to focus on the research questions (Willis, 2008).

**Interviewing techniques:** the purpose of using interview technique was to guarantee rich data by means of probing and clarification when needed. The enquiry needed to be explored and described accordingly. The researcher reflected on the study to ensure that she heard the participants correctly on the matters that were discussed

(De Vos et al., 2011; Smith, 2005). The questions that were used to guide the focus group discussions are illustrated in the table below.

**Table 4:1 Interview guide for youth and social workers**

Focus Group Members	Questions Posed
<b>Youth exiting foster care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your understanding of foster care?</li> <li>• What is your understanding of the youth living foster care system?</li> <li>• What are your experiences as a foster child in Buffalo City Municipality?</li> <li>• What are your challenges in foster care placement in Buffalo City Municipality?</li> <li>• What are your recommendations with regard to foster care placement?</li> </ul>
<b>Social workers providing foster care supervision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your role in the supervision of foster care?</li> <li>• What type of intervention services have you done for youth exiting the foster care system?</li> <li>• What statutory services did you provide for the family?</li> <li>• What challenges have you encountered during supervision of foster care?</li> <li>• What exiting strategy have you prepared for the youth exiting foster care system?</li> <li>• What will be your recommendations to improve foster care placement?</li> </ul>

#### 4.6.2 Stages of focus group discussions

The researcher adopted the six stages of focus group discussions, as described in Willig (2013, p. 34). The six stages are as follows:

- Recruitment of participants and research assistant,
- Choice creation on the number of participants to partake,
- Strategy of the group discussion,
- Determining the amount of groups required,
- Looking for a venue, and
- Implementation of the study.

#### 4.6.3 Data collection procedure

The Head of Department of Social Development granted permission to conduct the study in 2017. This led the researcher communicate with the service manager of the area by telephone and email. However, on the day of the interviews, the youth exiting foster care were not contacted and the social workers were also not prepared. The researcher encountered a challenge and improvised to get the social workers to participate. The focus group for social workers consisted of five social workers doing foster care supervision over three years.

Holloway and Wheeler (2013, p. 128-129) reported that the amount of people to partake in the focus group is dependable to the research's need for that specific topic. Two focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with the youth exiting foster care and the social workers. The FGDs took place in one of the offices at Department of Social Development in the Buffalo City Municipality and they lasted between 45 to and 1h30 minutes. One method to **prepare** a setting for the focus group that is conducive and not harmful to participants. Quimby (2012) states that the researcher needs to check non-verbal communication signs when asking questions to start with general

question and ask sensitive questions later. The researcher made use of a around table setting so that the participants can face each other during the interaction.

The researcher managed the time to strategise for the focus by having a **pre-interview discussion** in order for the session to run without any delays. Leavy (2011) recommends the use of pre-interview discussion because it assists to build rapport with the participants. The participants were given information about the study, the title of the study, purpose of the study and their right to receive a copy of the results. The participants were given the opportunity to ask questions for clarity and they signed consent form and focus group confidentiality binding form. The participants were asked to be recorded during the FGDs and they have consented. This was done as part of credibility. The researcher managed to introduced herself and clarify the processes and procedures pertaining the study before data collection:

- 1) Names of the participants will remain anonymous
- 2) No remuneration.
- 3) For use of audio equipment permission will granted
- 4) Publication of results.
- 5) Participants are permitted to leave the group if the need arise.
- 6) Participants were not coerced

**Informed consent:** the participants agreed to be part of the study and they signed the consent form. The participants were given the opportunity to know each other and their inclusion to the study. In order for the research to run smoothly, the researcher started with pre-interview and preliminary remarks to motivate the participants to share their views (Zikmund, Babin, Griffen & Carr, 2012).

Rubin and Babbie (2010) emphasise that recording the exact answers of participants in qualitative research is vital. The use of audio recording as an instrument to assist with the study. Thomas, Nelson and Silverman (2011) also mentioned that the significant use of other resources or tools like notepads, log sheet and journals that captured detailed information that was collected on the day of the study. By taking field notes during the study assisted the researcher to record verbal and non-verbal communication. The field notes were useful during transcribing the audio recording where the researcher was able to add body language signs that happened during the interview (Bryant, ).

#### **4.7 Data analysis**

In describing data analysis, Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009, p.148) highlight that data analysis is a technique suitable for the examination of information by breaking it down in order to make sense. Schwandt's (2007) addition on analysing data is that, it has to be reconstructed in order to make sense on the views of the participation in answering the inquiry. The researcher broke down the information into pieces in order to understand the views of the participants' explanation concerning experiences of youth exiting the foster care system in Buffalo City Municipality. Eight steps as suggested in by Tesch in Creswell (2009, p. 186) were used to analyse the data collected from the participants. These steps assisted the researcher to identify themes and sub-themes related to the lived experiences of youth exiting the foster care system in Buffalo City Municipality. The data analysed were examined by the supervisor as part of credibility to check how did the researcher identify the themes, and sub-themes.

#### 4.7.1 Steps of data Analysis

The researcher used the eight steps described by Tesch (1990, p. 142) to analyse the data.

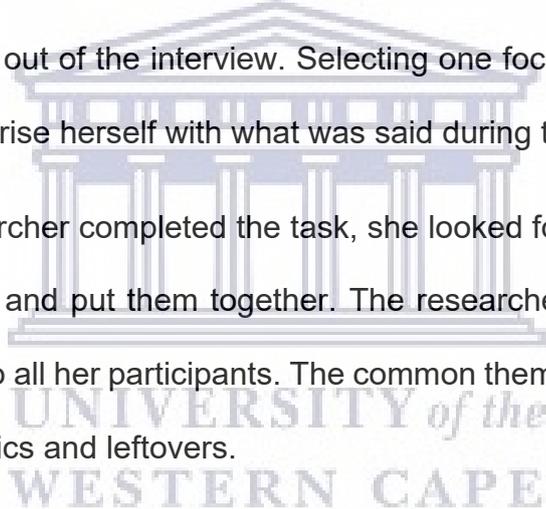
**Step 1:** The researcher familiarised herself with the data and to get a sense of the entire work. The researcher had conducted focus groups and semi-structured interviews, read the transcripts, and got a sense of what was said in the transcripts.

**Step 2:** The researcher had selected one focus group interview when doing transcribing because taking one at a time helped the researcher to understand the meaning of the information in the interview. The researcher had written down the thoughts that had come out of the interview. Selecting one focus group had assisted the researcher to familiarise herself with what was said during the interviews.

**Step 3:** When the researcher completed the task, she looked for a response, made a list of common themes, and put them together. The researcher looked at what was said that was common to all her participants. The common themes were arranged into major topics, unique topics and leftovers.

**Step 4:** The researcher made a list and returned to the data. The researcher made short topics and codes or perhaps used different highlighters for the topics. Each code had matched one part of the text. The researcher tried out an early organising format to see whether new categories and codes came out.

**Step 5:** The researcher found the most descriptive wording for her topics and turned them into categories. The researcher looked at her list to reduce it by combining topics that relate to each other. The researcher drew a line between the categories that showed inter-relationships.



**Step 6:** The researcher made a final decision on the abbreviations for each category in one place and performed a preliminary analysis.

**Step 7:** The researcher collected data material belonging to each category in one place and performed a preliminary analysis.

**Step 8:** The researcher recoded the existing data.

#### **4.8 Self-reflexive measurements of the researcher**

Cohen, Marion and Morrison (2000) cited in Humphries (2008) define reflexivity as an awareness that the researchers have on participants concerning the research processes. The research process that the researcher undergo to make study alive starting from initial submission of the proposal, initiating contact with the participants and other relevant stakeholders. The study was directed by relevant literatures. The interviews were carried out in a professional and principled manner and the researcher did not let her individual sentiment affect the research. The settings for the FGDs were conducive for the participants. The researcher started with general questions in order to build rapport with participants and sensitive questions were not asked to avoid offending participants.

#### **4.9 Trustworthiness of the study**

Validity and reliability are connected to qualitative and quantitative research of trustworthiness (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011). Thus, confirming power and trustworthiness of a study relies on the opinions or worldviews on the findings and images portrayed in the qualitative study (Keele, 2011). Babbie and Mouton (2010)

describe information that can be confirmed by means of reliability and confirmability as the foundation to improve the truth-value of the qualitative research. Trustworthiness of the study is recognised and enhanced by four elements of the criteria namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

#### **4.9.1 Credibility**

The data was verified by means of credibility, which refers to the facts that the researcher had discovered during the inquiry (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; Macnee & McCabe, 2008). Credibility determines accuracy on the information that the participants portrayed in the study as the reasonable findings that the researcher has distinguished (Graneheim & Ludman, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The credibility was ensured by considering participants' views, whereby the researcher summarised the data, reflected to them, and represented accurately. The researcher also recognised if the final data was accurately analysed and understanding the challenges of the study. Credibility was enhanced through the peer debriefing with the supervisor to discuss about the process of the study and data analysis.

#### **4.9.2 Transferability**

The data was verified by means of transferability, which is defined as the steps that the researcher used to obtain the results of the study (Bitsch, 2005; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Bitsch (2005, p.85) asserted that the "researcher facilitates the transferability judgement by a potential use of 'thick description' and purposefully sampling". This means that when the researcher defines the query and participants were nominated purposefully, it connects to the inquiry. To enhance transferability, the researcher used existing literature and dense descriptions of the setting where the study was conducted. This information about the setting could be used to examine and validate the researcher's findings if they are consistent with the context. Li (2004) stresses

that thick description refers to implementation of literature to fit in the descriptive information presented in the findings and the accuracy to relate in the research study. It covers the researcher's clarifying all the research processes, from information gathering, and the setting of the study to the manufacture of the final report.

#### **4.9.3 Dependability**

The data was verified by means of dependability. According to Bitsch (2005), dependability refers to the authenticity of findings over a period. Dependability entails of participants evaluation of the findings and clarifying the recommendations of the information is well supported by the participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Tobin & Begley, 2004). To check dependability, an investigation audit was conducted, whereby the researcher accounted for decisions and actions, which was established and how the information was composed, documented and examined.

#### **4.9.4 Confirmability**

The data was verified by means of confirmability. Confirmability refers to the step to which the results of an investigation could be confirmed or verified by other researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Confirmability is "concerned with founding that the information and clarifications of the findings are not figments of the inquirers imagination but are obviously derived from information" (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p.392). Studies propose that confirmability of qualitative inquiry is accomplished through an audit trial, reflexive journal and triangulation (Bowen, 2009; Koch, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability was recognised by means of a reflexive journal, which helped the research to keep track of her research study.

#### 4.10 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval to conduct the anticipated research was acquired from the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape, (**Ethics Reference Number: HS17/8/21**), and the Eastern Cape: Director of Social Development. Bickman and Rog (1998) state that the morals of social research are about relationship with the participants that is content and participants' answers that are honest to the findings of research study. The moral views of the research study were obeyed and led in an organized way. De Vos et al. (2011) emphasize that it is the duty of the researcher to protect participants from any form of danger during the inquiry, while Creswell (2003, p. 64) asserts that every partaker's contribution in the research study must be voluntary, and the involvement must not be coerced.

The researcher has informed all the participants who took part in the study that they had a right to withdraw any time. All those who participated in the FGDs signed confidentiality binding form that gives permission to participate in the study. The confidentiality and privacy of the participants were confirmed by providing pseudo names. Participants were sensitised about the nature and purpose of the study before the interviews took place. Participants were asked to give consent to audio-recordings of the FGDs and to capture the information. Additionally, the participants were informed that no harm was going to be done on them, participation is voluntary and were informed that psychological services were available in case they experience psychological distress during the FGDs.

#### 4.11 Summary

In this section, a qualitative research approach was followed and applicable for this study. The research procedure helped the researcher to discover and label the

experiences and support systems for youth exiting the foster care system, which is the goal of the study. The findings and literature control will be presented in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the reader on how the research methodology was present in the inquiry. In this chapter, the research findings are presented, and discussed based on the responses generated from the FGDs with youth exiting the foster care system and social workers. The aim of the study was to explore and describe the experiences and support systems for youth exiting the foster care system. The findings are further discussed based on the themes and sub-themes that were identified in this study. Themes of the study are further discussed with the existing literature and quotes taken from the transcripts and are then substantiated with the existing literature and theories underpinning the study (Creswell, 2009).

#### 5.1 Demographic Information

The five social workers employed by the Department of Social Development, years of experience ranged between three to five years as depicted in Table 5.1 below. The social workers who participated in the study were experienced social workers, some of the participants having experience in foster care supervision. The social work participants were mostly African females, only one male social worker. The foster care participants were mostly females, and only two were males.

The Department of Social Development (2013) reported that South Africa currently needs 68498 social workers but there were only 16154 registered with the South African Council for Social Service Profession as at June 2013. Department of Social Development failed to provide enough social workers to accommodate the workload

(Fortune, 2017). Govender (28 October 2007, p.13), writing in Sunday Times reports the views of the Public Servants Association, which represents government social workers, to explain the shortage of social workers in South Africa, which is estimated to be 50000.

**Table 5.1: Social workers' Information (n=5)**

Name	Ethnicity	Experience	Language	Gender
Participant 1	African	4	Xhosa	Female
Participant 2	African	3	Xhosa	Male
Participant 3	African	4	Xhosa	Female
Participant 4	African	5	Xhosa	Female
Participant 5	African	5	Xhosa	Female

In terms of the youth exiting the foster care, twelve participants (n=12) who consented to be part of the study because they were exiting the foster care system. The youth age ranged between 18 and 20 years and was representative of both males and females of the same ethnicity, which is African Black. They expressed themselves in their mother tongue known as isiXhosa, as it is as presented in Table 5. 2 below. Good communication skills are one of the fundamental skills required in scientific discourse (Erikson, 2007, p. 39). According to Nyika (2015), the child's home language lays a foundation of his or her worldview and perceptions.

**Table 5.2: Demographic information of youth exiting foster care (n=12)**

Name*	Ethnicity	Age	Language	Gender
Sihle	African	18	Xhosa	Female
Amanda	African	19	Xhosa	Female
Lunga	African	18	Xhosa	Male
Nosipho	African	19	Xhosa	Female
Alizwa	African	18	Xhosa	Female
Sive	African	20	Xhosa	Female
Dumisa	African	20	Xhosa	Male
Siya	African	20	Xhosa	Female
Anelisa	African	19	Xhosa	Female
Zodwa	African	18	Xhosa	Female
Libhongo	African	19	Xhosa	Female
Nondumiso	African	18	Xhosa	Female

\*pseudonyms for participants

## 5.2 Findings of the study

Themes and sub-themes were developed from the transcribed data of the research study. Four theme and sub-themes that are presented in Table 5. 3.

**Table 5:3: Themes and Sub-themes**

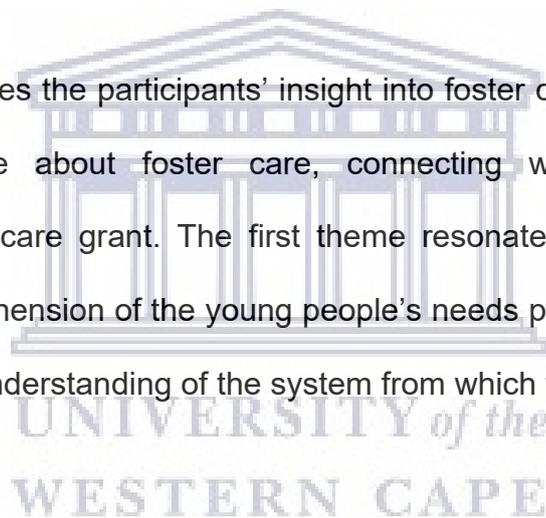
Themes	Sub-themes
1. Insight into foster care system	1.1 Lack of knowledge about foster care 1.2 Connecting with family 1.3 Management of foster care grant
2. Challenges experienced by the youth exiting care	2.1 Stigma around children or youth in care 2.2 Participants' knowledge about discharge from care 2.3 Employment opportunities
3. Support needed by the youth exiting care	3.1 Youth preparedness to exit care 3.2 Need for participation 3.3 Visibility of social workers from youth exiting care
4. Challenges experienced by social workers to manage foster care placement	4.1 Lack of resources 4.2 High caseload of cases 4.3 Backlog of cases 4.4 Quality versus quantity in social services



### 5.3 Theme 1: Insight into foster care system

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Insight into foster care system	1.1 Participants' knowledge about foster care 1.2 Connecting with family 1.3 Poor management of foster care grant

This theme contextualises the participants' insight into foster care, which include the participants' knowledge about foster care, connecting with family and poor management of foster care grant. The first theme resonates with Smith's (2011) suggestion that comprehension of the young people's needs prior leaving foster care should begin with the understanding of the system from which they are emerging.



#### 5.3.1 Sub-theme: 1.1 Participants' knowledge about foster care

This sub-theme captures the participants' knowledge about foster care services within the area where they are living. Most participants viewed foster care as the source of money given to children with no parents. This indicates that foster care information is not clearly channelled to foster parents, and children when they come to social welfare organisation for foster care application. This is echoed by participants' (Sihle, Lunga and Alizwa's) understanding of foster care as the money given to children. Participants shared their knowledge about foster care.

*“I think foster care is the money given to children without parents and then to cater for the needs most of the time for children who under the age of 21 years for food, clothing or school”.* (Amanda)

Amanda’s response is consistent with the previous studies (Midgley & Conley, 2010; Shaw et al., 2020) that were reported about foster care grant alleviating poverty. For instance, the foster child grant contributes circuitously to financial growth by providing admission to education, health, food security and protection (Midgley & Conley, 2010).

In addition, another participant said:

*“Is the money that comes from government that assist children who don’t have parent”* (Alizwa).

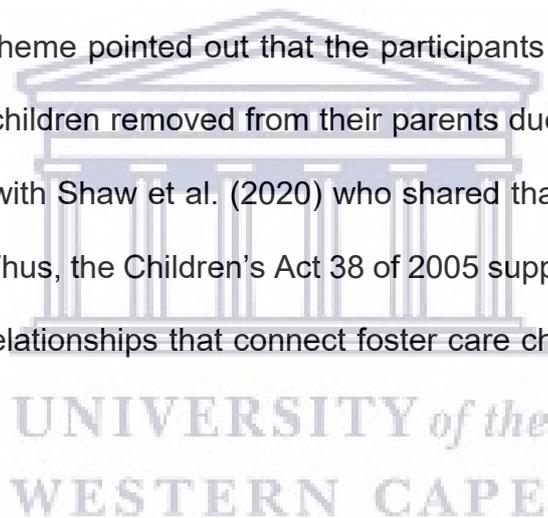
The findings from Alizwa are consistent with Shaw et al. (2020) who found that foster care grant was the source of income that assist families. However, Patel and Hochfeld (2012) state that foster care services not only providing protection, healing and amenities but they were meant at supporting and raising indigenous community creativities through public growth initiatives, including revenue generation and micro-enterprises, to promote the livelihood competences of people who are poor - in this case, foster parents and children.

A participant said:

*“For me, foster care is not only about money that government has allocated for orphans to be looked after, it is more about given a second chance to be cared for by your loved ones with assistance of foster care grant”* (Zodwa).

The findings from Zodwa clearly supported the sense of belonging, which is an element of the circle of courage and Children's Act 38 of 2005 that enforce good and positive relationships that support foster interdependence. It is clear that Zodwa had a positive mind about foster care, which promotes the acceptance, appreciation, quality of life, development and well-being (Brendtro et al., 2005). In contrast, foster care is a temporary solution for social issues of neglect or orphaned children. The temporary solution is supported by the children's court that has the final decision about the child's needs related to care and protection, as enshrined Section 151 of Children's Act 38 of 2005.

Findings from this sub-theme pointed out that the participants viewed foster care as the money that assists children removed from their parents due to social issues. The findings are consistent with Shaw et al. (2020) who shared that the financial support seem to be significant. Thus, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 supports the importance of nurturing and positive relationships that connect foster care children with their foster care parents.



### **5.3.2 Sub-theme: 1.2 Connecting with family**

Care-leavers experience considerable disruption to their familial relationships (Dziro, 2020). Due to factors, such as frequent changes in placement during care, emotional dysregulation and lack of positive role modelling, they can have trouble maintaining their relationships once they have left care (Marion, Paulsen & Goyette, 2007). The Circle of Courage accentuates that belonging is the dimension that afford the children opportunities to build relationships with their families so that they may receive social support (Brendtro et al., 2005). This is further supported by Bronfenbrenner's

microsystem that enables child's potential to flourish. In contrast to the existing literature, the participants indicated that the connections with family are either positive or negative, which resulted in difficulties for youth in foster care to open and bond with their families. The participants find it difficult to share sensitive information with their caregivers. One participant said:

*"We don't inform our parents that we have diaries that we hide under our beds and my parents will see and read that you have passed so many challenges in your life some hurt you and you need someone to talk to"*  
(Sihle).

It is evident from the extract of Sihle that the participant has achieved mastery as a dimension of Circle of Courage because she had the opportunity to reflect on her problem solving capacities during problematic situations in life. The findings corroborate with (Brendtro et al., 2005) who pointed out that young people develop their full potential and willingness to learn new skills and knowledge of ameliorating difficult situations. The findings indicate that Sihle has developed competencies related to social, physical and intellectual domains as shared by Brown (2005) in Circle of Courage.

Despite the positive experiences shared by Sihle about connecting with family as part of belonging and connecting with others, Wade (2008) describes that the youth's reflections provide opportunities for reappraisal when care-leavers re-evaluate their relationships, including those with their birth parents and substitute carers to determine their reliability to provide emotional and practical support. This is consistent with the element of belonging in circle of courage that promotes sharing and connections among children and their families.

*“It depends, if you don’t have attachment, or you started to stay with your guardian when your parents passed on it be a challenge because you were not used to stay with that person. For us, it is easier to talk to the guardian because we were used to stay with her since childhood. You know how to share with her information she knows how to handle us, and how we approach her, she knows our needs” (Lunga).*

However, Moodley, Raniga and Sewpaul (2020) refer to a time of transition as when youth generally try to reconnect with their roots and to seek validation of their identities, which are deeply embedded in the need to belong to someone or care for someone.

Another participant in foster care said:

*“I am enjoying being with my grandmother as she treat me well. My family is very supportive towards me and my grandmother” (Siya).*

The extract of Siya corroborate with the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 that emphasises the value of safe and nurturing social environment that fosters positive relationships with families. It was evident that the relationship that Siya developed with his grandmother seem to be strengthened a sense of joy and contentment. The findings are in alignment with the most frequently reported type of support received from family incorporating emotional and financial support, followed by practical and housing support (Drinscoll, 2011; Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016). The findings further indicated that the participants were able to cope with their life, which supports a sense of belongingness linked with the Circle of Courage.

Findings in this sub-theme pointed out that there are good and bad family connections. This sub-theme speaks of sense of belonging, and attachment within the family. Some participants were not familiar with their caregivers, which made it difficult to find a

sense of belonging. This is evident in Zodwa's assertion "*my experience is not good because sometimes you really feel you are an outsider as my aunt children become jealousy of me*". Brendtro, Brockenleg and Jackson (2014) in the Circle of Courage maintain that the most important human necessity for existence is to connect with others. The young people in care and caregivers relations play a significant role not to trigger childhood experiences that are affected them negatively (Brendtro et al., 2014).

The literature place emphasis on the connections with the family and is confirmed by Berk (2000) and Paat (2013) who indicate the importance of family interactions with immediate family and surroundings, and both formed part of the bio-ecological framework of the study. The care leavers at this stage is searching to find his/her identity, as social being and emerging adult. However, because they are in transitioning from care, this becomes a very difficult time for the young adult. The care-leavers are a vulnerable group that need support so they may be able to deal with the challenges related to foster care, unemployment, accommodation, education and poor management of the foster care grant. These challenges tend to influence the transition to emerging adulthood as highlighted in Dickens and Marx (2020).

### **5.3.3 Sub-theme: 1.3 Management of foster care grant**

The management of the foster care grant has been identified as a problem that affect majority of the families and children who are part of the foster care system. A concern has been raised in a qualitative study that explored the challenges facing statutory social workers in linking foster care with socio-economic development programmes for sustainable livelihoods (Dhludhlu and Lombard, 2017); the findings revealed that the foster care grant was not used to benefit the child. The participants who noted that

the foster parents do not use the money they receive for their basic needs echo this; instead, their needs are deprived. This sub-theme supports the findings of previous studies (Shaw et al., 2020; Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017), which indicate that mismanagement of the foster care grant is common among South African communities. On the day of payment, the recipients will pay stokvels and other vendors. However, Hearle and Ruwampura, (2009) indicated that the foster care grant should address the mental, social and monetary problems confronted by foster children. It is envisioned to offer economic sustenance to foster care parents eager to provide a youngster with a safe and nurturing household setting. Makhubu and Ndenze (2013) further explained that some caregivers misuse the grant, which then results in children living in poverty.

*“You can see that in the house there is nothing and your money is used for something else, foster care was supposed to be used what is expected to do” (Sihle).*

Issues include the widespread belief that grant beneficiaries abuse the money, that social grants encourage teenage pregnancies and dependency on the state (Patel, 2016).

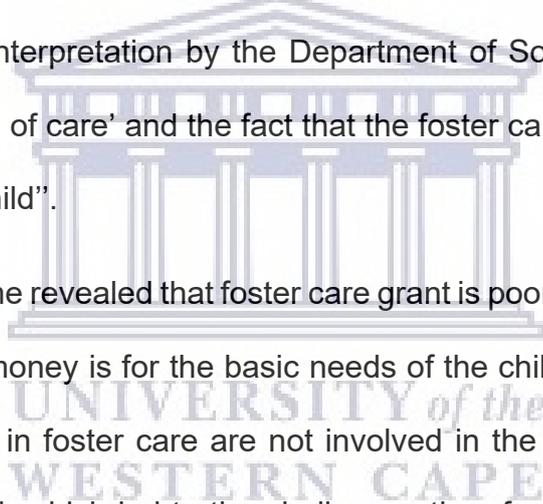
*“Our parents have a way of how to manage the foster care grant, and not doing what supposed to be done. For example, they will tell you that they need to pay people selling blankets (foreign nationals). When you tell her that my shoe is finished, she will tell you that she need to pay stokvel money. You will realise that your needs are not met and government gave you money to assist you with your needs. She has other debts about*

*the money and you will be disrespecting if you can tell her it's your money"* (Lunga).

Currie and De Waal (2013, p.609) suggest, "foster parents caring for children in South Africa are entitled to financial assistance in the form of a monthly grant. A foster care grant is payable to foster parents in respect of a foster child who has been placed in their care by way of an order from the children's court".

However, Midgely and Piachaud (2013, p.252) suggest that "the rapid expansion of the foster care grant, which is impacting strongly on grant expenditure is due to the increasing number of deaths of parents as a result of HIV/AIDS, a loosening up over the last decade in the interpretation by the Department of Social Development and courts of 'a child in need of care' and the fact that the foster care grant is nearly three times the value of the child".

Findings in this sub-theme revealed that foster care grant is poorly managed and foster parents forget that the money is for the basic needs of the children or youth in foster care. As a result, youth in foster care are not involved in the discussions about the budget of the household, which led to the challenges they faced when exiting foster care.



## 5.4 Theme 2: Challenges experienced by the youth exiting care

Themes	Sub-theme
2. Challenges experienced by the youth exiting care	2.1 Stigma around children or youth in care
	2.2 Participants' knowledge Discharge from foster care
	2.3 Employment opportunities

In relation to the challenges faced by care-leavers, developed countries have put legislation in place that provides funding and mandates the provision of services that aim to prepare and support young people in out-of-home care for their transition to adulthood (Frimpong-Manso, 2012; Van Breda & Frimpong, 2020b). This theme focuses on the stigma around children or youth in foster care, discharge knowledge about care and employment opportunities available during transitioning from care. The findings in this theme are consistent with Strahl et al. (2020) who indicated care-leaving is a global challenge that affect young people's journey to adulthood.

### 5.4.1 Sub-theme: 2.1 Stigma around children or youth in foster care

Stigma is one of the injustices that are perceived to be a powerful social phenomenon that influence both parents who provide foster care and children who are in foster care (Dansey, Shbero & John, 2019; Denzel & MacDonald, 2014). It has been found that stigma tends to influence the transition from youth to emerging adulthood (Denzel & MacDonald, 2014). Participants revealed that they encounter challenges related to

the stigma surrounding children or youth in foster care. Youth in foster care find it difficult to deal with issues regarding stigma and discrimination. A youth in foster care said:

*“It will be a shame when our social workers visit us in school because there are top children coming from rich families, they will ask why the social workers visited you. Foster care children are made fun of”*  
(Sihle).

The findings of the current study support the results of Strahl et al. (2020), which indicated isolation or loneliness accounted 81% (29/36) of the countries that shared the challenges faced by the care-leavers. Furthermore, the findings are in accord with previous studies that reported that young person in care are discriminated because of their background in the welfare system (Bond, 2010; Meyer, 2008; Oelofsen, 2015). As a result, the young people fear that other people are inquisitive about their associations with social workers (Mamelani, 2013).

In addition, another foster care participant said:

*“Children at school always teasing me that I am an orphan. I become sad, you are reminded that you do not have parents. It is sad that in this time in age people are being called such names, and because my parents died of HIV, I am victimised by my very own community”*  
(Anelisa).

Fleming (2015) points out that OVC experience discrimination in accessing education and health care, as orphan-hood is associated with HIV/AIDS.

Another foster care participant added that:

*“My experience is not good because sometimes you really feel you are an outsider as my aunt children become jealousy of me. They always remind me I am a foster child” (Zodwa).*

The findings from Zodwa indicate that some children who are in the process of exiting foster care, they seem to deal with isolation and discrimination because of their foster care status. This is evident in Rubaha (2008) who pointed out that neglect, abuse, lack of parental love, lack of food, high labour demand at home, stigmatised at school because of lack of school uniforms and learning materials, are some of the challenges facing orphaned students.

Findings in this category pointed out children in a foster encountered many challenges and stigmatisation is one of them. Mastery refers to strength to overcome challenges by using problem solving, for example separate themselves from the problem (Brendtro et al., 2014; Reid & Ross, 2005). Bronfenbrenner (1979) reflects on the mesosystem, the partnership between all stakeholders plays a significant part in the upbringing of the youngster. This means that all the people involved in the caring of the child need to work together to address such issues of stigma, i.e. school, parents and the welfare system. Hence, Moodley et al. (2020) promote the interdependent living and Ubuntu in the process of transitioning out of foster care.

Denzel and MacDonald (2014) suggest that there is a need for work directed toward ameliorating both the stigma attached to foster care and the negative influences towards exiting the system. The literature agrees that children or youth in foster care are stigmatised and discriminated against because they are children in need of care. The stigma attached to foster care has a negative influence on the youth's belongingness, capacity needed to develop positive relationships and resilience

(Dansey et al., 2019). Society needs to be empowered about the issues of stigma and discrimination affecting youth in care; they have not asked to be neglected or abandoned by their parents. The stigma has a negative influence on the youth, which might affect their discharge from foster care (Dansey et al., 2019).

#### **5.4.2 Sub-theme: 2.2 Participants' knowledge about discharge from care**

According to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, children discharged from foster care when they turn 18 years. However, there are cases whereby foster care is extended with the approval of the children's court in case of the children who need to finish their education. It has been reported that children who are discharged from the system tend to experience difficulties with financial security, food security, accommodation and unemployment (Mogale, 2019; Matinka, 2018). It is further important to note that youth exiting the system unprepared for the outside world tend to struggle with transition to emerging adulthood (Mogale, 2019; Matinka, 2018). This is evident in the findings of the current study where the participants revealed that discharge from care happens when they reach the age of 21 years. The participants, as youth in foster care, consciously know the financial subsidy they receive from the social welfare agencies in partnership with social security agency will be discontinued. One participant said:

*“When the government agreed that the foster care must stop at 21, he thought that they were supposed to be done even though some maybe still continuing” (Lunga).*

Young people had to leave foster care at short notice, mostly due to administrative rules, such as being over 18 years old or finishing upper secondary school (Hojer & Sjoblom, 2014).

In addition, another foster care participant said:

*“My understanding is that I would no longer receive foster care grant after I turned 21 years, which is a challenge because it is my last year receiving it and I don’t know how will I survive without foster care grant because my aunt did not save enough” (Siya).*

A concern about the preparatory services for youth exiting foster care has been raised as a serious problem that influence transition to adulthood (Mogale, 2019; Matinka, 2018; Shaw et al., 2020). In Mogale’s study, it was found that “youths faced social challenges, behavioural and psychological challenges, unemployment, financial instability, poor education or vocational opportunities and lack of safe and affordable housing” (p.iv). This is in agreement with Siya who seemed to experience a sense of lost and unpreparedness, as he was worried about his survival when he exit the system. Due to lack of support, the discharge from the system tends to be abrupt and leaving care is typically based on age rather than readiness, this population of emerging adults is regarded as highly vulnerable (Pinkerton & Van Breda, 2019; Strahl et al., 2020).

The social worker said:

*“In most cases from my experience when they are 21 years most of the times, they are already in varsity but before that maybe when they turn 18, they pass their grade 12” (SW:1) .*

Betz, Smith and Macias (2010) observes that exiting from care need the young person to be fully matured and not relying on age criteria to exit care. The young person must be developmentally ready before they can leave the welfare system (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007). However, Bond (2020) and Van Breda and Frimpong-Manso

(2020b) indicate that some of the care-leavers are unprepared to deal with the challenges.

Findings in this category point out that the foster care participants had at least knowledge about the time of discharge from care. The literature revealed that most of the youth discharged were not developmentally ready, and due to administrative procedures that need to be followed, the discharge was necessary. The discharge knowledge about care created feelings of instability, uncertainty and anxiety about what was waiting ahead after foster care. This further highlighted the need for youth's discharge preparations related to employment opportunities as part of emerging adults.

#### **5.4.3 Sub-theme: 2.3 Employment opportunities**

Employment is one of the significant part of youth exiting foster care in preparation for transitioning to emerging adulthood (Shaw et al., 2019; Lesea, 2017). This is supported by the Children's Act 38 of 2005 in section 157 (1) (a) (iii), which stipulates that social workers should have plans for the children that they are supervising for alternative services. However, the need for alternative care only exist in papers and books but in real situations "majority of young people in South Africa are not engaged in any economic activities and are trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty and unemployment" (Lesea, 2017, p.22). This is evident in the extracts of the participants who shared their frustration lack of employment opportunities. Youth exiting care go through many challenges, as they are unskilled and do not get employment opportunities. One female participant shared her notion:

*"When the money stops, you must go and look for work because foster care money is no longer available for you"* (Nosipho).

The findings in the current study resonate with Strah et al. (2020) who found that 94% (34/36) countries were concerned about employability of care-leavers. Dickens and Marx (2020) shared that employment is one of the outcomes that measure successful transition to emerging adulthood. In contrast, Suliman-Aidan, Benbenishty, Dinisman and Zeira (2013) commented that the experience of care-leavers is often one of having to provide support to their families rather than receive it.

Another foster care participant added that:

*“I know that I have to look for a job and I won't be able to have all the things that I am used to” (Dumisa).*

Unfortunately, the cycle of poverty still continues because the focus is on finding a job not a career due to exiting programmes that are not sustainable (Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Henig, 2009; Miller & Porter, 2007).

Another foster care participant said:

*“I will be forced to go and look for work since there is no one at home working and I have to take my family out of poverty because I don't want to engage in criminal activities in order to alleviate poverty at home” (Libongo).*

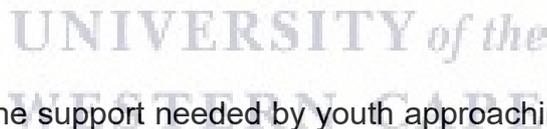
It is reported that the youth in South Africa find it difficult to finish secondary school and able to secure low paying jobs due to lack of skills (Stats SA, 2017). In one South African study, observe that joblessness among youth exiting care stood at 54% (Dickens, 2017).

Findings in this sub-theme point out that finding employment is difficult among the youth exiting care, as the statistics indicate the unemployment rate of youth out of care

is high. The literature agrees to the challenges encountered by youth to secure employment (Mogale, 2019; Lesea, 2017). The participants' response highlighted that exiting foster care would make them search for employment opportunities, which is another challenge for emerging adults with nothing to fall on while searching for jobs. This indicates that the youth need some support as part of their preparation.

### 5.5 Theme 3: Support needed by the youth exiting care

Themes	Sub-themes
3. Support needed by the youth exiting care	3.1 Youth preparedness to exit care 3.2 Need for participation 3.3 Visibility of social workers from youth exiting care



This theme reflects on the support needed by youth approaching the stage of exiting foster care. It resonates with the assertion that indicated that care-leavers are incompetently armed with autonomous existing skills at the time of exiting care (Meyer, 2008; Oelofsen, 2015), for instance constructing economic decisions or using public transport. Lack of societal engagement for youth exiting care (Meyer, 2008), and do not know how to adjust outside residential facility. The youth exiting the foster care system are not prepared enough for the journey to adulthood. They are not involved in the planning strategy to leave care. The youth exiting care revealed that the visibility of social workers is not adequate.

### 5.5.1 Sub-theme: 3.1 Youth preparedness to exit care

Participants raised a concern that they are not prepared to exit the foster care system. In the participants' conversations, it was noted there was no preparation, as part of the programmes, which are mostly done by social workers doing foster care supervision. Youth exit the foster care system; feel frustrated because they do not know what to do with their lives as their dreams are being shattered.

A foster care participant said:

*“The social worker was supposed to tell us so that when we are still in school so that we can be able to make an effort since we won't be able to do other things that we do with the money. For example, you were in grade 11 and the money that was supporting you is ending, when it ends you will stop schooling and your dream will stop” (Sihle).*

Bond and Van Breda (2018b) reported that youth exiting the care system in South Africa are unsupported by the welfare system. Another issue for youth exiting care is that there is little preparation done for them and no follow up service after they exited the system. The difficulties to cope with the challenges related to transitioning from care are perpetrated by the absence of proper policies and legislation to support aftercare (Bond, 2018a; Strahl et al., 2020).

In addition, another foster participant said:

*“Prepare us especially when you turn 18 and no longer at school because the social workers don't visit us it is difficult to give input on this issue” (Zodwa).*

This finding supports Van Breda and Frimpong-Manso's (2020b) argument about the need for an “organised preparation program providing the youth with employment, life,

and communal skills” (p.4). The findings clearly indicated that transition from care for care-leavers is a complex process that should begin as early as possible in the care career of a child or young person at all stages (Coyle & Pinkerton, 2012).

The social work participants indicated that there is no exiting strategy for the youth exiting care. They agree with foster care participants and indicated.

*“The exiting strategy is one thing that needs to be worked on, it’s not happening at all” (SW: 1).*

This finding accords with Van Breda and Frimpong-Manso (2020b) and Bond (2020) that transitional support is limited because there is no preparation for interdependent living. As they prepare to exit care, young people are thought to be involved in an individual preparation procedure to be connected with a social worker who will offer follow up-services (Department of Social Development, 2010).

Social workers do not prepare the youth exiting the foster care system, as highlighted in the findings in this category. The structures in this layer (exosystem) influence the child’s development by interacting with some structure in her microsystem (Berk, 2000). This stage should involve the intervention from the welfare system of the child (Berk, 2000). The literature point out that planning needs to be done as early as possible; however, in reality, nothing is happening, which means there is a need for the youth to engage in conversation with social workers about readiness (Children’s Act 38 of 2005).

### **5.5.2 Sub-theme: 3.2 Need for participation**

Participants revealed that they are not participating in decision-making when it comes to exiting the foster care system. Youth exiting the foster care system find it difficult to participate in decision-making. A foster care participant said:

*“Social workers they were supposed to come to us and discuss the things we will go through as we grow older, so that you can reach your goals”*  
(Sihle).

Many youths exiting care felt that the social services are not giving them chance to voice out their views or involving them in formulating strategic plan (Bond, 2010). Despite the lack of preparation for exit foster care, the participants were consciously contemplating their future as part of the plan, which feeds to their sense of becoming and being resilient.

Another foster participant said:

*“What I know is that I want to study further and do Law after matric it’s my plan”* (Zodwa).

Unfortunately, in contrast with social services globally there is after care support services, even though in South Africa there is no financial assistance (Bond, 2018a). However, Van Breda and Frimpong-Manso (2020b, p.4) shared that youth like Zodwa in the present study with “personal motivation and hope for the future” tend to succeed in their transition. As a result, their resilience to adapt during the difficult situations is strengthened.

Findings in this category indicate that youth exiting the foster care system are not involved in the planning. The literature pointed out that youth exiting encounter poor participation in decision-making and lack of financial assistance. This could mean that social workers need to advocate for the youth exiting foster care for continuity.

### **5.5.3 Sub-theme: 3.3 Visibility of social workers for youth in care**

Concerning the visibility of the social workers, the participants indicated that social workers working for the Department of Social Development are not visible enough. As

a result, youth in foster care felt that their relationship with social workers does not exist, because they do not even know who is responsible for them. The youths in foster care associated the social workers with the forms that come once in a year for renewal of the foster care grant. One participant said:

*“I don’t know who the social worker is responsible for me, the last time I saw her when we went to court each and every time, we went to the offices for renewal of foster care the social worker has been changed”* (Libongo).

Despite the fact that there was poor visibility of social workers, for the youth in care, Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017) argue that, the centralisation of services in the Department of Social Development made it difficult to incorporate foster care services with socio-economic development.

In addition, a foster care participant said:

*“They just send someone or pass a message to someone instructing us to come to the offices. My grandmother was given a message to go and visit their offices”* (Sive).

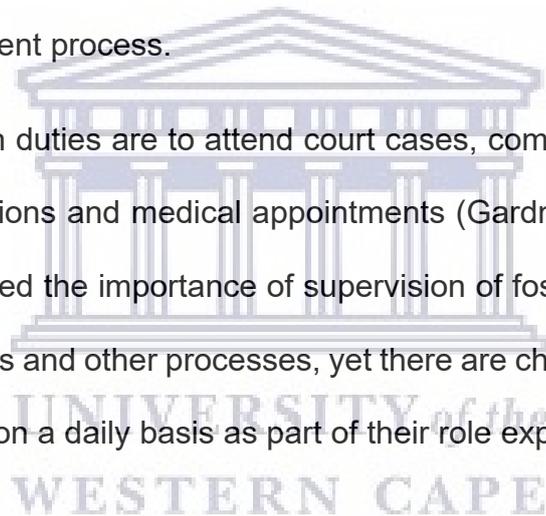
The findings from the current study revealed that supervision of youth in care appeared to be a problem as highlighted in the narratives of the participants. However, Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017) confirmed that there is lack of supervision of social workers and they “are not liberated to perform their roles as they have been taught at university” (p.175). It can be suggested that the supervision should be done in a form of group to provide support to social workers so that they may support foster parents and young people.

In addition, a social work participant in respond to the question what her is role in the supervision of foster care?

*“To add to what I think is to monitor and also to ensure that the best interest of child is taken care of, as it was promised in court when the child was placed, and also to ensure that the court order is reviewed so the benefits that the child is supposed to get are still in place” (SW:1).*

Bronfenbrenner (1977) describe the macrosystem as the big full set of social ideals, culture, principles, standards, political ideas, customs, laws of government, the economy and wars. Looking at policies of the government, the social worker has a role that needs to be fulfilled as part of the statutory work. Gardner (2018) reflects the main roles for social workers are involved in supporting duties to monitor progress during the out-of-home placement process.

The social workers main duties are to attend court cases, complete case plans, court reports, schedule visitations and medical appointments (Gardner, 2018). Findings in this sub-theme highlighted the importance of supervision of foster care lacks in terms of conducting home visits and other processes, yet there are challenges that the social workers must deal with on a daily basis as part of their role expectations.



## 5.6 Theme 4: Challenges experienced by the social workers to manage foster care placements

Themes	Sub-themes
4. Challenges experienced by the social workers to manage foster care placement	4.1 Lack of resources 4.2 High caseload of cases 4.3 Backlog of cases 4.4 Quality versus quantity in social services

This theme highlights the challenges related to the support systems needed for the social workers, as they grapple with their role expectations to manage foster care. The welfare organizations have challenges related to a lack of resources and high caseloads, which results in burnout among social workers. This is an indication that the support systems needed for sustaining the foster care services are struggling. It has been reported that the welfare organizations rendering child protection have similar challenges, such as lack of resources in terms of infrastructure, administration resources like computers and cars to make home visits (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017; Alpaslan & Schenck, 2012). This has influence the quantity of work that is expected from the social workers, which affects the work due to the top-down approach (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017).

The findings of the current study may be explain by the poor integration of services, which influence the collaboration among the different sections of Department of Social Development as identified by Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017). This suggests that there

is a need of centralisation of services to grassroots levels so that the working conditions could be strengthened and be conducive. Furthermore, the centralisation of services will assist in linking services that promote livelihoods of foster parents and their children (Mogale, 2019; Dhludhlu & Lomard, 2017).

Caseloads are the pressures that influence the social work in caring and supervising foster parents and children. Mogale's (2019, p.44) study indicates that social workers are under pressure because "of a shortage of human and other resources" needed for the job to be done.

#### **5.6.1 Sub-theme: 4.1 Lack of resources**

Most of the social work participants pointed out that the lack of resources is a challenge in their offices, especially vehicles in local offices. The Department of Social Development does not have enough resources; a telephone line is a hustle, and cars are a luxury, whereas it is a necessity for service delivery to the people. One social work participant said:

*"We have a challenge with resources you have to wait to get a transport so that you can do a home visit" (SW: 3).*

Shortage of resources in the South African welfare organisation agencies and in communities is a challenge that affects children and families. It is mostly experienced in the organisation where there is shortage of resources like vehicles and social workers are facing challenges to conduct home visits (Dlamini & Sewpaul, 2015; Ndonga, 2016; Strydom, 2010).

Another participant response on the question she was asked: 'how often does she does home visits?'

*"It depends on the availability of transport, we have there subsidised transports. Forty people that are using these vehicles do you get my point"*  
(SW: 5).

Due to inadequate resources in the social services, it causes a lot of conflict because social worker cannot respond to crisis matters (Dlamini & Sewpaul, 2015).

In addition, participant said:

*"You find that you have 10 cases for home visits and your office will call you to bring back the car, transport is a challenge"* (SW: 1).

Mogale (2019) argues that the quality of foster care is affected by the lack of resources, which constrict service delivery. The lack of resources and centralisation at head office contribute to the unsuccessfulness of the foster care services.

Findings in this sub-theme point out a lack of resources in the welfare organizations, which result in poor service delivery. The literature confirms what the participants have indicated, and the people who are affected are the vulnerable groups of our society. It was noted from the findings that lack of resources contributed to caseloads.

#### **5.6.2 Sub-theme: 4.2 High caseload of cases**

High caseload of cases are considered as administrative irregularities that influence foster care. This is evident in Mogale's (2019) findings, which reveal that the social workers were struggling to renew the foster care placement because of high caseloads. Participants pointed out that the number of cases have increased, resulting

in high caseloads and insufficient resources. The high caseloads have an influence on employees because it causes a lot of stress and burnout in the workplace. One participant said:

*“Going back to the workload, when you see that your child is turning 21 and you are happy to close the file minus one problem, that is how the reality of the matter is, because you have about 200 files minus one file is like thank you Lord” (SW:1).*

The high caseload among social service practitioners that is uncontrollable can cause a lot of stress and burnout (Mogale, 2019).

Another participant said:

*“Due to workload that we do everything you are a social worker you do foster care, you do programmes basically you do everything that is socially related, so there is a gap there” (SW: 5).*

However, Strydom (2012) reports that due to high caseload some of the family issues like marital counselling are not getting the attention they deserve because the focus is on other programs like child protection.

Another participant said:

*“To add more on that challenge, our caseloads are more than 200 cases, we supposed to have progress report for each case we won't have time due to work load and we have other cases as well” (SW: 5).*

Barnes (2012) reports that the main issues for social workers in terms of their organization were lack of resources, high workloads, lack of time, bureaucracy and rigid procedures. Staff shortages led to high workloads and meant that they could not

provide the quality service they wished for (Barnes, 2012). The literature agrees that high caseloads that social workers deal with can cause stress and take less interest in specialised cases.

In findings of about the caseloads, the social work participants indicated that their caseloads are extreme because they handle over two hundred files and this makes it difficult to give every file the attention it needs. They also indicated that when they close a file, it is a relief, as it is one caseload. The increased number of caseloads seemed to result in the backlog of cases.

### **5.6.3 Sub-theme: 4.3 Backlog of cases**

The backlog of cases is a shortfall that affects foster care services. It has been reported that the backlog of cases has negative implication because of inadequate and monitoring of youth exiting and transitioning to adulthood (Mogale, 2019). Participants in this sub-theme revealed that they experience backlog. The high caseloads that social workers are dealing with make it difficult to give time to every case on their caseload. Another participant said:

*“I think the other problem with backlog DSD and SASSA they don't talk same language this file lapses on November and SASSA will say it in the backlog; it's not in the backlog. The management of foster care backlog system they don't talk necessary on our way of backlog and foster care reviews and staff” (SW: 5).*

The backlog of the foster care orders is complicated by the fact that these orders must be renewed every two years, according to Section 159 of the Children's Act (2005). In its presentation to the previous Portfolio Committee on Social Development, the

Department of Social Development explained the eradication of the backlog (Van Breda, 2018a).

Another participant said:

*“We had a lot of backlog and we have to leave everything and focus on that. You will find that we have clients who were supposed to be placed last year in June or August, us focussing on the backlog of children who are already in the system created a backlog for children who are not yet on the new foster care applications. So, it's give and take sometimes you place them quicker and wait for a very long time” (SW: 1).*

In its presentation to the Portfolio Committee, the department highlighted that it had submitted the Children's Amendment Bill of 2019, which seeks to amend Section 159 of the Children's Act provide that make provision for discretion to extend lapsed foster care orders or issue interim orders. However, the clause 60 seeks to provide for quality assurance of child protection services (Department of Social Development, 2019).

Findings in this sub-theme pointed out the backlog in foster cases are still an issue that needs to be prioritized by social service officials because it affects the beneficiaries of the foster care grant.

#### **5.6.4 Sub-theme: 4.4 Quality versus quantity in social services**

The issue of quality versus quantity in resonates with the findings of Dhludhlu and Lombard (2019), which indicate that the “Department of Social Development is more interested in the quantity of services reaching users than on the influence of the services rendered” (p.174). It was identified that the constitutional social workers do

not conduct detailed inquiries with regard to the foster care cases as their level of performance is determined by the quantity of cases finalised. One participant said:

*“I think the problem is that our work is quantified because we need to have production in our work, we need to produce quality but the way we treat each other with ourselves and their superiors is quite problematic at the end of the month we need to produce numbers how many kids have been removed or placed” (SW: 2).*

The White Paper says that developmental social welfare guidelines and programmes should be founded on the belief that “all social welfare programmes will strive for excellence and for the provision of quality services” (RSA, 1997, p.10).

Another participant said:

*“So, the challenge that was mentioned is the quantification of our work” (SW: 1).*

The work environment is an important societal question as it affects the quality of the service provided and thus the welfare of society (Smith & Shield, 2013; Travis, Lizano, & Mor Barak, 2016).

Findings in this sub-theme pointed out that the authorities need quantity at the end of the month, not quality. It does not matter how it affects service delivery in our communities. The literature is also agrees with what the participants had mentioned in connection with quality versus quantity in social services (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017).

## 5.7 Summary

This section delivered a detailed discussion of the results of the research study. The themes and sub-themes were discussed thoroughly supported by literature and the quotes from participants.

The four key themes developed as follows:

- Insight into youth exiting foster care system
- Challenges experienced by the youth exiting care
- Support needed by the youth exiting care
- Challenges experienced by the social workers to manage foster care placements



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## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 6 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the findings were presented and discussed based on the themes identified. Therefore, this chapter summarises the main findings of the research study, and identified few items like recommendation in order to improve the service delivery. The study tried to explore and describe the experiences and support systems for youth exiting the foster care system. Data was collected through focus group discussions as it is part of qualitative research. Tesch in Creswell's (2009) eight basic steps of qualitative data analysis was used to analyze data.

The four main themes that emerged from the study are experiences of youth exiting foster care system; challenges faced by youth exiting care; support needed by youth exiting care and difficulties of social workers to manage foster care placements.

#### 6.1 Summary of the main findings

##### 6.1.1 Theme 1: Insight into youth in foster care

Based on the findings, the insight into youth in foster care are between good and bad due to lack of information about understanding the aim of foster care. The foster care participants have their own knowledge regarding foster care. The foster care participants have a different notion of foster care; for them, it is about money given to children without parents. The aim of foster care needs to be addressed among the children and their caregivers on the day of foster care application processes. In terms

of connecting with family, the foster care participants indicated that they do not have a good relationship with their families, where it is evident that their sense of belonging to the family is contested. The foster care participants indicated that their foster care parents treat them differently with their biological children. As a result, attachment issues become a problem.

The study shows that some participants have a good relationship with their families and caregivers. The participants also mentioned the poor management of foster care grant by the foster parents where they focus on their own financial needs, for instance, participating in stokvels and paying debts to foreign nationals. The participants also mentioned that they are not participating in the financial budget of their household.

### **6.1.2 Theme 2: Challenges experienced by the youth exiting foster care**

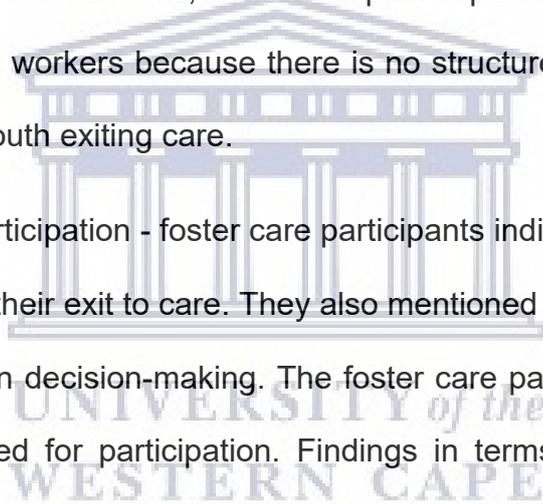
The discoveries of the study was strong and confirmed that youth in foster care experience many challenges. The foster care participants indicated that they experience stigmatization and discrimination from school and their communities. Participants revealed that they are teased and discriminated against based on their family background being orphans due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The study also revealed that our communities are failing to protect foster care children from stigmatization and discrimination. The foster care participants were aware of their discharge from the care because they revealed that their social workers informed them that the grant would be discontinued when they reach the age of twenty-one. The challenge they encounter is that they do not know what the future holds for them after exiting care. Participants feared that losing the grant would hinder their well-being.

In terms of employment opportunities, most participants indicated that it is a challenge to obtain employment in South Africa due to lack of skills. Unemployment in South Africa has become a norm for youth, whether you are educated or not.

### **6.1.3 Theme 3: Support needed by youth exiting care**

Findings in terms of youth preparedness to exit care - the foster care participants pointed out that the social workers do not prepare them for exiting care. The youth in foster care gets frustrated because their dreams disappear in front of their eyes. Social workers echoed the same sentiments; there is no plan in place for youth exiting care. It is frustrating for social workers because there is no structure or strategic plan that they can use to assist youth exiting care.

Findings for need for participation - foster care participants indicated that they are not involved in planning for their exit to care. They also mentioned that in their household they do not participate in decision-making. The foster care participants felt that they are deprived of the need for participation. Findings in terms of visibility of social workers for youth in foster care is a challenge. Most of the foster care participants do not know the social worker who is responsible for them. In addition, youth in foster care last saw their social workers when it is time for reviews. It is a challenge for youth in foster care; every time they visit social services offices, they are told that the social worker assigned to them have been changed. The social workers also reported that they are not visible enough for youth in foster care; in most times, they only visit when it is time for review processes.



#### **6.1.4 Theme 4: Challenges experienced by the social workers to manage foster care placements**

Findings in terms of lack of resources - the social workers pointed out that there is lack of resources in social welfare organization and it is frustrating to them because it delays service delivery to the communities they serve. The study revealed that among other challenges faced by the Department of Social Development is lack of resources, for instance, a shortage of vehicles to conduct home visits. Findings in terms of high caseloads is a challenge for social workers to manage foster care placements. Most of the social workers mentioned that their caseloads range between 150 and 200 files. The cases they mention are the cases of children or youth that are already on the system. The backlog of cases is experienced because they find it difficult to put more time in other cases, and some cases end up in backlog. The social workers mentioned that there is poor communication between the department and the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). When it comes to backlog, they do not speak the same language. The social workers mentioned that their work is quantified; the department focuses on the number of cases finalized and not on the impact of services delivery to service users. According to social workers, the quantification of work in the social welfare department is measured on the performance of the employee.

#### **6.2 Summary of the theoretical framework**

In this study, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system framework was significant and consists of five phases. Implementing the theoretical framework was found in the following themes; theme one on sub-theme two, which highlighted the connections with family. It emphasised the mesosystem, which highlights the importance of the family connections with others as a means of survival, where participants indicated

good and bad relationships with their families. Circle of courage was also significant when it comes to family connections. The sense of belonging which works together when it comes to family connections where the participants pointed out that they do not feel they belong to their families.

On theme two, implementations of the theoretical framework findings were found in the sub-theme one, where it pointed out the issues of stigmatization of children in foster care. The participants reported that they experience the issues of stigmatization in their households, and at school. The circle of courage emphasis on mastery where it indicates that mastery is the ability to overcome challenges. The participants overcome the challenge of being stigmatised in their households and in school; for them, they took it as a stepping-stone to overcome any challenges that comes in their way. Bronfenbrenner bio-ecological system indicates that in the mesosystem all the stakeholders need to work together with issues surrounding children in foster care.

On theme three, the integration of the theoretical framework was seen in the sub-theme one and three. Sub-theme one highlights the youth preparedness to exit care. Bronfenbrenner exosystem emphasizes the intervention of the welfare system of the child. The participants pointed out that they are not prepared by social welfare professionals to exit care. Participants do not see the intervention of the welfare system; also, social welfare professional also confirms that they do not prepare youth to exit care. The visibility of social workers for youth exiting care is reflected in the Bronfenbrenner macrosystem, where it highlights the laws of government where social workers are guided by policies and legislation. Findings from the participants indicated the lack of visibility from social workers, and the social worker need to adhere to their roles in foster care.

## 6.3 Recommendations

The recommendations are presented in relation to the findings discussed in the previous chapter of the current study.

### 6.3.1 Short-term recommendation

- The Department of Social Development needs to compile a database of youth exiting foster care system and share it with other governmental departments. This would assist in connecting the youth exiting foster care so that they may establish entrepreneurial opportunities and address the unemployment issue.
- The social workers need to prepare youth exiting the system and empower them with skills.
- Financial budgeting skills for foster parents, to assist them to manage their finances effectively.
- Integrating of services with other governmental organization, and involvement of programmes such as Expanded Public Works Programme who can assist the youth to obtain employment.
- Monitoring of foster care placements, conducting of school visits and home visits. This will enable the Department of Social Development establish partnerships with other stakeholder to the livelihoods of the youth exiting foster care.

### 6.3.2 Long-term recommendations

- The Department of Social Development needs to develop a structured programme specifically for youth exiting the foster care system. The program will need to be implemented for youth starting at eighteen years to twenty-one years of age.

- The Department of Social Development needs to have a budget and involve the private sector to absorb youth for a skillful training programme.
- Boot camp for youth in foster care where they will share their experiences and challenges concerning foster care.
- Establishment of child protection forums, that meets once a quarter in order to evaluate the effectiveness of service delivery in their communities. It is envisaged that the establishment of child protection forums will enable youth with capacities related to resilience and adaptation to transition to adulthood.
- There should sufficient budget for resources such as government cars, for Department of Social Development for service delivery to be effective.
- The National Department of Social Development need to develop policies and legislation for youth exiting the foster care system.
- The National Department of Social Development need to adopt the Independent Living Programme from developed countries.

### 6.3.3 Further research

- There is a need for intervention research for designing and developing intervention programme for preparing youth exiting foster care so that they transit to adulthood capacities of ameliorating problematic situations.
- Further research can be institutional ethnography to explore how youth exiting foster care cope with the injustices influencing their participation in community activities.

## 6.4 Limitations of the study

Every research study has its own limitation, which may affect the outcome of the study.

These are the limitations noted that hampered the research study.

- An important restraint of the inquiry was the shortage of communication between the District Office of the Department of Social Development and the Service Office, where the study was conducted. The researcher wanted to have individual semi-structured interviews with social workers doing foster care supervision. However, the researcher opted in having a focus group because the social workers were not informed in time so they could prepare themselves and not schedule appointments on that day.
- Due to lack of communication within the department, the researcher took longer to get hold of a database of youth exiting the foster care system and resulted in having two focus groups instead of three.

## 6.5 Conclusion

The aim of the study was to explore and describe the experiences and support systems for youth exiting the foster care system. Overall, the study discovered that youth in foster care lack knowledge about the meaning of foster care. Participants' notion regarding family connections is not convincing, but it is a work in progress. Poor management of foster care grant indicates that foster parents are not equipped with finances. Youth in foster care encounter many challenges like stigmatisation and discrimination in their lives. Social welfare organisations need to have a plan in place to assist youth transitioning from foster care. Monitoring of foster care placement is paramount for the human well-being of children and youth in care. The challenges of social workers to manage foster care placement can be achieved if the employer can consult with other stakeholders.

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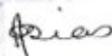
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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Ethical approval

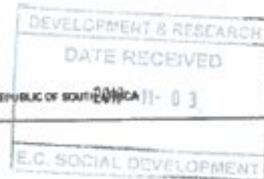
	<b>OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DIVISION</b>	Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535 South Africa T: +27 21 959 2988/2948 F: +27 21 959 3170 E: <a href="mailto:research-ethics@uwc.ac.za">research-ethics@uwc.ac.za</a> <a href="http://www.uwc.ac.za">www.uwc.ac.za</a>
26 October 2017		
Mrs T Sotshononda Social Work Faculty of Community and Health Science		
<b>Ethics Reference Number:</b> HS17/8/21		
<b>Project Title:</b>	An exploration of experiences of youth exiting foster care system.	
<b>Approval Period:</b>	24 October 2017 – 24 October 2018	
I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.		
Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval. Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.		
The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.		
		
<i>Ms Patricia Josias Research Ethics Committee Officer University of the Western Cape</i>		
<b>PROVISIONAL REC NUMBER - 130416-049</b>		
<small>FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.</small>		

## Appendix 2: Eastern Cape Social Development: Permission Letter



Province of the  
**EASTERN CAPE**  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Beacon Hill Office Park - Corner of Indragweni Road and Herkley Close - Private Bag 20029 - Bisho - 5601 - REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: +27 (0) 53 885 5234 - Email address: [dot@msltd@ecsd.gov.za](mailto:dot@msltd@ecsd.gov.za) - Website: [www.ecsd.gov.za](http://www.ecsd.gov.za)



30 October 2017

Ms Thozama Sotshononda  
University of the Western Cape  
Department of Social Work  
Bellville  
Western Cape

Dear Madam

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: AN EXPLORATION OF LIVED EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH EXITING FOSTER CARE SYSTEM.**

The Department considered your application for permission to conduct the above research in Buffalo City Municipality (King Willem's Town area) - The application is hereby approved.

You are requested to adhere to the following conditions:

1. You will liaise with Ms N. Maxham, Deputy Director, Coordination and Support in the district, to coordinate and facilitate access to relevant social workers for the purpose of conducting the research. Ms Maxham must be kept abreast of progress and any issues that might arise from the study. Her contact details are as follows: [Nomfango.maxham@ecsd.gov.za](mailto:Nomfango.maxham@ecsd.gov.za) Tel. Nr: 043-70510/58 Mobile Nr: 0744356217.
2. Interviews with the identified respondents must be conducted with the least disruption of service delivery.
3. The Department must be afforded a fair opportunity to respond to any issues that might arise from the research before publication.
4. After completion of your research, you must provide the Department (Population and Research Unit) with a written research report. The report will be used to inform foster care programmes that are implemented.
5. The research be undertaken for academic purposes only.
6. Strictly adhere to ethical standards to make sure no harm comes to participants in the study.

PERMISSION RESEARCH: MS MDLANKOMO UNIV OF FORT HARE SEPTEMBER 2017



*Building a Caring Society Together*

7. You avail yourself, should the need arise, to make a presentation of the findings and recommendations to the Department

Please acknowledge and sign this document to indicate that you agree to and accept the conditions as stated above. Return the signed document via email to the Director, Population Policy Promotion by 15 November 2017.

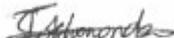
E-mail: [dolores.fatchell@ecdsd.gov.za](mailto:dolores.fatchell@ecdsd.gov.za)

I wish you well with the research and look forward to the findings and recommendations

Yours sincerely



MS N BAART  
Acting HEAD OF DEPARTMENT  
DATE 06/11/2017



MS T. SOTSHONONDA  
MASTERS CANDIDATE UWC  
DATE 10/11/2017



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE

PERMISSION RESEARCH MS MLANKOMO UNIV OF FORT HARE SEPTEMBER 2017



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## Appendix 3: Consent form



### UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa  
*Email : [tnthembu@uwc.ac.za](mailto:tnthembu@uwc.ac.za)*

#### CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project:**

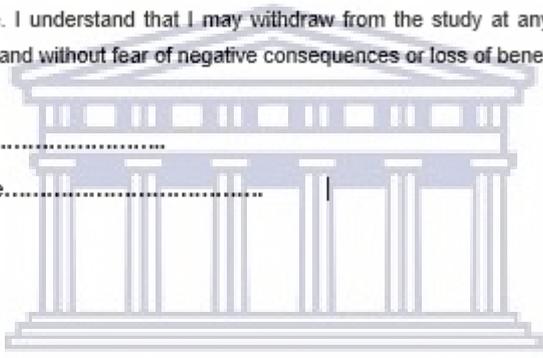
An exploration of lived experiences of youth exiting foster care system

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

## Appendix 4: Certification for editing the thesis

# University Editor (CC)

Certificate of comprehensive English editing

This document certifies that we have edited the manuscript indicated below for English language, grammar, spelling, clarity, and scholarly writing style.

**Manuscript Title:**  
EXPLORATION OF EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH EXITING A FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

**Author:**  
*Thozama Sotshononda*

**Date Issued:**  
7 October 2020

The author's subject matter contents and intentions were unaltered during the editing process. Manuscripts with this certification should be grammatically ready for publication; however, the author/s have the final choice to accept or reject our suggestions and changes. If you have any questions regarding the edited document, kindly contact [info@uedit.org](mailto:info@uedit.org) or visit us at <https://uedit.org>

Singed by the editor  in Pretoria

**UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE**

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Postal Address: C/O I Lazarus & Co Registered Accountants and Auditors, P O Box 274, Pretoria 0001, South Africa  
Office Address: C/O I Lazarus & Co Registered Accountants and Auditors, Upper Level, 4 Greenpark Estates, 27 George Storrar Drive, Groenkloof, Pretoria 0181, South Africa, Email: [info@uedit.org](mailto:info@uedit.org) [www.uedit.org](http://www.uedit.org)

Chief Executive Officer: A Apostolides BA (UNISA), MPhil, MA (*cum laude*), PhD (University of Pretoria)

**Researcher: Introduced herself and her co-facilitator in this research and the purpose of the research to the participants, and clarify on how the focus group will be conducted.**

**Researcher: what is foster care?**

Participant 2: I think its money given to children without parents and then to cater for their needs so most of the time for children who under the age of 21 years for food, clothing or school.

**Commented [U1]:** Money given to children

**Commented [U2]:** Human needs (subsistence)

**Researcher: anyone who want to add on that**

Participant 1: foster care is the money that assists children who don't have parents to meet their basic needs like schooling, food, clothing and other household needs.

**Commented [U3]:** Money given to children

**Commented [U4]:** Human needs(subsistence)

**Researcher : is there anyone who want to add**

Participant 3: I think is the money that assists children who don't have parents to fill the gap that parents are not there.

**Commented [U5]:** Money given to children

Participant 5: Is the money that comes from government that assist children who don't have parents.

**Commented [U6]:** Money given to children

**Researcher: when you went to court, did they explain what is foster care?**

Participant 2: No

**Researcher : you mentioned a lot about finance and basic needs, do you think foster care is about that.**

Participant 1: can you repeat your question

Researcher: why do you think foster care is about money?

Participant 1: money is doing a great job in the house we cannot live without it.

**Commented [U7]:** Perceive money as the need

**Researcher: what is your understanding about youth exiting foster care system?**

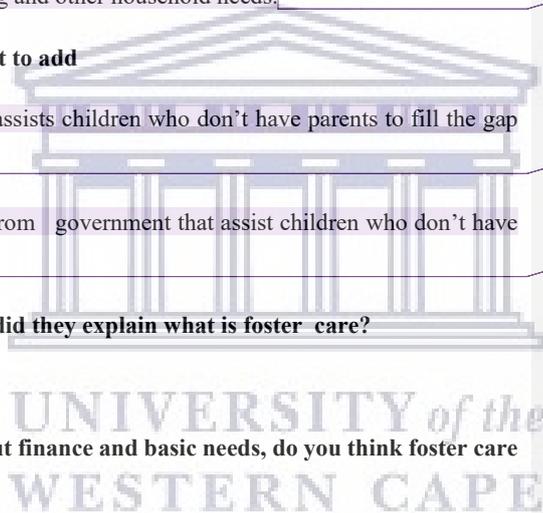
Participant 3: I don't think we have enough information regarding that, when we reach the age of 21 years the money stops, it is the end.

**Commented [U8]:** Lack of information regarding exiting from the system

**Commented [U9]:** Discharged from the foster system

Participant 4: when the money stops, you must go and look for work because foster care money is no longer available for you.

**Commented [U10]:** Look for work



Researcher: if I hear you correctly are you saying when the money stops you must go and look for work or employment.

Participant 4: yes

Participant 3: when government agreed that the foster must stop at 21, he thought that they were supposed to be done even though some maybe still continuing.

**Commented [U11]:** Miscommunication from government officials

**Researcher: your thinking is that you were supposed to be done when you reached 21 years.**

Participant 1: must be educated, we were supposed to be prepared because we are almost, as foster children we need to make an effort.

**Commented [U12]:** Need for preparedness to exit

**Commented [U13]:** Change agent

**Researcher: you will be 21 soon**

Participant 4: repeat your question

Researcher: you were supposed to be prepared.

Participant 3: they were supposed to tell us, so that we know what is going to happen instead of being shocked when it stops. Some will not have the money or funds to continue.

**Commented [U14]:** Need of information

**Commented [U15]:** Challenge of funds

Participant 4: we were supposed to be prepared for the situation we will be in.

**Commented [U16]:** Need of preparedness

Participant 1: yes, the social worker was supposed to tell us so that when we are still in school so that we can be able to make an effort since we won't be able to do other things that we do with money. For example you were in grade 11 and the money that was supporting you is ending, when it ends you will stop schooling and your dream will stop. You will go and look for work.

**Commented [U17]:** Need of information

**Commented [U18]:** Challenge of funds

**Commented [U19]:** Look for work

Researcher: what are your experiences as a foster child or challenges or everything is smooth.

Participant 1: we met a lot of challenges some are good and others are bad. You can see that in the house there is nothing and your money is used for something else, foster care was supposed to be used for what is expected of it.

**Commented [U20]:** We met a lot challenges

**Commented [U21]:** Mismanagement of foster care grant

Researcher: can you elaborate more on your statement regarding what was supposed to be done with the money.

Participant 1: our parents have a way of how to manage the foster care grant, and not doing what supposed to be done. For example they will tell you that they need to pay people selling

**Commented [U22]:** Mismanagement of foster care grant

blankets (foreign nationals). When you tell her that my shoe is finished she will tell you that she need to pay stokvel money. You will realise that your needs are not met and government gave you money to assist you with your needs. She has other debts about the money and you will disrespecting if you can tell her its your money.

**Commented [U23]:** Mismanagement of foster care grant

**Commented [U24]:** Mismanagement of foster care grant

**Commented [U25]:** Challenge to meet human needs

**Commented [U26]:** Change agent

Researcher: others don't have challenges I think the other thing consultation and budget. Are you guys involved or communicated on how the money will be spend?

Participant 1: No

Participant 3: No

Researcher : They mention challenges, what the good experiences you had with foster care grant?

Laugh by participants.

Participant 6: The foster care has helped out a lot because I am able to afford things that I could not get. If it was not about foster care grant I will be sitting at home, but now I can fulfil my dreams due to the foster care grant support.

**Commented [U27]:** Human needs are met( protection )

Participant 5: The school stuff that I get from the foster care grant is helping me a lot.

**Commented [U28]:** Human needs are met (protection)

Researcher: you mention a lot of positive things. What are the recommendations concerning foster care placement so that foster placement can be improved.

Participant 3 : They need to be told about need to be done about foster care grant, even when is going to end they need to be prepared. Social workers or government can come out with solutions like bursaries or scholarship for children in foster care. Social worker need to check the children in foster care, do home visit more often. There are situations whereby other children stay in bad situations and nothing has been done.

**Commented [U29]:** Need of information

**Commented [U30]:** Need of preparedness

**Commented [U31]:** Suggestion for social workers and government

**Commented [U32]:** Foster care supervision challenge

**Commented [U33]:** Foster care supervision challenge

Participant 4: The children need to be told that money is going to be stopped and be included in budgeting.

**Commented [U34]:** Need of preparedness

Participant 1: The children need to be told about foster care grant that is going to stop. Social workers need to do home visits, sometimes the house is untidy and the basic needs of the children are not met. The parents can lie a lot.

**Commented [U35]:** Need of preparedness

**Commented [U36]:** Foster care supervision challenge

**Commented [U37]:** Human needs are not met(participation)

**Commented [U38]:** Parents can lie

Researcher: When was the last time you saw your social worker?

Participant 1: While I was in primary school.

Commented [U39]: Foster care supervision by social workers

Participant 3: When we were still in Port Elizabeth.

Commented [U40]: Foster care supervision challenge

Researcher: Do you know your social worker?

Participant 1: I forget her name, when I saw the researcher I thought she is the one.

Commented [U41]: Foster care supervision challenge

Researcher: Don't you think you need to know your social workers and build a relationship .

Participant 2: When we were in Port Elizabeth we knew her and we had a relationship with her.

Commented [U42]: Human need(affection)

Researcher: Do they visit you guys in school?

Participant 2: No

Researcher: So when the teachers have a problem with you who do they consult first?

Participant 1: When the teacher have a problem with me they will consult my parents.

Commented [U43]: Foster care supervision challenge

Researcher: Do your teachers know that you are under social workers?

Participant 2: Yes, they give us forms in the beginning of the year so that the teacher can fill it in.

Commented [U44]: Change agent

Researcher: If they don't visit how do they do 159 or 176 extension order because when you are under 18 or above extension report need to be made.

Participant 6: Laugh... They just send someone or pass a message to someone instructing us to come to their offices. My grandmother was given a message to go and visit their offices.

Commented [U45]: Foster care supervision challenge

Commented [U46]: Change agent

Participant 3: My mother will go to their offices.

Commented [U47]: Change agent

Participant 1: The social workers were supposed to have our parents contact details.

Commented [U48]: Change agent

Researcher: What I have gathered here it's a very big challenge.

Participant 1: Social workers are forms that comes once every year. Laugh

Commented [U49]: Foster care supervision challenge

Researcher: Anyone want to add. Who do you report to when you have problems?

Participant 1: We don't inform our parents we have diaries that we hide under our beds and my parents will see and read and see that you have passed so many challenges in your life some hurt you and you need someone to talk to.

Commented [U50]: Human need(affection)

Researcher: People don't take this for granted you are not an ATM child, don't take this like they are doing you a favour. You have right, we said from the beginning you need to be honest. You went through a lot. Your social worker is the school form. There is no justice.

Participant 2: If I hear you correct my social worker was supposed to know what is happening in my life.

Commented [U51]: Foster care supervision challenge

Researcher: I have noticed that you don't have the foundation of what foster care entails. I have noticed that you don't have a good relationship with your foster care parents.

Participant 2: You mentioned that we need to sit down with our foster parents or guardians.

Commented [U52]: Human need(affection)

Participant 1: It is not easy for me to sit down with my foster parent, I wish I can tell someone older, so that she can communicate with and understand my behaviour.

Commented [U53]: Human need (affection)

Participant 3: It depends, if you don't have attachment, or you started to stay with your guardian when your parents passed on it will be a challenge because you were not used to stay with that person. For us it is easier to talk to the guardian because we were used to stay with her since childhood. You know how to share with her information she knows how to handle us, and how we approach her, she knows our needs.

Commented [U54]: Human need(affection)

Commented [U55]: Human needs are met(affection)

Researcher: Are you saying that sometimes they don't understand you.

Participant 1: Yes

Participant 4: Sometimes we are treated differently by our parents because you are not his own.

Commented [U56]: Change agent

Researcher: What can be done?

Participant 3: We need to sit down with the mother and also foster parents can be told or ask why are they treating us differently.

Commented [U57]: Change agent

Commented [U58]: Need of information

Participant 1: Social workers need to visit our homes and ask our parents why they are treating us differently, and not saying good things about us. Even in terms of clothing.

Commented [U59]: Need of information

Commented [U60]: Human need (subsistence)

Researcher: Are you saying an outsider can differentiate a biological child and a foster child?

Participant 1: Yes

Researcher: You are not saying anything regarding foster care groups or parents because parents don't understand you.

Participant 1: When I was in primary school there was a group called Sinovuyo Teen. I did not know the criteria for recruitment in that group they were discussing teen challenges. I think we need that we can discuss things freely unlike with parents.

Commented [U61]: Need of information

Commented [U62]: Need of information

Commented [U63]: Need of information

Participant 6: When I was still young the social worker used to ask me about my progress and how are things at home and that is not happening anymore.

Commented [U64]: Foster care supervision

Participant 1: Social workers they were supposed to come to us and discuss the things we will go through as we grow older, so that you can reach your goals.

Commented [U65]: Need of information

Researcher: They don't know you. They don't have a plan.

Participant 3: I doubt they even know who we are.

Commented [U66]: Change agent

Researcher: they know names.

Participant 3: I don't know, my name was written wrongly in their documents. I think they need to make an effort because they fail as second parents I think something need to be done to them. Sudden laugh.

Commented [U67]: Foster care supervision challenge

Commented [U68]: Change agent

Participant 1: she is right participant 3, its time they were supposed to know us by visiting us.

Commented [U69]: Foster care supervision challenge

Participant 2: we did not know that they are second parents, we thought it's a norm to us if they come and visit us.

Commented [U70]: Need of information

Commented [U71]: Foster care supervision challenge

Participant 1: it will be a shame when our social workers visit us in school because there are top children coming from rich families they will ask why the social worker visited you. Foster care children are made fun of.

Commented [U72]: Human need(participation)

Commented [U73]: Human need

Researcher:

## Focus group: 2

Researcher: What is your understanding of foster care?

Participant 2: My understanding is that it's about the money that the government is giving me because I don't have parents. I understand that the money for foster care is more than the money received by children who have parents like child support grant.

Commented [U74]: Money given to children

Commented [U75]: Human need (protection)

Participant 5: It's the money that my grandparents receive every month.

Commented [U76]: Human need(protection)

Participant 1: It's about the money my aunt told me about that for children who don't have parents.

Commented [U77]: Money given to children

Researcher: is there anyone who wants to add?

Participant 3: It is the money that government and social services put it aside for children who lost their parents so that it can assist them for their basic needs.

Commented [U78]: Money given to children

Commented [U79]: Human need(subsistence)

Participant 4: For me foster care is not only about the money that government has allocated for orphans to be looked after, it is more about given a second chance to be cared for by our loved ones with assistance of foster care grant.

Commented [U80]: Money given to children

Commented [U81]: Human need(protection)

Researcher: What is your understanding of youth living foster care system?

Participant 1: Can you please repeat the question?

Researcher: The question is asking do you know what will happen to you as participants when you finish or reached (high school or turning 21).

Participant 1: I know that I have to look for a job and I won't be able to have all the things that I am used to.

Commented [U82]: Look for work

Commented [U83]: Human need not met (protection)

Participant 3: I am scared about this question because I did not prepare about that yet.

Commented [U84]: Need for preparedness

Participant 4: What I know is that I want to study further and do Law after matric it's my plan.

Commented [U85]: Need for information

Participant 2: My understanding is that I would no longer receive foster care grant after I turned 21 years which is a challenge for because it is my last year receiving it and I don't know how will I survive without foster care grant because my aunt did not save enough money for me.

Commented [U86]: Discharged from foster care system (Section 175, Children's Act 38 of 2005)

Commented [U87]: Human need (protection)

Commented [U88]: Mismanagement of foster care

Participant 5: I will be forced to go and look for work since there is no one at home working and I have to take my family out of poverty because I don't want to engage in criminal activities in order to alleviate poverty at home.

Commented [U89]: Look for work

Commented [U90]: Human need (subsistence)

Commented [U91]: Change agent

Researcher: What are your experiences as a foster child in Buffalo City Municipality?

Participant 2: I am enjoying to be with my grandmother as she treat me well. My family is very supportive towards me and my grandmother and the involvement of the social workers and their support is much appreciated because they remind my grandmother about the importance of saving money for rainy days.

Commented [U92]: Human need (affection)

Commented [U93]: Human need (protection)

Participant 4: My experience is not good because sometimes you really feel you are an outsider as my aunt children become so jealousy of me. They always remind me I am a foster child. People lie to the magistrate under oath and saying they are going to take of you whereas they want your money not you.

Commented [U94]: My experience is not good

Commented [U95]: Feeling like an outsider

Commented [U96]: Foster parents lie under oath

Participant 3: Children at school always teasing me that I am an orphan. I become sad you are reminded that you don't have parents. It is sad that in this time in age people are being called such names, and because my parents had died because of HIV I am victimised by my very own community.

Commented [EP97]: Children at school are teasing me

Commented [EP98]: Human need (protection)

Commented [EP99]: Human need (protection)

Participant 1: My life has been a roller coaster I lost my parents and my grandmother who was taking care of me past on and there was no one in my family who wanted to take care of me until a non-relative saw my situation and take me in as her own. She was not interested in my foster care grant she was doing it out of humanity. There are people out there who still have a heart.

Commented [EP100]: Foster care challenges

Commented [EP101]: Family challenge?

Commented [EP102]: Human need (affection)

Participant 5: I have been a naughty child my parents passed on when I was 10 years old and I was raised by maternal family, my grandmother it was hard to be raised by older parents because they don't understand you, and times has changed. With the help of the social worker I was able to change and become a better person. Sometimes you have the thought what will be your life looked like if your parents were still alive and give the carers the hard time.

Commented [EP103]: foster care challenges

Commented [EP104]: foster care supervision

Commented [EP105]: change agent

Researcher: What are your challenges in foster care placement in Buffalo City Municipality?

Participant 5: I don't know who is the social worker responsible for me, the last time I saw her when we went to court and each every time we went to the offices for renewal of foster care the social worker has been changed. It is difficult to have a relationship with your social worker it is not nice to open up to strangers about the things that are happening in your life.

Commented [EP106]: foster care supervision challenge

Commented [EP107]:

Commented [EP108]: foster care supervision challenge

Participant 4: Sometimes you just receive forms you don't know what these forms for. The challenge is that communication is an issue with our foster parents they don't understand us, for example you ask for something in advance when that time comes you are told stories. When

Commented [EP109]: Need for information

Commented [EP110]: Communication challenge with foster parents

Commented [U111]: Need of information

you ask why you can't get what were you promised you reminded your parents are dead and they are doing you a favour to keep you. You are even threatened that when you are over 21 you will no longer stay with them because you won't have money.

**Commented [U112]:** Mismanagement of foster care grant

**Commented [U113]:** Change agent

**Commented [U114]:** Foster care challenge

Participant 3: The social worker does not even know my face or which grade I'm in this year.

**Commented [U115]:** Foster care supervision challenge

Participant 2: other challenge is that our parents don't understand us and there is no clear communication especially when you want something. They always tell you that there is no money.

**Commented [U116]:** Communication challenge with foster parents

**Commented [U117]:** Mismanagement of funds

Participant 1: We don't even talk about how we are going to do with the money and do budget together so that I can understand. The social worker don't come and visit us and check if we are coping well or not.

**Commented [U118]:** Communication challenge with foster parents

**Commented [U119]:** Foster care supervision challenge

Researcher: What are your recommendations with regard to foster care placement?

Participant 1: The department must give jobs or link us with learner ships.

**Commented [U120]:** Need of information

Participant 2: Maybe a support group for foster care children so that we can have a platform where we can share our experiences and learn from each other.

**Commented [U121]:** Need for preparedness

**Commented [U122]:** Need for information

Participant 3: Give us scholarships so that we can further our studies.

**Commented [U123]:** Change agent

Participant 4: Prepare us especially when you turn 18 and no longer at school because the social workers don't visit us it's difficult to give your input on this issue.

**Commented [U124]:** Need for preparedness

**Commented [U125]:** Foster care supervision challenge

Participant 5: Must form group for foster parents where they can be taught be how to handle us foster children.

**Commented [U126]:** Change agent

Our first question is

**Researcher: What is your role in supervision of foster care? (Silence) Must I repeat it? What do you do actually?**

Participant 5: I will say is to monitor placement.

**Commented [U1]:** Monitor placement

Participant 1: To add on that I think is to monitor and also to ensure that the best interest of the child are taken care of, as it was promised in court when the child was placed, and also to ensure that the court order is reviewed so the benefits that the child is supposed to get are still in place.

**Commented [U2]:** Monitor placement

**Commented [U3]:** Human need (protection)

**Commented [U4]:** Human need (participation)

**Researcher: Any other participant wants to add on that?**

Participant 2: On my side I will say, eh..., I will take the administrative part in the supervision of foster care placement because ke..., its home visits to be conducted and the compilation of review report in terms of statutory in Children's Act, if the child is below of 18 and you compile a report in terms of section 159, and if the child is above 18 years and you compile a report in terms of section 176, so that the administrative part in the process of supervising the foster care placement of the child.

**Commented [U5]:** Human need (participation)

**Commented [U6]:** Statutory mandatory

**Researcher: do you want to add on that, so that we can go through the second question. But I still need more because remember you also go there to build a relationship not just for paper work; you build that relationship with the child. We don't just go there and tik, tik, tick.**

Participant 4: Our role is also assisting the foster parent, oh... even with the challenges she encounters while raising the foster child and also to ensure the safety of the child.

**Commented [U7]:** Foster care supervision

**Commented [U8]:** Human need (protection)

Participant 6: To add on that to have in group sessions with foster children and also foster parents on all these things for example problems during placement.

**Commented [U9]:** Need for information

Researcher: I hear that you said you are doing group sessions with foster parents

Participant 5: Yes, it may vary according to the age of children, we got those who had behavior problems, and also on foster parents we got isession on savings for the child.

**Commented [U10]:** Foster care supervision

**Researcher: You are doing a lot of roles for example when there is a problem you play a role of a mediator**

Participant 5: The other role that we play is to look at the development of the child whether the child is developing according to his or her own age, and to look...I think basically is about ehh... it's about interest of the child and the development of the child, (silent) and make sure the child the belonging, the identity, of the child is taken care of that what we also do, and also look at educational part of the child whether the child is schooling, where the progress is ...he or she is doing well. We also advocate for the rights of the child ok, if the child is at school there are problems we need to be there, the community whether there is a problem to be there. Also in the family, may be the foster is abusing the child so that we can form that relationship.

Commented [U11]: Role of advocacy

Commented [U12]: Human need (protection)

Commented [U13]: Human need (identity)

Commented [U14]: Human need (protection)

Commented [U15]: Role of advocacy

Participant 6: To add more on education if there are some problems with education we consult other stakeholders just like education with assessment of the child if the child needs some special school we do that.

Commented [U16]: Role of advocacy

**Researcher: Since you have given us a lot on that, the second question will be; what are the foster cares services have you done for youth exiting foster care? For example, in this question these kids are almost out of the system, what are you doing for those children that are going to be out of the system? Are you making sure that child goes to school, network the child with other stakeholders**

Participant 1: In most cases from my experience when they are 21 years most of the times they are already in varsity but before that maybe when they turn 18 they pass their grade 12. We do sometimes assist and then if they seek assistances sometimes assistance is already available at home from the foster parents and everything but in preparation for that that's why we highly recommend that foster parents to save and all of that when they reach that stage they are able to go to varsity able to register and all of that so, the reason why we require foster parents to save money part of the preparation that we are doing for the child when they exit the system so they is some sort of preparation been done but ee...In addition to that in most times when they leave varsity they are already out of the system and ask for assistance even my colleague Lebo sometimes even give them even posts around because some of them are unemployed so we do assist here and there and it's not all the time not for all the children.

Commented [U17]: Role of enabler

Commented [U18]: Management of foster care grant

Commented [U19]: Assisting with exiting

Commented [U20]: Need for information is met

Commented [U21]: Foster care supervision

Participant 5: I think eee...we all do the process, there is a lack of resources, look at the environment, you look at the province that we are in, so there are no resources that you can say at the end of the day when you finish or you have passed grade 12 this what you can do the resources

are not there. Due to work load that we do everything you are a social worker you do foster care, you do the programmes basically you do everything that is socially related, so there is a gap there. We don't have the resources, there is no plan for every child that is my caseload that has passed grade 12 this is what I am going to do.

Commented [U22]: Lack of resources

Commented [U23]: Work load

Commented [U24]: Lack of resources

**Researcher: Do you think if you have resources you would have less work load it would be easier to plan and prepare?**

Participant 2: Basically I don't think the reduction of workload would be a proper plan; it can be a proper strategy. I think the best strategy would be a prescribed program for exit we don't want work load to reduce as if it's our motive behind. The motive behind is that the children in foster care placement can undergo a program that can assist them.

Commented [U25]: Work load

Commented [U26]: Change agent

**Researcher: You don't have a youth program in this province?**

Participant 2: No, no that I know of.

Commented [U27]: Need for information

Participant 4: Its program 5 that is doing that community development.

Commented [U28]: Need for information

Participant 1: The one that I know program 5 have Harambee, I don't know how it works. I am aware that they are dealing with youth and teenagers and give them skills. We don't know any that we can refer our children to. To some extent our hands are tied.

Commented [U29]: Need for information

**Researcher: Don't you indicate that when you are doing operational plans as social workers you want to assist children who exiting the system. You don't discuss that, this is what you want to do for foster care children in your province or in your office.**

Participant 5: The operational plan we are just given, this is the operational plan for the year we don't participate in that.

Commented [U30]: Human need not met (participation)

**Researcher: So are you saying you are not given a platform to raise these issues, for example this is what you want for children exiting foster care.**

Participant 4: You are allowed to do changes that you want for your children.

Commented [U31]: Change agent

Participant 1: It is regarded as something as extra mile, it's not even in your work plan, KPA's there is nothing, and there is nothing of such. Basically we are not told it is something that is at the

back of our minds, I am speaking for everyone we focus on the child while he or she is still in foster care. What you do after it can be your extra mile, as I understand it.

Commented [U32]: Change agent

Participant 2: Laugh...it is like a debriefing if I may say the problem we only depend on individual plan. If you have a capacity to plan for your own children you are fine, then if you rely on the operational plan, how you manage your work, how do you exit this chunk of children from the foster care placement then you are in trouble. It is not first time we have such. I have never seen anyone presenting the operational plan, exiting as far as exiting of foster care concerned. No one presented operational plan in my office.

Commented [U33]: No exiting strategy for youth in foster care

Participant 6: Just to add on that it was 2 years ago in 2016 when I was trying to have career exhibition, I approached the province and they said they don't have funds, as for our community halls you need pay.

Commented [U34]: Lack of funding

Researcher: **You need to be creative and challenge your superiors. Remember those who will turn 18, what if they become criminals because there was no link with programs that will assist them when they are adults and made some changes in their lives. Foster care children are supposed to be a priority or your province or district is not making them a priority?**

Participant 1: There are supposed to be, it supposed to be like that, truth of the matter is not happening like that not here, not at any office that I am aware of around here and it's more like going back to the work load, when you see that your child is turning 21 and you are happy to close the file minus one problem, that is how the reality of the matter is, because you have about 200 files minus one file is like thank you Lord. The exiting strategy is one thing that needs to be worked on it's not happening at all.

Commented [U35]: Work load

Commented [U36]: Work load

Commented [U37]: No exiting strategy for youth in foster care

Researcher: **you need to sit again as social workers and discuss what are you doing exactly with these children, are you dumping them. They are human beings, they are not animals, and we need to make their lives easier. Remember we spend a lot of money in foster care.**

Participant 2: Thanks, I suppose you are talking under normal circumstances that should be the thing, all of us came with high level of creativity, came here energetic, plan for human subject that we are dealing with, everything was almost perfect but when you arrive here was subjected to

bureaucracy, there are memos to be written to the district office and took ages to come back. Your creativity become exploited and fails, and that is the problem and we cannot lament on our challenges because we are dealing with human beings. Bureaucracy is very strenuous to our creativity to do things provided that we are dealing with human beings. Otherwise it is in our minds that we have their future in our hearts.

Commented [U38]: Opinions not valued by management

Commented [U39]: Opinions not valued by management

**Researcher: The next question, what statutory services you provided for the family?**

Participant 1: One thing I know that pop up in my mind, our supervisor always advise us when you there is a need you can do bereavement counselling on the spot that is what coming to my mind (ezinye ndisazicinga).

Commented [U40]: Human need (protection)

**Researcher: Do you want to add on that, feel free. Statutory services starts when the client comes. There is a process you need to follow.**

Participant 2: I think we lash or depend on the norms of standards of the department. The first must be statute the first comes when the Children's Act kicks in, when the client comes we rely on the norms of standards that is statutory work, foster care process then, when we implement it starts when we go to court, place a child, then we refer the foster parent to SASSA but Social Assistance Act, it is not our part we render statutory services to families.

Commented [U41]: Statutory mandatory

Commented [U42]: Human need (protection)

**Researcher: You don't do screenings?**

Participant 2: Yes, we do it under norms and standards not the Act.

Commented [U43]: Statutory mandatory

Participant 4: We screen them and we gather information, we do home visits and check living conditions (cough).

Commented [U44]: Statutory mandatory

**Researcher: Do you have any problems when you go court and give your dates for long, in our province you are submitting report and wait to be given date. You don't have such in your province.**

Participant 4: No, not any more

Commented [U45]: Human need (understanding)

Participant 1: It used to be a challenge, its running smooth.

Commented [U46]: Human need (understanding)

**Researcher: How long for you to do your investigation. Do you have a client that will say I've been coming to the social workers for almost a year?**

Participant 3: It depends; we have challenge with resources you have to wait get a transport so that you can do a home visit.

Commented [U47]: Lack of resources

Participant 1: As she said, it depends we know it was supposed to take 3 months. We had a lot of backlog and we have to leave everything and focus on that. You will find that we have clients who were supposed to be placed last year in June or August, us focusing on the backlog of children who are already in the system, created a backlog for children who are not yet on the new foster care applications. So its give and take sometimes you place them quicker and wait for a very long time.

Commented [U48]: Challenges with backlog

**Researcher: Don't you think it creates more work for you or backlog don't you think it's unfair for new ones.**

Participant 1: It is, yes

**Researcher: I want to check don't you have foster care management meetings, where you discuss backlog, have plans 3 months before.**

Participant 2: I think mam there were supposed to be forums of that nature but they don't exist. We only had meetings for backlog last year not even month. They were done weekly we have to sit on those meetings and keep our client waiting. The planning part is tempered with, when you mention backlog is sort of frustration.

Commented [U49]: Foster care management

Commented [U50]: Foster care management

Commented [U51]: Challenges of backlog

**Researcher: Don't you have supervision session where you discuss that.**

Participant 5: I think the other problem with backlogs DSD and SASSA they don't talk same language this file lapses on November and SASSA will say it's in the backlog; it's not on the backlog. The management of foster care backlog system they don't talk necessary on our way of backlog and foster care reviews and staff.

Commented [U52]: Human need not met (understanding)

Commented [U53]: Human need not met (understanding)

**Researcher: I see that we have given you a platform to ventilate. Let's go to the next question what are you have encountered.**

Participant 2: Sometimes we find that when you are doing home visit that the foster parent and the child have relocated and they did not report and you have to run around like a headless chicken, because you have to do what is expected of you.

Commented [U54]: Foster care supervision challenges

Participant 3: Challenges of foster parents who don't cooperate you visit the foster parent and you say she must visit our office and she never comes, and it causes backlog.

Commented [U55]: Foster care supervision challenge

Commented [U56]: backlog

Researcher: Do you think it's their intentions or vast distance.

Participant 2: Foster parents are not realistic they are not talking what is really happening because they have not saved money. They are running away.

Commented [U57]: Human need not met (understanding)

Commented [U58]: Mismanagement of foster care grant

Commented [U59]: Human need not met (understanding)

Researcher: Do you have a good relationship with them.

Participant 1: From my experience, is that in the process of foster care when they are still prospective foster they will come, when they receive money they will give you a run around.

Commented [U60]: Human need (protection)

Commented [U61]: Human need not met (understanding)

Researcher: Are you saying it's a business.

Participant 1: Yes

Participant 2: if we were not talking about foster care grant. Another challenge you place a child because you are convinced and did intensive investigation that a child is in need of care and protection and standards that are provided in the Children's Act that the child is orphaned, and you find out that the father is the one who was accompanying the prospective foster parent.

Commented [EP62]: Statutory mandatory

Commented [EP63]: Human need not met (understanding)

Researcher: Don't you think we need to be blamed; you need to do a thorough investigation.

Participant 2: I think our mode of investigation is perfect we don't lack capacity. Challenge is not cooperation between the schools. Our children have been oriented on how to lie; you don't know your parents. The problem is the participation of community neighbor tell them this story. We do everything the problem there is no negative consequences for lying to the social worker. If you have detected that there is father you just discharge.

Commented [EP64]: Statutory mandatory

Commented [EP65]: Human need (understanding)

Commented [EP66]: Statutory mandatory

Researcher: Do you want to add. You mentioned that foster care is a business, there is no cooperation, and community is contributing.

Participant 1: Another challenge is that due to case load, sometimes you don't want to put an effort. You find that you have 10 cases for home visit and your office will call you to bring back the car, transport is a challenge. Foster parents will say everything is well 2 days down the line child moved to somewhere else, there is no transparency.

Commented [EP67]: Case load

Commented [EP68]: Lack of resources

Commented [EP69]: Foster care supervision challenge

Researcher: How often do you go home visits in a week/month?

Participant 5: It depends on the availability of transport we have 3 subsidized transports. Forty people that are using these vehicles do you get my point. This week so and so is going to a workshop, so you can't have a proper plan.

Commented [EP70]: Lack of resources

**Researcher: there is a possibility that you cannot do home visit.**

Participant 2: If I get you correctly, are you asking how many visits per case home.

Participant 1: Most of the time, If I need to be honest, you are lucky if you get a car once in a week. For foster care the actual fact is that we go for a visit when it's due for a review and most of the time you don't even know your children and you cannot know all of them. You only knew the house when it's due for review. In a year's time the area has been removed from you and you are given another area and you have to learn that area.

Commented [EP71]: Lack of resources

Commented [EP72]: Foster care supervision challenge

Participant 6: To add more on that challenge, our case load are more than 200 cases, we supposed to have progress report for each case we won't have time due to work load and we have other cases as well.

Commented [EP73]: Case load

Participant 2: I think the problem is that our work is quantified because we need to have quality production in our work, we need to produce quality but the way we treat each other with ourselves and their superiors is quite problematic at the end of the month we need to produce numbers how many kids have been removed or placed. In the process of doing foster care you need to identify problems like behavior and you need to work with that child. You need to go to that child due to financial constraints you can say to the child must come here for more sessions. So we need to go and conduct home visits. We need to bring services to our people but the problem is that we need to do rash rash so that you can qualify for PMDS incentive that is not in our minds because we are concerned about the wellbeing of the child but because you need to make sure you meet your standards. You make sure you do what is required of you.

Commented [U74]: Change agent

Commented [U75]: Advocacy role

Commented [U76]: Change agent

Commented [U77]: Foster care supervision challenge

Commented [U78]: Human need (protection)

**Researcher: Are you saying it is always about the numbers? Not the quality of service, targets every month?**

Participant 1: It is there in the work plans.

Commented [U79]: Statutory mandatory

Participant 2: Yes, but there are not considered at all. Under normal circumstances there are supposed to be feedback reports from the management or here is the gap let us close it. We are

required to write challenges on the monthly report and we are asked to supply correctional measures, ever since I arrived in the public sector you provide solutions. It won't be taken into consideration what so ever. So the challenge that was mentioned is the quantification of our work. Work place challenges are being personalized I would come up with an idea, 3 years ago this should be our mode of operation you always raise that in staff meetings, always raise that on different or various platforms but it won't be considered. When it's failure I said long time ago I suggested that we do this way. It becomes a stigma, personal issue that thing of Belu, named after your suggestion. It is personal demoralize you and becomes a problem.

Commented [U80]: Management/supervision challenge

Participant 5: I am seconding it, it depends who is saying that in order to be looked at, let us guys do the monthly report together, and see that whether I am lacking, but no there are not starting. I believe the part of 'Ilima' for backlog on our own when it was the district for every office, the person who is suggested there did not see the need.

Commented [U81]: Management/supervision challenge

**Researcher: Are you saying you are led by blind people?**

Participant 2: Actually we are not led by blind people. Their mind is sober, can you realize that immediately we are here we are workers and relationship we need to be perceived as such. If this thing was said by Belu, Jesus Christ it would be implemented can you realize that it is a psychological problem from our side, immediately you make such utterances it means that you have psychological problem, it has affected your emotions, confidences, and even your creativity.

Commented [U82]: Management challenge

**Researcher: Are you saying that your opinions are not valued?**

Participant 2: Yes

Participant 4: I agree that on that, some of us coming another offices, we come suggesting that in our offices, we did not have backlog, there was a team for backlog, intake, there was no backlog for new cases. In this office everyone is doing everything.

Commented [U83]: Management challenge

Participant 5: There was a team that was directed for after care, but in this office there is no such. Everyone is doing everything.

Commented [U84]: Management challenge

Participant 2: Additional problem is benchmarking we are suffering from superiority complex. If they are doing in Dimbaza it works well for them we were supposed to do it here, we lack benchmarking. There must be a benchmarking team that will go to Dimbaza and see how do they

operate, and manage things there were supposed to take social workers to your province and see that there is no backlog, and how they can manage it and smooth running of foster care production, and process of benchmarking team will come to social workers and present it, and we can monitor and evaluate it that benchmarking and see the implementation. Are we implementing it, even if you are conducting research we are one who are participating in the data collection of the research will be the ones expected to get findings of the research. It will lend on the hands of better beings of the sector.

Commented [U85]: Management challenge

**Researcher: What exiting strategies have you prepared youth exiting foster care system?**

Participant 2: These things happen spontaneous, not that there is no planning capacity but they just happen unplanned, but mostly if I can make my contribution, we focus largely on the educational part of exiting strategy of the child. Otherwise as it relates to employment is very much difficult we just play a role of advocate, role of a broker, we broke services we tried to assist them with the information limited as it is, so that they can access post schooling institutions. It is difficult when they completed their academic program, and they are qualified. Some of the foster children are qualified social workers there was no exiting strategy what so ever, now they are saying I was a foster child. But the problem is there is no proper plan subsequent to the exit to the system. There is no strategy in place, there is nothing planned.

Commented [EP86]: Foster care supervision challenge

Participant 1: I think as we said before I think we have touched on this topic, there is really nothing on the table right now, but do hope that things will change.

Commented [EP87]: Foster care supervision challenge

Commented [EP88]: Foster care supervision challenge

**Researcher: Since you mentioned that you have not prepared anything. What is your recommendation in order to improving foster care placement?**

Participant 5: I think the improvement of foster care placement and exiting strategy depends on the integration of services, as we have said it before programme 5 does have youth something but we are not aware of it but we are in the same department. Integration of services is important so that we can all be part of what is happening and other departments that have internship, so that we have that integration. So that when department of education have learner ship so that we know the requirements needed.

Commented [EP89]: Management challenge

Participant 2: Benchmarking of foster care, we must take from the best.

Commented [EP90]: Management challenge

**Researcher: Are you saying best practice model.**

Participant 2: We need to establish forums on foster care so that we can meet more often, so that we share our technical expertise as it relates to foster care. And lastly we need to consider the standardization of social work practice as it relates to foster care. We depend on individual work plans. As I've mentioned earlier that if we can standardized the way of work so that all of us can work the same way, and standard framework of doing things as it relates to foster care at least there can be a relief.

**Commented [EP91]:** Foster care supervision challenge

Participant 1: Another thing that could be of assistance in addition of what is saying we could have foster parents workshop and children's foster care where we sit with children and have sessions with them and equip each other, and vocalizing their challenges they can assist within the same group. So that we can spot challenges or issues before it even arise, aid themselves and engaging with one another, even when they have challenges they call other foster parents, it can also enlighten the work that social workers does. We have this group that is able to discuss their issues regarding the development of the child.

**Commented [EP92]:** Foster care supervision challenge

**Researcher: you have recommended that integration of services, best practice model, benchmarking, standardization, workshop on foster parents and children. Remember guys you have mentioned lack of resources as a challenge, you can recommend on that in order to have proper service delivery.**

Participant 5: We can have a team for after care services where it can assist with the youth exiting foster care, that team can close the gap that we have today for youth.

**Commented [EP93]:** Management challenge