

**FROM BEING IN CHARGE OF A CHILD-HEADED HOUSEHOLD TO BEING  
PLACED IN KINSHIP FOSTER CARE: THE EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS OF  
ORPHANS PREVIOUSLY IN CHARGE OF CHILD-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS**

by

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of

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**DECLARATION**

**STUDENT NUMBER: 8178828**

I, Thandy Shirley Mathebula, declare that **FROM BEING IN CHARGE OF A CHILD HEADED HOUSEHOLD TO BEING IN KINSHIP FOSTER CARE: THE EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS OF ORPHANS PREVIOUSLY IN CHARGE OF CHILD-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

**Signed**

Mrs. T.S Mathebula

**Date**

February 2012

## **DEDICATIONS**

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents, **John** and **Julia Ngobeni**, who used to teach me about the importance of education. I cannot omit also dedicating this study to my loving husband **Bedwel Mathebula**, for taking care of our children when I was not available for them because of this study; to my son-in-law, Pastor **David Tibane**, my beautiful daughters, **Glenda**, **Amukelani**, **Bridget** and **Risima** for their commitment to Christianity and their endless support throughout this research study. The thesis is also dedicated to my grandson **Lwazi David Tibane** for his sense of humour that helped to relieve me of stress when facing challenges during the period of conducting this study.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Placement of orphans under kinship foster care is a common occurrence in social work practice, especially around Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga Province. Social workers are facing the challenge of an alarming increase in foster care cases due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic in the area. Thus the social workers are trapped in a situation of having to place orphans in kinship foster care, without adequate preparation nor the opportunity to explore the feelings and experiences of being in a child-headed household.

This study aimed at exploring and describing the experiences and expectations of orphans who were in charge of child-headed households, regarding their preparation for being placed in kinship foster care and their subsequent placement in such care. Research findings revealed that some orphaned children who had previously been heading a child-headed household and were now placed in kinship foster care were continuing to head the households despite the fact that an order had been issued by the children's court for them to be under the care and guidance of kin foster parents. The non-involvement of orphaned heads of households in any decisions that affect them emerged in the findings of the study as a critical issue.

Another important finding was that some orphaned children in kinship foster care experienced the abuse of the foster care grant by their kin foster parents. The research study has made provision for conclusions and recommendations to all role-players responsible for placing child-headed households in kinship foster care in order to enhance the efficacy of kin foster care placement.

## **KEY WORDS**

Experiences; expectations; orphan; child(ren); child-headed household; foster care; kinship  
foster care; preparation, in-charge; placement.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.1. Introduction to the study**

This chapter deals with the background to the research, problem statement, rationale for the study, research questions, goals and objectives, research approach and design, ethical considerations, limitations of the research, clarification of key concepts, and the content plan of the research report.

##### **1.1.1. Background to the research and problem formulation**

The death of a parent is regarded as a crisis for any child, involving the loss of love, care, support and security that parents should provide, as well as the loss of a link both with the past and a shared future. In their study, Foster, Levine and Williamson (2005: 39-47) indicated that the death of a parent put children under enormous economic stress. Foster et al (2005) explained further that in most families illness strikes economically active adults, who are mostly bread winners, and as the stages of illness progress, the person is forced to stop working and the family income is either reduced or lost. Children may be forced to drop out of school due to the family loss or reduced income and the inability to afford school expenses for instance, school fees or school uniforms. Children may also be forced to drop out of school to seek employment in order to generate income for the family. Wild (2001:8) mentioned that children risk dropping out of school prematurely either to go out to work, look after the home, or care for siblings or an ill person.

Kelly in Foster et al (2005:67-70) pointed out that as the stages of the disease progress, the children are forced to be absent from school due to frequent visits to hospitals. Adolescents in this situation have to cope with the deprivation of their childhood and with the need to be a child and yet the imperative to assume adult responsibilities as household provider (Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, 2001:27). These children are increasingly taking on adult responsibilities at a young age, including providing care for a sick parent. Some children, especially girls, also have to give up school in order to generate income or to assist in taking care of the siblings (Foster 2004:9). MacLellan (2005:12) asserted that girls heading



households are especially vulnerable, with reports of them trading sex for siblings' school fees. This is confirmed by the World Vision Canada (2007) report in revealing that girls, in particular, are sometimes forced into risky activities such as trading sex in order to bring income to the family and risk being exposed to HIV infection, teenage pregnancy and other sexually transmitted diseases. In most communities it is up to the first born child who is usually left in charge of the younger siblings and must make sure that there is food on the table for everyone (Moyo 2007:1). The most common reactions to terminal illness or death of a parent include hopelessness, depression, anger, loneliness, anxiety, fear of abandonment and confusion (Wild 2001:10).

UNICEF (2004:2) reported that 15 million children had already lost one or both parents. An additional large group of children live in with families or communities where adult illness and death have brought about additional hardships.

The number of orphans in Africa continues to grow at a staggering pace, leaving communities and governments struggling to accommodate so many children in need of food, clothing, housing, school, medical care and psychological support (Craddock in Kalipeni, Opong and Gosh 2004:9). The annual report for Child Welfare South Africa (2002-2003) stated that the number of orphaned children on Child Welfare caseloads nationally has reached extreme proportions, with numbers having trebled between 1999 and 2002. Foster (2004:2) indicated that as a result of the impact of AIDS on communities, changes are taking place in care-giving arrangements for affected children. He further asserted that an increase in the number of double orphans has led to the increase of the households headed by children, mostly in their teens, but with some headed by children as young as ten to twelve years.

In the presentation of "Child-headed household: dilemmas of definition and livelihood rights" by MacLellan (2005:4-5) at the 4<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights at Cape Town, it is highlighted that the establishment of a child-headed household occurs due to several factors, one being the lack of extended family able to care for the children. Whereas there may be relatives able to take one child into their family, the desire of the siblings to stay together may be so strong that they prefer to look after themselves. At the same time, Baquele (2007:4) has pointed out that although we are inclined to think that children are in need of these traditional and modern mechanisms for protection, there is also the less well-known fact

that children rationally and consciously make a choice to establish child-headed households, even when there are alternative care systems for the following reasons:

- First and foremost, children may not want to be separated from their siblings
- Secondly, they may want to keep the family's property and land
- Thirdly, they may establish their own child-headed household out of fear of being mistreated or exploited in foster families

In some rare cases, children decide to stick together to fulfil promises made to a dying mother who may entrust adolescents to take care of the younger children and keep them together. Rantla, Siwani and Mokoena (2002:20-21) in their study on orphans and extended families in Bushbuckridge, reported that all 50 child-headed households studied, preferred to remain in the child-headed households to protect the property left by the deceased parents irrespective of the availability of extended relatives. Some of the children indicated that the extended families did not play a vital role in their lives while the parents were still alive and therefore they regarded them with suspicion about wanting to use them for financial gain such as receiving the foster care grant.

In the research study conducted by Nziyane (2010:138-170), the following findings on some of the realities of orphaned children living in child-headed households were highlighted:

- Children acting as caregivers of the sick parents

The research study has revealed that orphan children heading households were taking care of their terminally ill parents, as well as their siblings. Such children endure the pain of taking care of their sick parents, witnessing their death and losing them at the end.

- Orphaned children who assumed responsibility of being the head of the household
  - All children who participated in the research study were in charge of the household
  - The eldest child in the family, irrespective of gender, assumed parental responsibilities after the death of the parent. The caring roles include bathing of younger siblings, cooking, cleaning or fetching water and providing food.

- The assumed parental responsibilities denied them the opportunity to engage themselves in childhood activities such as playing with peers.
  - Taking care of younger siblings is a frustrating situation to children in charge of the household since at times they are unable to meet the needs of their siblings
  - Children who participated in the study indicated that shouldering parental responsibilities impacted adversely on their school performance.
- Orphaned children in child-headed households live without adult care and advocacy in unsafe living conditions
    - All children who participated in the study were living on their own, without the care of an adult person.
    - The orphan children indicated their interest on staying with a relative, and highlighted the gains of being under the supervision of a parent such as the right to be cared for by a parent or a guardian.
- Orphaned children in child-headed households experienced inadequate food supplies, education related difficulties, sexual abuse and exploitation.
    - All children who participated in the study indicated the lack of food in their households.
    - Some of the extended family members have no means to improvise in assisting orphaned children
    - Other extended family members do not respond positively when asked for food, indicating that they are also experiencing financial constraints
    - Neighbours play a vital role in providing the children with food in a case where relatives cannot provide them with food.
    - The economic distress of children living in child-headed household is also relieved by Government social grants such as the child support grant and foster care grant.
- Orphaned children in child-headed households experienced education-related difficulties

Children who participated in the study indicated that they lacked neither school uniforms nor money to buy food at school nor to pack lunch to eat.

- Orphaned children in child-headed households experienced sexual abuse and exploitation
  - It was revealed in the research study by two children participating in the study that children living in child-headed households, mainly girls, are vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation.
  - Living in child-headed households without adult care, especially in unsafe areas puts orphaned children at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation.

The child-headed household is not a new phenomenon. The Children's Amendment Bill (B19b-2006) submitted by the Portfolio Committee on Social Development, indicated that child-headed households are not new phenomena in South Africa, but has escalated due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Citing the idea that child-headed households are not new phenomena in South Africa, Sloth-Nielsen (2004:2) maintained that children used to head households due to parents migrating to urban areas to seek employment before the advent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In addition, MacLellan (2005:3) stated that recent studies and reports on the phenomenon of child-headed households have identified the issue of HIV/AIDS as a major contributory factor to the establishment of child-headed households and MacLellan (2005:3) further mentioned that such compositions have always existed at some point in most cultures, primarily in times of hardship or conflict, but in general on a very minor scale.

In this regard, Foster, Makufa, Drew and Kravolec (1997:46) also indicated that the assumptions that child-headed households are not new phenomena in South Africa have not been validated because no studies were conducted on the child-headed households phenomenon prior to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the phenomenon had always existed at some point in most cultures, primarily due to migrant labour.

In Zimbabwe child-headed households are perceived as a new coping mechanism in response to the impact of AIDS on communities (Foster et al 1997:155). Community groups have been identified as agents for change in helping extended families to cope with the disaster by encouraging the establishment of volunteer-based visiting programmes to at risk households. Barnett and Blaikie (1992:87) note that when AIDS-related deaths began to increase,

communities gradually became supportive of the family system. In instances in which children cannot be cared for within the extended family, mass orphanhood demands new institutional coping mechanisms. However, institutional care is often viewed as the worst of all alternatives, disempowering and traumatizing children who have already suffered numerous losses (Hope 1999:97). Orphans may be placed with relatives, foster families or residential institutions in the belief that their material needs will be met.

Mallman (2002:6) stresses the importance of care by the extended family members as it is viewed as the first environment in which a child experiences love and affection. He further maintained that the family provides a child with a sense of belonging and an identity, because they have common roots and the same ancestors, and therefore child welfare agencies currently consider kin as the first placement choice when foster care is needed because they are readily available to provide a safe home. The Centre for Law and Social Policy (2009) is of the view that children in kinship foster care experience greater stability and they are more likely to report “always felt loved” than children with non-kin foster parents.

However, the extended family, which has proved so effective in the past, is becoming stressed as a result of both a dramatic increase in the number of maternal and double orphans and a reduction in the number of prime age caregivers, such as aunts and uncles. This implies that relatives, who took over the responsibility for taking care of orphan children, are also ill and dying due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Foster (2004:5) maintained that the extended family is no longer a social sponge with infinite capacity to soak up orphans as some children slip through the extended family safety net and end up in a variety of extremely vulnerable situations. Baquele (2007:1) also maintained that this safety net is now stretched to its limits by the effects of armed conflict, family disintegration, and most importantly, the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Herring (2005:6) indicated that kinship foster care placements predominantly involve certain types of biological relatives. National data indicate that the most common placement (40 to over 50% nationally) is with one or two grandparents, usually a maternal grandmother and the next most common kin placement (30 to 40% nationally) is with aunts and/or uncles, with most of these placements involving an aunt. The remaining 10 to 20% of kin placements are with various other relatives such as great aunts or cousins (Herring 2005:6-7).

In response to the increased use of kinship foster care, Herring (2005:8) provides the differences revealed by several studies in comparing kinship and non-kinship placement. Kinship caregivers have significantly lower income than non-kin foster parents. They are more likely to be single and to have less education. This is confirmed by Foster (2004:13) in indicating that children who have lost one or both parents in sub-Saharan Africa often live in households that are headed by older caregivers who have low levels of education and are thus unlikely to have regular sources of income. Kinship caregivers are likely to be older, with many being grandparents of the children for whom they provide care. They are more likely to be in poor health. In this regard, Foster (2004: 6) indicated that in some cases grandparents, usually grandmothers, are more prone to taking in orphaned children. As these grandparents' age or experience deteriorating health, the situation in which the elderly provide child care is reversed and grandchildren end up caring for increasingly frail grandparents.

In many of the countries most affected by HIV/AIDS, social service and welfare agencies are the most understaffed and are underfunded parts of the government, and the safety net for impoverished and stressed families is nearly nonexistent (Hunter and Williamson 2002:12). Similarly, Demmer (2004:40) pointed out that the South African social welfare system is unable to adequately meet the basic needs of the infected and affected. Thiele (2005:6) concurs with Demmer (2004) by saying that in the South African context, the current social service system cannot cope with the large number of children who are in need of care and support as a result of HIV and AIDS. Demmer (2004) further stated that social workers can become overwhelmed by the plight of individuals and families affected by AIDS and they may experience frustration themselves at not being able to do more for them.

As the researcher was a social worker herself, she too was faced with the challenge of a heavy foster care caseload, which left one with no option other than to use a "quick fix" method of placing orphan children in kinship foster care although not preparing them adequately. Thus social workers are trapped in having to place orphans in kinship foster care, without an adequate opportunity to explore the feelings and experiences of being in a child-headed household (Thiele, 2005:15). In the study conducted by Nziyane (2010:269-271) at Bushbuckridge, social workers who participated in the study confirmed that orphaned children are not properly screened due to the backlog of foster care cases and furthermore indicated that there is pressure exerted by social workers' supervisors to reach certain target

numbers in a month. In this regard, it seems as if the quantity and not the quality of foster care placement determine the performance standard of the social workers involved.

From the description of the study's topic outlined above, it is evident that one cannot run away from the reality that the HIV/AIDS pandemic is the main contributory factor to the emerging child-headed household phenomenon. It also emerges that children heading households experience difficulties in the various areas of their social functioning. Various alternative forms of care were explored as an intervention strategy to address the placement of orphaned children without them being involved in the placement process. MacLellan (2005:8) affirmed this by saying that children are often dismissed as if they have no rights in their own society, thus making them feel voiceless and powerless to change their fate. The need for actively investigating the experiences and expectations of children who were in charge of the household but are now integrated in kinship foster care will be crucial in this research study.

The present researcher argues that the success of foster care placement for any foster child is not solely determined by the nature of the foster or institutional care the child is placed in, but basically by the efficiency of the preparation done to orphan children by the significant people such as the social workers, relatives, home-based caregivers, community forums and other relevant organizations. According to the on-line manuals presented by the Department of Health and Human Services in North Carolina, recognizing that the act of separating a child from his/her parents and home is a traumatic event implies that preparing the child for this event is crucial. The manual further goes on to say that ideally, the child should have a period of preparation for placement in order to have time and opportunity to understand the new situation.

As argued in the above statement, the importance of adequate preparation of an orphan child who was previously in charge of a household prior to placement plays a major contributory role in the success of the placement. Hence, the researcher developed an interest in wanting to understand the experiences of orphan children who were previously in charge of a child-headed household with regard to the preparatory process before the placement and the subsequent placement under kinship foster care.

### **1.1.2. Reasons/Rationale for research**

Placement of orphan children in kinship foster care has been a response to the rapid growth in the number of orphan children due to HIV/AIDS. This alarming increase in the number of orphans poses a serious challenge to social workers. This kind of situation has led to a quick-fix solution of placing children under the care of the next of kin, since prospective foster parents are easily accessible and it is a legitimate procedure of accessing foster care grants as a means for their survival. According to Whitaker (1996:63), social workers often render superficial service; they do not have time to do “in-depth” counselling. Consequently problems in foster care are left far too late and often lead to a breakdown of the placement or removal of a child. On the other hand, supporting and supervising placements poses problems for social workers. Rakitla (2003:19) confirmed this by saying that social workers are often unable to carry out the supervisory role more effectively due to high caseloads, and staff turnover as well as long waiting lists of applications for foster care. It has been the researcher’s experience that, due to high caseloads, very little time is spent on exploring more of the experiences of orphan children for preparation and placement in kinship foster care.

Harber (1998:23) indicated that assistance should not only focus on survival, but also on the psychological, educational and moral aspects of deprivation. For this to be possible, an understanding of the experiences of orphaned children is necessary. Based on the said premise, it is evident that kinship foster care is being used as a safety net for addressing the growing number of foster children due to HIV/AIDS. However; social workers’ intervention strategies are also minimal in that the placement process does not address the total well-being of the orphan foster child.

In this regard, several conflict-inducing situations between kin foster parents and foster children have been reported to social workers. The relationship breakdown between foster families and the foster child is highlighted by Singer and Okmar (2004:582) who show that children and foster families display many and varied reactions to foster care placement. A foster child who becomes extremely afraid of rejection by someone he or she loves will often try to avoid anticipated further rejection by keeping everybody at an emotional distance (York & Sandell 2004:52). Similarly, James (2000:49) asserted that children who enter the foster care system at an older age are more likely to display behavioural problems than those who enter foster care at a young age.



Thus, from the researcher's experience in working in the field of "Orphans and Vulnerable Children" it seems as if research studies on foster care placement have been mainly conducted on the plight faced by orphan children in child-headed households and in kinship foster care, but little, if not nothing, is being done about engaging the child-headed households in the transactional process of integrating them into extended families. It is with this notion that the researcher developed an interest in wanting to understand the experiences of orphan children who were previously in charge of child-headed households with regard to the preparatory process before their subsequent placement under kinship foster care.

It is therefore of importance to explore and describe the transactional process of integrating orphaned children previously in charge of a child-headed household with their extended families in kinship foster care in relation to their previous experiences of being in charge of a child-headed household and their experiences in kinship foster care. Of special importance is the preparation for and process followed for removing them from the child-headed household and placing them in kinship foster care. It will be important to understand the strengths and assets of the whole client system in order to respond intelligently to the needs of the situation (Mkhize 2006).

## **1.2. The research question, goal and objectives**

In this section the research questions as well as the primary goal and objectives for the research will be discussed.

### **1.2.1. The research question**

In qualitative research, research questions instead of hypotheses are used to "identify the initial focus of the inquiry" (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson 2002:723). According to Alston and Bowles (2003:51) qualitative researchers should not begin their studies with "empty heads" but rather with some initial ideas of the direction the research should take. A research question can be defined as: "...concerned with a single variable or with the relationship between two variables" and, regarding quality: "...a good research question is one that can be answered by collecting data and whose answer cannot be foreseen prior to the collection of data" (De Vos 1998:116).

With reference to the above explanation, the formulation of a research question will in the present case be relevant as the study is qualitative and exploratory. The research question may be summarized as shown below:

What are the experiences and expectations of orphaned children who were previously in charge of child-headed households about their preparation and placement process in kinship foster care?

### **1.2.2. The goal of the study**

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2005:104) indicated that terms “goal”, “purpose” and “aim” are used interchangeably as synonyms for one another. Their meaning implies the broader, more abstract conception of “the end toward which effort or ambition is directed”. A goal helps researchers to determine why they want to do the particular research study and what they intend to accomplish at the end of the study (Creswell, 2003:87).

The goal of the present study was:

To develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences and expectations of orphans of the process of being placed in kinship foster care after having been in charge of a child-headed household.

### **1.2.3. The objectives of the study**

Babbie (2007:114) indicated that an objective tells researchers what exactly needs to be investigated in practical terms. An objective serves as a means to achieve the aim or goal of the study. According to Rubin and Babbie (1995:116), objectives need to be narrow and specific, answerable by observable evidence, and feasible to investigate and answer whilst Fouche and De Vos (in De Vos et al 2005:104) maintain that objective involves the steps a researcher has to take, one by one, realistically at grassroots level, within a certain time-span, in order to attain the goal or dream of the research project.

In order to attain the aforementioned aim the following objectives are stated:

- To obtain a sample of orphans previously in charge of child-headed households who are now integrated into kinship foster care.
- To conduct semi-structured interviews to explore the following:
  - the experiences of orphaned children now placed in kinship foster care about previously being in charge of a child-headed household
  - the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of a child-headed household about the process of placement into kinship foster care
  - the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of a child-headed household about being in kinship foster care.
- To sift, sort and analyse the data obtained according to the eight steps of qualitative data analysis constructed by Tesch (in Creswell 2009:186).
- To subsequently describe
  - the experiences of orphaned children now placed in kinship foster care about previously being in charge of a child-headed household
  - the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of a child-headed household about the process of placement into kinship foster care
  - the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of a child-headed household about being in kinship foster care.
- To interpret and analyse the data and conduct a literature control in order to verify data.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations informing social workers regarding social work interventions about the experiences and expectations of children who were previously in charge of child-headed households and are now in kinship foster care.

### **1.3. Research Methodology**

Under this heading the following will be presented: The research approach, research design, population, sampling and sampling techniques, methods of data collection, and the analysis and verification of the data obtained.

#### **1.3.1. Research Approach**

A qualitative approach will be followed, as the researcher is of the opinion that qualitative research is best suited to explore matters such as a child-headed household's experiences and interactions. Silverman (2005:6) concurs and postulates that when the purpose of the research is to explore people's everyday behaviour, a qualitative method is best suited. According to Fossey et al (2002:717), qualitative research is a broad umbrella term for research methodologies that explore, describe and explain persons' experiences, behaviours, interactions and social contexts without the use of statistical procedures or quantification, whilst quantitative research aims to measure the social world objectively, to test hypotheses and to predict and control human behaviour. This is confirmed by Donalek and Soldwisch (2004:356) who state that the qualitative researcher seeks to gain in-depth understanding of a phenomenon under study from the participants' point of view because the participants are experts in their experiential worlds and are able to articulate and describe their experiences and feelings until the researcher has attained full understanding of the phenomenon or part of the phenomenon.

Based on the aforesaid explanations, the researcher is of the opinion that qualitative research is holistic and aims mainly to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life. The researcher therefore applied qualitative research methods for the study as she intended to explore and describe the experiences of orphans who were in charge of a child-headed household and who were subsequently placed in kinship foster care about the preparation for placement in the foster care situation, and about their kinship foster care placement.

With reference to the above explanation, it is evident that a qualitative research approach is characterized by the following elements as outlined by Creswell (2009:175-176), Fossey et al

(2002:727), Meadows (2003:464-465) and Donalek and Soldwisch (2004: 353-356) which were applied in the research study as indicated:

- A qualitative researcher sees data as meaningful when understood within the context and environment in which research participants operate or live, rather than in an experimental setting. It is therefore of fundamental importance for the researcher to create an enabling environment for both researchers and research participants, in order to understand the meanings of human actions and experiences in relation to the phenomenon under investigation. For the purpose of the current study, the researcher sought to obtain an understanding of the meanings that the orphans who were in charge of child-headed households attach to their preparations for placement in kinship foster care and their subsequent placement in the foster care situation. In order for the researcher to create an enabling environment that allowed the participants to share their experiences and the meanings attached thereto, face-to-face interviews were utilised.
- Qualitative researchers use appropriate research participants that are affected by the phenomenon under investigation, as they will be able to describe their experiences of the phenomenon. The researcher used orphans as participants who were in charge of child-headed households and then had been placed under kinship foster care. Such participants were best able to describe their experiences of the topic under study.
- Qualitative research methods are explorative and descriptive in nature. According to Creswell (2009:145), the researcher is interested in process, meaning and understanding gained through words and/or pictures. The goal of the present study was to explore and describe the experiences of orphans who were in charge of a child-headed household and who were subsequently placed in kinship foster care, about their preparation for placement in such a foster care situation, and about the process of their kinship foster care placement. The frame of reference of the participant was thus of critical importance during the interviewing process.
- Qualitative research methods involve field work. The researcher sought to physically conduct visits to the homes of orphaned children placed in kinship foster care. By

doing so the researcher was afforded the opportunity of observing and recording the behaviour of participants in their natural setting.

In view of the above characteristics inherent in the qualitative approach, the researcher was of the opinion that this approach was best suited to realizing the goal of this study.

### **1.3.2. Research Design**

A research design depicts how the research study is to be conducted in order to fulfil the objectives (Rubin & Babbie 2005:656). Mouton (1998:107) defines research design as a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research problem. He further likens a research design to a route that a research should follow until the final product is researched. De Vos et al (2005:268) further assert that terms such as strategies, methods, traditions of inquiry and approaches are related to the term design. Similarly, Grinnell and Williams (1990:138) explain research design as a total plan used to aid in answering the research questions. In a plan decisions are made on what the research question should be, what data will be required, from whom the data will be obtained and what exactly is the best way in which to gather the data. The design is in this way likened to a plan that can be used when building a house. Builders use it as a map that guides them along every line and corner so that the structure is made purposeful and meaningful. With this map there is very little likelihood that one can go astray because in such a design, data are gathered methodologically and systematically and then analyzed in such a manner that the research question is answered.

Hence the researcher in this research project, sought to explore and describe the experiences of orphans who were in charge of child-headed households about their preparation for being placed in kinship foster care and their consequent placement in foster care, thus using the qualitative approach in an explorative, descriptive and contextual research design. The explorative, descriptive and contextual aspects of the research design entailed the following:

According to Grinnell (2001:29), “Exploratory research seeks to find out how people get along in the setting under question, what meanings they give to their actions, and what issues concern them”. Yegis and Weinbach (2002:106) indicated that researchers should first gather more knowledge about the phenomenon before they can embark on trying to understand it.

The researcher therefore used the exploratory design for the study. An explorative design was used as the study was conducted to explore the experiences of orphans who had been in charge of child-headed households about their preparation for being placed in kinship foster care and about their kinship foster care placement process.

A descriptive strategy of inquiry was also used as part of the research design for this study because it paints a picture of specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship (Neuman 2006: 34-36). This study sought to describe the experiences of orphans who had been in charge of child-headed households about their preparation for being placed in kinship foster care, and how they experienced the subsequent placement in kinship foster care.

Contextual studies seek to understand the social meaning and significance of an event or social action from the social context in which it appears (Neuman 2006:158). The researcher's intention was to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and expectations of orphaned children who had previously been in charge of the household within the context of their preparation for and subsequent placement in kinship foster care.

The researcher successfully identified the Bushbuckridge Municipality as the area of interest in conducting the research study. A letter that provided the intended dates for starting to conduct the study was sent to the Manager of the Department of Social Development (see Annexure 111). An interview guide was prepared in order to give the researcher an idea of the information that she was looking for in order to answer the research question. Research design includes aspects like deciding on where and when the research should be conducted, what information should be conducted and how the researcher would find the participants to include in the study (Yegidis & Weinbach 2002:106). These questions relate to the research population, sampling and sampling techniques which will be described below.

### **1.3.3. Population, sampling and sampling techniques**

Rubin and Babbie (2005:238) define the population as the theoretically specified aggregation of the study. On the other hand, the study population is defined as that aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected (Neuman 2006:196). Arkava and Lane (in De Vos et al., 2005:193) highlight the distinction between universe and population. *Universe* means "...all potential subjects who possess the attributes in which the researcher is

interested”, while *population* “...refers to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics”. In other words, a population is drawn from the universe as it has a narrower connotation regarding the specific and realistic characteristics that the researcher is interested in studying in order to answer the research questions formulated for the study (Yegidis & Weinbach 2002:180).

In this research study, the specified population is regarded as orphans previously in charge of child-headed households in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province, and now integrated into kinship foster care.

In any research it is impossible to study all the available elements of a population. Yegidis and Weinbach (2002:181) mentioned that time and resources usually do not allow researchers to study the whole population which is of interest to the researchers. Sampling is defined by Grinnell (2001:207) as a process of selecting participants from the population to take part in the research study in order to learn about the population from which the sample is drawn. Concurrently, Becker (in Silverman 2005:136) asserted that it is not feasible for researchers to study every case which is of interest to the researcher owing to time constraints and shortage of resources.

In drawing a sample from the population concerned, specific sampling techniques are followed. Certain sampling techniques allow the researcher to determine and/or control the likelihood of specific people being selected for study more than others. In the case of qualitative research, sampling occurs subsequent to establishing the circumstances of the study, with purposive sampling techniques used rather than random sampling (Denzin & Lincoln in De Vos et al., 2004:334).

Thus, for the purpose of this study, the purposive sampling method was decided upon because it is regarded as central to a naturalistic research. Social work sampling is often conducted in situations in which it is not feasible to select a probability sample, therefore, it could be appropriate to select the sample on the basis of the researcher’s knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research aims (Rubin & Babbie 2005:229). In this study, purposive sampling was used where the researcher was able to select only those child-headed households who had been in charge of the household and then placed in kinship foster care.



The criteria for inclusion in the sample for the proposed study were as follows:

- Orphan children, previously in charge of a child-headed household, and now integrated into kinship foster care through the legal system facilitated by social workers who are employed by the Department of Social Development at Bushbuckridge sub-district in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa.
- Male and female participants should both be included in the research study.
- They should be under 18 years of age in accordance with the Children's Amendment Act No 41 of 2007.
- Participants should be willing to take part in the research study.

In a descriptive qualitative research project, there are no stipulated rules on the size of the sample. Conventionally in qualitative research, sampling takes place until the point of saturation is reached.

#### **1.3.4. Method of data collection**

Data collection is defined by Neuman (2006:345) as a scientific manner of gathering data. Creswell asserted that the aim of data collection is to gather good information to answer the emerging research question.

##### *Preparation for data collection*

Initially, the researcher wrote a letter of request together with an attached specific proposal to the Department of Social Development in the Enhlazeni District, Mpumalanga Province. The rationale behind the whole process was to inform the management about the purpose of the research project, give a description of the research design, the resources required, and a clear description of the researcher's roles and responsibilities, as well as what would be required from the various groups (Devers & Frankel, 2000). More importantly the aim was to gain access to the participants as stated by Feldman, Bell and Berger (2003:38) that identification with the researcher, his or her intentions and the goal and value of the research are all important in gaining access as they have a major influence on whether a person will open or close the door. This is confirmed by Miller and Glassner (2004:127-128) who indicated that the way in which participants respond to a researcher is based on who the researcher is. The

researcher therefore considered meeting the management in person in order to elucidate and clarify some questions that might emanate from the proposal.

Donalek and Soldwisch (2004:354) stated that it is important for the researchers to create and maintain relationships with participants when conducting qualitative research to ensure that participants feel comfortable enough to share their stories which sometimes can be sensitive. This has been confirmed by Devers and Frankel (2000) who maintained that in qualitative research, knowing the participants and establishing rapport with them should precede data collection. The researcher therefore began the process of data collection for this study by conducting home visits to child-headed households who are now integrated with kin foster parents. The purpose of the visits was for the researcher to introduce herself and establish trust with the potential participants and their foster parents where applicable in the natural environment where they feel comfortable enough to explore and describe their life experiences.

The researcher explained the purpose and procedures of the research, discussed the information documented in the letter of request to conduct research study with the participants, and determined the willingness to participate in the research study (see Annexure 11). The ethical principles as outlined in this research study were explained to the participant's. The intention of tape-recording the interviews was brought to the attention of participants and permission obtained for this purpose. The researcher informed them about the team members who would have access to the tape recordings and the transcripts of the tape recorded interviews (i.e. the researcher, the person who checked the translations of transcripts from Xitsonga to English as well as the independent coder and the study supervisor). If they voluntarily decided to take part in the research, prospective participants were requested to sign the consent form, or the kin foster parent was requested to provide the necessary consent that the child concerned could participate in the study by signing the necessary consent form (see Annexure 1V).

Padget (1998:7) describes the following three methods of data collection that can be used in a qualitative study:

- Face-to-face interviews with a schedule.

- Participant observation.
- Review of documents.

In this study, face-to-face interviews with a schedule guide were used for children previously in charge of child-headed households and now placed in kinship foster care.

For the purpose of collecting data, the researcher employed semi-structured interviews aided by an interview guide. According to Fossey et al. (2002:727), qualitative research interviews enable participants to articulate stories of their lives in an interactional and conversational manner with the researcher to allow the researcher to gain understanding of their experiential and social worlds. These qualitative research interviews can be structured, unstructured or semi-structured. Alston and Bowles (2003:116) maintain that conducting semi-structured interviews can be a useful method for obtaining information in exploratory and descriptive designs where there is little knowledge on a research topic.

Semi-structured interviews fall between structured and unstructured interviews as they are usually conducted with the use of a schedule which allows the researcher to explore additional information which the participant has raised outside the interview schedule or interview guide. Greef (in De Vos et al., 2005:296-297) explains that having an interview guide beforehand forces the researcher to think explicitly about what the interview should cover to ensure that specific information required for the purpose of the research is collected. The semi-structured interviews conducted were digitally recorded and the participants' permission sought to do so.

As mentioned in the above discussion, the researcher made an effort to establish trust and build rapport with the participants. The researcher used open-ended questions when probing for clarity on what the participants articulated. According to Babbie (2007:246), open-ended questions are questions that allow the participants to provide their own answers to the question. They help people to fill in gaps in their stories with regard to their experiences, behaviours or feelings. Open-ended questions allow the researcher to use probes to encourage participants to provide more depth on the issue under study (Meadows 2003: 466).

In this research study, all interviews were conducted in the language of the participants, which is Xitsonga. Data were then translated from Xitsonga into English. Since the researcher is also a Tsonga-speaking person, an expert in translation was no longer needed as initially planned, but the researcher made an effort to translate what the participants articulated in their home language of Xitsonga into English. The researcher, with the consent of the participants, used a digital voice recorder and short-hand note-taking techniques to capture the information in order to ensure that all words articulated by participants were recorded. Fossey et al. (2002:728) assert that note-taking and digital voice-recording are useful when used together because they provide a holistic analysis of the information and give details of specific components of the interviews.

Each participant was asked to provide the following biographical information: Gender, age, present school grade, period of time heading the household and period of time in kinship foster care. This information was incorporated in the questionnaire (see annexure V).

In addition to the biographical information requested, the three sets of questions highlighted below were used as a guide in interviewing the orphans who were previously in charge of child-headed households and now integrated into kinship foster care:

- Questions on the experiences of being the head of a household

Tell me how was it for you to be in charge of a child-headed household.

What did you like about being in charge of a child-headed household?

What did you not like about being in charge of a child-headed household?

What was challenging about being in charge of a child-headed household?

What helped you to manage in the child-headed household?

- Questions on the experiences and expectations about the process of placement into kinship foster care.

Tell me about the change process from the child-headed household to the kinship foster care placement

How you were prepared for placement into kinship foster care?

What and who helped you cope with the change?

Would you have liked to have been prepared differently for the kinship foster care? If yes, explain...

- Questions on the experiences about being in the care of kin foster parents

How is it for you to be in kinship foster care?

What feelings did you experience about being placed in kinship foster care?

What do you like about kinship foster care?

What don't you like about kinship foster care?

How would you like to be supported in this kinship foster care situation?

What helped you to cope now in kinship foster care?

What advice can you give to others who are supposed to be placed in kinship foster care?

In this process of moving from a child-headed household to a kinship foster care placement

...what were your gains?

...what were your losses?

The researcher conducted a pilot interview beforehand to assess the effectiveness of the interview guide. In this regard Berg (2004:90) mentioned that once researchers have developed the instrument and are satisfied with the general wording and sequencing of questions, they must pretest the schedule.

She also applied the following interviewing techniques as acquired during the theoretical and practical orientation to the MA (SS) Mental Health study and as outlined also by Babbie (2007:245-268) and Meadows (2003: 456-466).

- Good appearance and demeanor. The researcher dressed in accordance with the acceptable standards of the participants in order to make participants feel comfortable to enable the researcher to get good cooperation and responses from them.

- Creating an enabling environment. The researcher created an atmosphere of trust and built rapport with participants to make them feel comfortable and share openly their personal experiences.
- Asking relevant questions. The researcher asked questions that are relevant to the study in order to achieve a productive outcome. The researcher asked questions that were clear, not too long and could be easily understood by participants. The researcher used probes to encourage participants to generate more information on a particular aspect being discussed.
- Empathy and advanced empathy as communication skills. Because the researcher was interviewing children who had lost both parents and experienced consecutive shifts of social functioning, she frequently tried to show empathy and advanced empathy. Empathy and advanced empathy do not just deal with emotions or feelings of people, but also with the person's experiential world, perceptions, needs, behaviour or understanding of a person as a whole. They may be useful as well to explore discrepancies and distortions of information during an interview.
- Listening and attending skills. The researcher listened attentively to what was being shared, attending to the shared message by paraphrasing on what had been said by the participants by using phrases such as: "Can I check if I heard you correctly...are you saying that...?"
- Verbal and non-verbal cues. Verbal and non-verbal cues were used by the researcher to encourage participants to speak openly, for instance nodding of head or leaning forward as a sign that the researcher was paying more attention to what was being said. People use both verbal and non-verbal communication to send their message across. The researcher therefore listened attentively to the words spoken by the participants on the one hand, while paying attention to the non-verbal behaviour such as facial expression, bodily language and voice-related behaviour.

### **1.3.5. Method of data analysis**

Marshall and Rossman (1999:150) define data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to the mass of collected data. In analyzing data, the desire is to transform them into meaningful findings. Similarly, Fossey et al (2002:728) define

qualitative data analysis as a process of reviewing, synthesizing and interpreting data to describe and explain the phenomena or social worlds being studied. Data analysis is aimed at seeking meanings which people attach to their life experiences. According to Alston and Bowles (2003:204-207), qualitative research is flexible in that during the data collection process, important emerging themes can be identified to allow the researcher to get more information on a particular aspect until such aspect becomes saturated and no more new information is generated. This was confirmed by De Vos (in De Vos et al., 2005:335) when they postulated that data analysis in qualitative research does not wait until the data collection process is complete as in quantitative research, but instead it starts during the data collection process.

For the purpose of analyzing the data in this study, the researcher followed the eight steps as proposed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009: 186) to analyze the data. This entails the following:

- The researcher reads all transcripts carefully in order to get a sense of the whole, while jotting down some ideas that may come to mind.
- She chooses one transcript which is the most interesting, shortest and the one on the top of the pile to read and tries to find an underlying meaning of what she is reading and write thoughts in the margin as they come.
- After several transcripts have been read, the researcher makes a list of all topics identified. The topics are clustered according to similarities marked as major topics, unique topics, and left-overs.
- The list of marked topics is converted into codes written next to the appropriate segments of the text. While using this preliminary organizing scheme, the researcher sees if new categories and codes are emerging.
- The researcher also finds the most descriptive wording for the topics and turns them into categories. Topics that are related to each other are grouped in order to reduce the total list of categories. Interrelationships between categories are shown by lines.
- She then makes a final decision on the abbreviation for each category.
- Material that belongs to each category is assembled in one place and a preliminary analysis is then performed. Once this process has been completed, the chapter in

which the research findings are presented (complemented by a literature control) is decided upon.

- Finally, she records the existing data if necessary.

The researcher also uses an independent coder in order to do a quality check of the analysis. Patton (2002:598) asserted that the aim of the independent coding is to help researchers to think critically about the thematic structure they are developing and the coding decisions they have made. Independent coder highlights where the researcher may have overlooked material that could enrich her interpretation.

### **1.3.6. Method of data verification**

According to Creswell (2003:196), data verification in qualitative research means a process of checking the accuracy and credibility of research findings from the standpoint of the researcher; verification for qualitative research differs from that of quantitative research because the nature and purpose of the two research methods are different as qualitative research seeks to describe accurately the experiences of the phenomenon in natural settings. Terms like reliability and validity in data verification are relative to the quantitative research methods, and in qualitative research, these terms are replaced by such terms as accuracy and credibility. Silverman (2005:209-210) concurs with Creswell (2003) that it is important that researchers should provide readers with an account of the procedures they used to conduct the research to ensure that the methods were credible and the findings of the research are accurate.

Guba's model of ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative data (in Krefting, 1991:214-222) comprises four characteristics, namely – the truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. These four characteristics were applied as follows in this research project for the purpose of data verification:

- Truth-value asks how confident the researcher is with the truth of the findings based on the research design, informants and the context in which the study was undertaken. It is concerned with whether the findings of the study are a true reflection of the experiences of the study participants (Krefting, 1991:214). This is termed credibility



which is established through a number of methodological strategies. In order to ensure that the findings are a true reflection of the participants' experience, the researcher used the following methodological credibility strategies:

- Interviewing technique. The researcher made use of various interviewing techniques during the interview, for example - tracking, empathizing, reframing, paradoxical interviewing, verbal and non-verbal expressions and summarizing in order to enhance the credibility of the study.
- Triangulation. The researcher employed the method of triangulation of data sources to compare data collected from different groups of participants, that is, children in charge of child-headed households. Triangulation is a strategy that seeks to establish the credibility of findings by comparing multiple perspectives for mutual confirmation of data (Krefting 1991:219). During triangulation data sources are compared to cross-check data and interpretation. Denzin (in Brewer, 2000: 75) explains that triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods, researchers or theoretical frameworks in order to extend the accuracy of data. In this study the researcher had only one group of participants who met one set of criteria, therefore having similarities.
- Peer examination. Krefting (1991:219) indicated that peer examination is a strategy that involves discussing the research process and findings with the researchers who are conversant and have experience with qualitative methods to share understanding and to debrief about problems that are encountered during the research process. The researcher consulted with other researchers who were also conducting qualitative research in order to share understanding about the research study and the challenges the researcher came across during the research process.
- Applicability

Applicability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or to other groups (Krefting 1991:216). In qualitative research, applicability does not necessarily seek to generalize findings to a larger population because the research is conducted in a natural setting of individuals with few controlling variables. Applicability is

thus established through the strategy of transferability or fitness. Transferability is achieved when the research findings fit into contexts other than that of the study situation but which have some degree of similarity. As far as applicability is concerned in the present study, the researcher provided background information on the research methodology followed in exploring the experiences of orphans in charge of child-headed household about their preparation and placement in kinship foster care. The researcher was of the opinion that doing so allowed others to check the transferability of the findings to a similar social phenomenon where orphans in charge of child-headed households were prepared for being placed in kinship foster care.

- Consistency

Krefting (1991:216) states that consistency is achieved when the study is replicated using the same participants or a similar context and still produces the same findings. In qualitative research, consistency is defined in terms of dependability. The researcher thus established the dependability of the results using two strategies. Firstly, the researcher provided a dense description of the exact research methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. Secondly, the researcher conducted a code-recode procedure during the data analysis phase. The researcher waited for at least two weeks and then recoded the same data and compared the results to assess consistency.

- Neutrality

Krefting (1991:216-217) indicates that neutrality refers to the extent to which the research procedures and findings are free from bias. In qualitative research, neutrality of the data is given more emphasis than neutrality of the researcher and is established through the strategy of confirmability. The researcher achieved this by establishing the truth value and applicability of the findings. The researcher made use of the promoter Dr Huma Louw's comments that provided guidance on the procedures employed and also ensured that the research methodologies and the findings were free from bias.

#### **1.4. Ethical Considerations**

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005:57), ethics is a set of moral principles that is suggested by an individual or group, subsequently widely accepted, and offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistance and students. As a social worker registered with the South African Council for the Social Services Profession (SACSSP), the researcher was obliged to take into account his/her personal and professional limitations, and not let such limitations impact on a principled service. According to the South African Council for the Social Services Profession, the code of conduct that concerns a client shall, inter alia, oblige a social service practitioner to:

- Recognise the uniqueness of each client;
- Maintain a professional relationship with the client;
- Acknowledge the right to self-determination of the client;
- Respect the client's right to decide whether or not to co-operate with the social services practitioner and
- Maintain the client's right of confidentiality.

This code of conduct must also applied when conducting research.

The following ethical considerations apply specifically to research in social work:

- Informed consent

Yegidis and Weinbach (2002:36) state that being informed means that participants should have a fairly clear understanding of what it means to them to participate in a particular study; whilst consent refers to a written agreement between the researcher and the participant to participate in a particular study. In ethical terms participants in this research project were approached about the study with an explanation of what the study was all about; how the information would be used and what was to be expected. No participant was forced to cooperate in the study, and when participants voluntarily gave their cooperation, written consent was obtained from them. The kin foster parents were also requested to sign consent

forms on behalf of the orphans who had headed households and were now placed under their care.

- Confidentiality

The researcher had to safeguard the privacy of participants as well as their identity by using pseudonyms in order to ensure their anonymity and avoid the tracing back to them of any information shared during the interview. It has been noted by Yegidis & Weinbach (2002:40) that data should be edited before dissemination of the findings to remove all names of participants and replace these with pseudo-names to ensure that there can be no association of data with any of the participants. Confidentiality of information was maintained by storing the recorded information in a locked safe place. The kept information was accessible only to the researcher, the person checking the translations of the transcripts from Xitsonga into English, as well as the independent coder and the study's supervisor. After all analysis, the original data was stored safely and on completion of the study it was destroyed. Mark (1996:48) outlined the following criteria to assist the researcher to maintain confidentiality:

- Information about participants has to be kept confidential, unless where participants gave written permission for it to be revealed.
- Information solicited and recorded could only be that which is necessary for that study to achieve its purpose.
- All participants' identifying particulars must be removed after coding.
- Transcribed interviews must be safely stored and then destroyed after the completion of the study.

- Debriefing

To minimize eventual emotional or psychological harm, debriefing of participants was done immediately by the researcher when accompanying emotions surfaced as a result of the interview.

### **1.5. Possible limitations of the study**

The study focused particularly on orphans who were previously in charge of child-headed households and were then placed in kinship foster care. The fact that this dissertation is of a limited scope also limited the study. More than one group of participants such as kin foster parents and social workers responsible for placement were supposed to form part of the participants in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences in regard to preparation and placement of orphaned children in kinship as experienced by them (kin foster parents and social workers). Thus the results of this study were limited by its small sample size and non-representativeness so that the findings could not be generalized. However, as the study was exploratory in nature, the results may demonstrate the need for future research to focus on this research topic.

### **1.6. Clarification of key concepts**

Rubin and Babbie (2005: 141) define conceptualization as the process of moving from vague ideas about what the researcher wants to study, to being able to recognize and measure what the researcher is studying. It involves refining and specifying abstract concepts and developing specific research procedures. The researcher would like to give an exposition of the following major concepts used in this study to clarify their general meaning as well as their operational meaning as used in the study.

- Experiences

Grobler, Schenck and Du Toit (2003:44) asserted that human beings have many different kinds of experiences and all of those experiences form part of the self and none can be ignored when trying to understand the self of a person. These specific experiences were further elaborated by Grobler et al (2003: 44) in a form of propositions as follows:

Proposition 1. This proposition maintains that every individual exists in a continually changing world of experiences, which is central, unique and personal. An observer cannot understand one's world of experiences unless told or brought to the picture by the person concerned. It is for this reason that the researcher held interviews with orphaned children previously in charge of child-headed households and now integrated into kinship foster care.

Proposition 2. In terms of proposition 2, perceptions of the world, like experiences, are also an individual matter. The implication is that the way a person perceives his world of experiences is unique, central and personal. In the process of interviewing the participants, the researcher respected the participants' perceptions of the topic under discussion, with the understanding that perceptions are unique. Thus the researcher guarded herself against imposing her own opinions on those of the participants.

Proposition 3. An individual's response to the experiential world is encompassed by various attributes, such as ideas, feelings, needs, behaviour and physical attributes. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will listen and attend to the participants in totality as an organized whole.

Proposition 5. This proposition addresses the needs and behaviour of the participants. It maintains that the individual behaves in a particular way because of meeting a specific need in order to become the self. In this regard the researcher analyzed and interpreted the data collected so as to understand the meanings that participants attached to their behaviour and their subsequent needs.

Proposition 6. Emotions are one of the elements of the total self, which accompany and facilitate the behaviour. The intensity of the emotions correlates with the importance an individual attaches to that behaviour in terms of self-preservation and self-enrichment. Some of the interviewing techniques highlighted in this research study, like empathy and advanced empathy reflected communication skills used to address emotions that surfaced during the interviews.

- Expectations

In terms of proposition 5, expectations are basically associated with individual needs that motivate specific behaviour. Child-headed households have ideas about what their needs are, and how best can they be met. The researcher listened and attended to the expectations of child-headed households from the various role-players in regard to placement in kinship foster care.

- Orphan

UNAIDS (2004) and UNICEF (2003) have stated that the internationally accepted definition of an orphan is a child under the age of 15 who has lost parents. In South Africa an orphan is defined as a child under the age of 18 years whose primary caregiver has died (Department of Social Development, 2003:33). For the purpose of this study, an orphan is defined as a child who is under the age of eighteen and has lost both parents, whether due to AIDS or for any other reasons.

A double-orphan is someone whose parents (mother and father) have both died.

- Child-headed household

A household is regarded “as a group of individuals who are sharing a residence and are involved in continuous and intense social interaction, which is based on loyalty and authority” (Mkhize 2006). A child-headed household is viewed as a situation in which children who have lost their parents are staying alone in the absence of an adult caregiver, and the elder child is taking adult responsibility for his /her siblings (*Child-headed household* 2008). Similarly, a child-headed household has been defined as a household that is led by a child under the age of 18 years. In such a household the child takes over the responsibilities usually carried out by parents, including providing care to other children (*Child-headed household* 2010)

In South Africa, the Children’s Amendment Act (Act 41 of 2007) stipulates that a child-headed household is recognized if:

- a parent or caregiver responsible for the household has died or is terminally ill,
- an adult family member is unavailable to provide care and protection for the children in the household, and
- the child under the age of 18 years has assumed the role of a caregiver in respect of a child in the household.

According to the Children’s Amendment Act (Act 41 of 2007), a child heading a household is legally allowed to make day-to-day decisions relating to the household as if the child were an

adult caregiver as well as receiving a social grant on behalf of the household if the child is 16 years old. However, the child should continue to enjoy the other rights of the child as he/she will need continued support. A child-headed household in the context of this study is a unit comprised of siblings who are under the age of 18, who have lost both parents, where a child was in charge of the household which is now integrated into kin foster parent care. The absence of a parental subsystem is the main feature of such a house.

- Kinship Foster Care

Kinship foster care is defined as the placement of a child with relatives (Blatt 2000:7). According to Gleeson, O'Donnell and Bonecutter (in Thiele 2005:9), kinship foster care refers to the placement of children in state custody with their relatives. For the purpose of this research study, kinship foster care can be defined as the placement of orphan children under the care of a relative through a legal court order as determined by the commissioner of the children's court. Makoni (2006:26) indicated that the extended family comprises grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins from both one's family of origin as well as in-laws.

- Foster Care

Foster care is defined by Herbst and Muller (2001:1) as "...statutory substitute care within a family circle for children who cannot be cared for by their own parents in a short, medium or long term, while services to the parents are continued in order to return the children to their care within a specific period". Foster care is based on the premise that a family provides the best environment for the development of a child. The Department of Social Development (2003: 20) defines foster care as the care of a child of another parent. It is considered to be the most widely utilized form of substitute care in the world, and foster care by family members (kinship foster care) is the most common form of fostering in Africa (Harber1998:159). In terms of the Children's Amendment Act (Act 108 of 2007) (2007:section 180) a child is in foster care if the child has been placed in the care of a person who is not the parent or guardian of the child as a result of an order of a children's court.



- Preparation

According to the Free Online Dictionary, (Thesaurus 2010:s.v. “preparation”), “preparation” refers to the state of having been made ready or prepared for use or action. For the purpose of this research study, preparation refers to the process whereby the social worker makes provision for a time of preparing the child mentally and physically for placement in order for the child to understand the new setting.

- Children in charge of child-headed households

The concept of being “in charge” refers to someone who is entrusted with a task or responsibility for care or control (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2010: s.v. “in-charge”). Children in charge of a child-headed household are children whose parents have died and the elder child who is younger than 18 years has taken over adult responsibilities by providing leadership and ensuring sustenance for the household without the supervision and guidance of an adult person.

### **1.7. Outline of the research report**

The research report consists of four chapters:

In Chapter 1 the introduction, background to the problem, problem statement, rationale for the study, research questions, goal and objectives, research approach and design, ethical considerations, limitations of the research, clarification of key concepts, and the content plan of the research report are provided.

Chapter 2 focuses on the researcher’s application of the qualitative research process.

In Chapter 3 the research findings are presented and discussed and also compared and contrasted with existing literature related topics (i.e. a literature control is undertaken).

Chapter 4 provides a summary of the research report and outlines the overall conclusions and recommendations.

## **1.8. Dissemination of research results**

The research findings are being disseminated in the form of a treatise for assessment purposes and to inform those who assisted with the research and the authorities in the Department of Health and Social Services in Bushbuckridge who gave the researcher permission to conduct research in the Department. An article is also being prepared and submitted for review and possible publication in a professional journal.

## CHAPTER 2

### A DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

#### 2.1. Introduction

In Chapter 1 of the research report the researcher provided a research plan outlining the research methodology she proposed to use for investigating the topic under discussion. Since the goal of this research study was to develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences and expectations of orphans of the process of being placed in kinship foster care after having been in charge of a child-headed household, in this chapter of the report a description of the research methodology used will be provided regarding how the qualitative research process was applied in the process of collecting data.

#### 2.2. The research question

Alston and Bowles (2003:51) explained that qualitative researchers should not begin their studies with “empty heads” but rather with some initial ideas about the direction in which the research should take place. It is on the basis of this notion that the researcher formulated a research question as follows:

“What are the experiences and expectations of orphaned children who were previously in charge of child-headed households about their preparation and the process of placement in kinship foster care?”

This research question provided the researcher with an idea of how to formulate the research goal and objectives that determined the accomplishment of that goal.

### 2.3. Goal and Objective of the Study

The intended goal of this study was to develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences and expectations of orphans regarding the process being placed in kinship foster care after having been in charge of a child-headed household. This is in agreement with Creswell (2003:87) that a goal helps researchers to determine why they want to do the research study and what they intend to accomplish at the end of the study. According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2005:104), the terms “goal”, “purpose” and “aim” are used interchangeably as synonyms for one another. Their meaning implies a broader, more abstract conception of “the end toward which effort or ambition is directed”.

With the objectives of the study in mind the researcher adopted the following process:

- Through the approval by the Manager of Social Development at Bushbuckridge Sub-District, Mrs D D T Mathebula, and the assistance she received from the two local Home Based Care institutions, i.e. Wisani and Nhlengelo, the researcher successfully obtained a sample of six orphans who had previously been in charge of child-headed households and had now been placed in kinship foster care.
- The researcher conducted the semi-structured interviews that enabled her to explore
  - the experiences of orphaned children now placed in kinship foster care about previously being in charge of a child-headed household
  - the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of a child-headed household about the process of their placement into kinship foster care
  - the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of a child-headed household about being in kinship foster care.
- She sifted, sorted and analysed the data obtained according to the eight steps of qualitative data analysis constructed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009:186).

- Subsequently the researcher described
  - the experiences of orphaned children now placed in kinship foster care about previously being in charge of a child-headed household
  - the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of a child-headed household about the process of their placement into kinship foster care
  - the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of a child-headed household about being in kinship foster care.
  
- The researcher interpreted and analysed the data, findings were contrasted with the existing theories and previous literature in order to establish the credibility and the trustworthiness of the study.
  
- Finally the researcher drew conclusions about the findings of this study and made recommendations for social workers, qualitative researchers and other role-players who engage themselves with orphaned children in charge of child-headed households about their experiences and expectations regarding the process of placement in kinship foster care.

## **2.4. Research Methodology Applied**

The research methods applied when conducting this study concerned the research approach, research design, population, sampling and sampling techniques, methods of data collection, analysis and verification of the data obtained.

### **2.4.1. Research Approach**

As indicated in Chapter 1 and in the introduction to this chapter, the researcher was of the opinion that qualitative research is holistic and aims mainly at understanding social life and meanings that people attach to their life experiences as explained by Silverman (2005:6). Hence the researcher visited the participants' homes and conducted interviews with open-

ended questions in order to allow them (participants) to share openly their experiences. The researcher also had an opportunity of making follow-ups in order to gain clarity on some matters that were under discussion. Donalek and Soldwisch (2004:356) asserted that a qualitative researcher seeks in-depth understanding of a phenomenon under study from the participants' point of view because participants are experts in their experiential worlds and are able to articulate and describe their experiences and feelings until the researcher has attained a full understanding of the phenomenon or part of the phenomenon.

The qualitative research approach used by the researcher was very effective in that participants opened up in sharing about their experiences in regard to the research topic under investigation, and the researcher managed to gain an in-depth understanding of what the orphaned children had experienced and expected with regard to preparation and subsequent placement in kinship foster care.

#### **2.4.2. Research Design**

Research design has been discussed at length in Chapter 1 section 3.2. In this study the researcher used an explorative, descriptive and contextual research design. The research was exploratory in that it sought to find out how orphaned children who were previously in charge of child-headed households and now legally placed in kinship foster care experienced the placement process and how they were getting along in this setting, their meanings and issues of concern. According to Grinnell (2001:29), exploratory research seeks to find out how people get along in the setting under question, what meanings they give to their actions, and what issues concern them. Neuman (2006:33-34) stated that the primary purpose of using an exploratory design is when researchers seek to examine a new topic or phenomenon where little is known in order to generate more precise research questions for future research. In view of the fact that little has been known about the experiences and expectations of orphans who were previously in charge of child-headed households about the preparation process and subsequent placement in kinship foster care, the exploratory mode of inquiry was relevant to be used for the attainment of the goal of this research study.

The descriptive strategy was also used as part of the research design to achieve the purpose of the study. Neuman (2006:34-35) stated that descriptive design paints a picture of specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship. For this study, the descriptive design was

employed in order to present and describe specific details pertaining to the experiences and expectations of orphaned children placed in kinship foster care as from the period of heading child-headed households prior to the death of parent(s) up to the process of being placed in kinship foster care. While exploratory design focuses on answering the “what” question, descriptive design focuses on answering questions such as “who”, “when”, “where” and “how” (Neuman 2006:35).

The researcher was taking into account the context in which participants were relating their experiences and expectations about previously heading the child-headed household and the subsequent placement in kinship foster care. During the interview process the researcher listened to their experiences and meanings attached in relation to the “self”, significant others such as kin foster parents, social workers, religious leaders and home-based caregivers. Neuman (2006: 158) explains that a contextual research design is used in a qualitative research study to understand the social meaning and significance of an event or social action from the social context in which it appears. This research study’s focal point was on the experiences and expectations of orphaned children previously heading households and now placed in kinship foster about their preparation and subsequent placement in kinship foster care, however the researcher also took into account the importance of understanding the participants’ experiences from the period when they started to head child-headed families (i.e. their context) up to their current experiences (i.e. being in kinship foster care) (see Chapter 3).

As part of the research design, a researcher must find answers to questions such as: Where and when should the research be conducted? What information should be collected? From whom should it be obtained in the best way? How will the researcher find participants to include in this study (Yegidis & Weinbach 1996:89). These questions relate to the research population, sampling and sampling techniques as will be presented in the next sub-section.

In the light of the information alluded to under this section 2.2, the researcher draws the conclusion that the research approach and the design used in this study were effectively applied in that participants provided in-depth information on how they experienced their preparation and placement process in kinship foster care, their meanings and issues of concern associated with that placement process.

### **2.4.3. Population, sampling and sampling technique**

In this section, the population from which a sample was drawn for inclusion in the study as well as the techniques used to draw the sample will be presented.

- Population

In this research study, the specified population considered was all orphaned children who were previously in charge of child-headed households at Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province, now legally placed in kinship foster care (see Annexure 1 for the map of Bushbuckridge) in accordance with Arkava and Lane's view (in De Vos et al 2005:193) that a population refers to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics. The researcher had worked at Bushbuckridge Municipality as a social worker for a period of about ten years, which explains the reason for her to choose orphaned children in Bushbuckridge Municipality as her population of interest for the purpose of this study. It was therefore easier for her to obtain a buy-in from the Department of Social Development management and from the two identified Home-Based Care organizations.

- Sampling and sampling techniques

Grinnell (2001:207) defined sampling as a process of selecting participants from the population to take part in the research study in order to learn about the population from which the sample is drawn. Yegis and Weinbach (2002: 181) indicated that time and resources usually do not allow researchers to study the whole population which is of interest to them. Similarly, Becker (in Silverman 2005:136) asserted that it is not feasible for researchers to study every case which is of interest owing to time constraints and shortage of resources.

In drawing a sample from orphaned children previously in charge of child-headed households in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province, and now placed in kinship foster care, the researcher has experienced that social workers could not identify exactly which potential participants could meet the criteria for inclusion in the research study. The researcher was then referred to two Home-Based Care organizations within the Bushbuckridge Municipality by the social worker who was based in that area. She then made an appointment



telephonically with the managers of Nhlengelo and Wisani Home-Based Care institutions. The researcher met the two managers to introduce herself and explain the rationale behind the visit. The researcher was known to these managers as she had worked in partnership with them during her time as a social worker. This long standing relationship made it easier for her to be allocated one home-based carer from each organization to accompany her to the identified orphans who had previously headed households and were now placed in kinship foster care.

The researcher adopted the purposive sampling technique to select purposely the participants for inclusion in the sample through the help of the two assigned care-givers, one from Wisani and the other from Nhlengelo Home-Based Care Organization. These Home-Based Care Organizations are located in two different villages within the Bushbuckridge area, about 30 kilometres apart from each other. Three participants were selected from each home-based care organization and home-based care-givers were assigned to assist the researcher in physically identifying the homes of potential participants for the purpose of this study. However; it was discovered by the researcher when she personally meet with the identified potential participants that some of them did not in fact meet the criteria for inclusion in this study, for example, they were still on the waiting list to be considered for placement, others were already staying with their extended families but had not been legally placed through the process of foster care placement. In this regard the researcher found it appropriate to select the sample on the basis of her knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research aim (Rubin & Babbie 2005:229). The criteria for inclusion in the sample for this research study were done as explained in Chapter 1, section 1.3.3 of this study.

In screening the participants for inclusion in this study, the researcher experienced a challenge of the need for listening and attending to all the identified orphaned children by the care givers before selecting them for the purpose of inclusion in this study. As stated in the previous chapter of this study that the researcher is a social worker and she was caught up in a situation of listening and attending to the feelings of all the orphaned children and thus she had to advise those children who did not meet the criteria of inclusion for the purpose of this study to visit the social work service centres where they could find the necessary help.

The researcher concludes that the population from which she drew her sample was characterized by all the orphaned children who had lost parents, where some had been placed

in kinship foster care, but some had not yet been placed. The researcher used her expertise to draw the sample that met the criteria of inclusion in this study from that given population of orphaned children.

After the researcher was convinced that the screened participants were the ones relevant for the purpose of this study, she proceeded with the process of collecting data.

#### **2.4.4. Data collection**

Creswell (2007:15) has indicated that the aim of data collection is to gather good information to answer emerging research questions. In gathering good information for the study, the researcher first prepared for data collection with the Department of Social Development in Bushbuckridge Municipality where a pilot study and the actual research study were conducted. She also made an effort to prepare the participants for the interviews.

- Preparation for data collection

The researcher submitted a letter of request together with the attached proposal to the Department of Social Development in Enhlazeni District. Since the study was to be conducted at the municipality level, the researcher was told that her letter of request to conduct research had been transferred to the attention of the manager of the Department of Social Development in the Bushbuckridge Municipality. The researcher then called telephonically the relevant manager to make a follow-up to her request. The Manager of the Department of Social Development at Bushbuckridge requested a written indication of when the research study would be conducted. The researcher gave a written indication to the Manager of Social Development at Bushbuckridge Municipality (see Annexure 11) and she was granted written approval for conducting the research study (see Annexure 111).

The researcher secured a date for a meeting with the manager of social workers. The rationale behind the whole process was to inform the management about the purpose of the research project, with a description of the research design, resources required, the researcher's role and responsibilities, as well as what would be required of the various groups (Devers & Frankel 2000). More importantly, the aim was to gain access to the participants. The researcher met in person with the manager of social work services in order to elicit and clarify any questions

that might arise from the proposal. Feldman et al (2003: vii) assert that access is a critical part of conducting qualitative research as it is more than just to “get in” in order to collect information but is a process which affects how the information required for the research will be provided to the researcher. In other words, access is not a once-off thing but a process of entering the study area, and building relationships with individuals who have the information required throughout the period of the study and sometimes beyond the researcher’s exit from the study area.

Gaining access is a relational process in that there are people or a person behind each door who can either open (i.e. allow you entrance) or close the door (i.e. refuse entrance). For the door to be opened requires that the researcher should convince the person behind the door to open it wide and allow the researcher to stay for a while. Feldman et al (2003: 38) explain that identification with the researcher, his or her intentions and the goal and value of the research are all important in gaining access as they have a major influence on whether a person will open or close the door. When people identify positively with the researcher, it is more likely that they will open their doors to allow access for the researcher. This is confirmed by Miller and Glassner (2004: 127-128) who postulate that the way in which participants respond to a researcher is based on who the researcher is. Aspects related to identity include the researcher’s previous or current profession, geographical affiliation, gender, class or race.

In this research study, a pilot study was conducted in Bushbuckridge where the actual study was to be conducted as indicated in Chapter 1, section 3.4 of this study. Berg (2004:90) mentioned that once researchers have developed the instrument and are satisfied with the general wording and sequencing of questions, they must pretest the schedule. It is based on this idea that the researcher used the guide to interview an orphan who was previously in charge of a child-headed household and was now integrated in kinship foster care. The researcher was assisted by Professor A H Alpaslan to develop the interview guide when developing her research proposal.

The researcher selected one participant from the six identified participants. The participant was chosen for piloting because she was staying nearer to the home-based care centre, thus it was convenient for the researcher to enlist her for the purpose of piloting the study. The

interview guide was effective in that it assisted the researcher to be focused on questions that aimed at generating information to answer the research question in this study.

The researcher used the same criteria of inclusion in the study as outlined in Chapter 1, section 3.3. The researcher applied the same research methods for the actual data collection process as outlined in Chapter 1, section 3.4 that is, conducting home visit for the researcher to introduce herself and establish trust with the potential participant and foster parent where applicable. This was in agreement with Donalek and Soldwisch (2004:354) that it is important for the researchers to create and maintain relationships with participants when conducting qualitative research to ensure that participants feel comfortable in sharing their stories which sometimes can be sensitive.

Devers and Frankel (2000) confirmed as well that in qualitative research, knowing the participants and establishing rapport with them should precede data collection. The researcher used the face-to-face interview with the aid of a schedule guide, the use of a digital voice recorder and note-taking accompanied by confidentiality in the process of collecting data.

- Preparing participants for the interview

Two contacts were made with two participants and one contact with each of the other four participants at their respective homes. The first contact was aimed at preparing the participants. The focus was on establishing the rapport with the potential participants and determining their willingness to participate in the research study. With the other four participants, building the rapport and collecting of data occurred simultaneously.

The home-based carers made the task much easier for the researcher because they had already prepared the potential participants for the researcher's visits. On the researcher's arrival at the participants' respective homes, the participants were all ready to take part in the research study. A private room to conduct interviews was offered by all participants at the request of the researcher and the researcher made it known even to the caregivers who accompanied her that the interview would be conducted between the researcher and the participant in order to safeguard the principle of confidentiality as indicated in Chapter 1, section 4 of this study. It was only when conducting an interview with the last participant, Tinyiko (not her real name), that her younger sister came in loaded with fire wood on her head, after dropping the wood off she opened the door of the interview room, approached the researcher, knelt down and

greeted her by hand shaking. The interview came to an abrupt halt and the researcher gave attention to the young girl. The girl then left the researcher and the participant to proceed with the interview (see Annexure V11)

One participant requested to be interviewed at school. On arrival, the researcher was referred to the social responsibility teacher, and then to the principal to whom she explained the purpose of the visit and that the child requested to be interviewed at school. The researcher also showed the school principal the letter of approval from the Department of Social Development that granted her a permission to conduct the research study, and the consent form signed by the participant's grandmother during the initial visit to the participant's home. A private office was provided and the participant was called and asked if he knew the researcher. After the participant's confirmation, the researcher before, the researcher and the participant were left alone to start with the interview.

The researcher introduced herself again and explained to the participants the purpose of the research study and the fact that participation was voluntary. The researcher also explained the principle of confidentiality and the use of a digital voice recorder to capture information to be used for the purpose of the study only. All participants voluntarily opted to take part in the research study and the proposal of capturing the information through the use of voice recorder was also accepted by all. She then explained the written consent forms to the participants and after verbal agreements made by the participants, they were requested to sign them (see Annexure v).

- Method of data collection

The researcher selected the semi-structured interview as a method of collecting data from the participants. Denzin and Lincoln (2005:643) define the concept "interview" as a conversation – the art of asking questions and listening. Fossey et al (2002:727) concur that the qualitative research interview enables participants to articulate stories of their lives in an interactional and conventional manner with the researcher to allow the researcher to gain understanding of the participants' experiential and social worlds. It is with this notion in mind that the researcher visited the participants' homes (and school in the case of one participant) in order to gather data through face-to-face interactive methods, where the questions asked were

open-ended. The researcher also had an opportunity of listening to the participants' verbal messages and observes also the non-verbal messages.

The use of open-ended questions when probing for clarity on what the participant have articulated was experienced as most effective in that it encouraged participants to provide enriched information relevant to the research question of this study. According to Babbie (2007:246), open-ended questions are questions that allow the participants to provide their own answers to the question. The use of open-ended questions by the researcher allowed the participants to fill in gaps in their stories with regard to their experiences, behaviours, expectations or feelings. Open-ended questions allow the researcher to use probes to encourage participants to provide more depth on the issue under study (Meadows 2003: 466).

Semi-structured interviews aided by an interview guide were preferred by the researcher as they allowed her to explore additional information which participants raised outside the interview schedule (De Vos et al 2005:296-297). Alston and Bowles (2003:116) have maintained that conducting semi-structured interviews can be a useful method for obtaining information in exploratory and descriptive designs where there is little knowledge on a research topic. This implies that the semi-structured interview was used specifically to break new ground as little is known about the experiences and expectations of orphan children who were in charge of a child-headed household and are now placed in kinship foster care, about the process of placement into kinship foster care. Greeff (in De Vos et al 2005:296-297) asserted that having an interview guide beforehand forces the researcher to think explicitly about what the interview should cover to ensure that specific information required for the purpose of the research is collected.

The digital voice recorder was used, with the consent of the participants, in order to ensure that all words articulated by participants were captured. Note-taking was used minimally to capture important aspects that needed to be explored further. The importance of using a digital voice recorder and shorthand noting was affirmed by Fossey et al (2002:728) that note-taking and digital voice-recording are useful when used together because they provide a holistic analysis of the information and give details in specific components of the interviews.

The three sets of open-ended questions mentioned in chapter 1, were used to collect data.

The researcher experienced that the questions were effective in collecting the data to answer the research question, even though some were not answered in detail, more specifically the questions based on the experiences and expectations of orphaned children in kinship foster care about the preparation for and the process of placement into kinship foster care (i.e. theme 3 of Chapter 3). Although participants had perceptions about how they should have been prepared and placed in kinship foster care, they had no information about the legislation and policies that are applicable to foster care placement. The researcher is therefore of the opinion that prior knowledge about relevant prescriptions would have enabled participants to provide the detailed information that is necessary for the attainment of the goal of this study.

The researcher applied the same interviewing techniques as reflected in Chapter 1, section 1.3.4 to collect data from participants.

#### **2.4.5. Analysing and interpreting the data**

- Data Analysis

The researcher reviewed, synthesized and interpreted the collected data with the intention of describing and explaining the experiences and expectations of orphaned children previously in charge of child-headed households and now placed in kinship foster care about their preparation and subsequent placement in kinship foster care (Fossey et al 2002:728). Alston and Bowles (2003:204-207) asserted that qualitative research is flexible in that during the data collection process, important emerging themes can be identified to allow the researcher to get more information on a particular aspect until such aspect becomes saturated. This has been confirmed by De Vos (in De Vos et al 2005:335) when they postulated that data analysis in qualitative research does not wait until the data collection process is complete as is done in quantitative research; instead it starts during the data collection process. In view of this, the researcher also analysed and interpreted the data (i.e. giving meaning to the data) simultaneously.

Since the study was qualitative in nature, data were collected from six participants in the form of spoken words. This procedure is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 647) since qualitative researchers study spoken words and written records of people's experiences.

Interviews were conducted in Xitsonga, and then recorded in a verbatim form. The playing and re-playing of the voice recorder assisted the researcher to capture all the information that transpired during the interviews. The short-hand notes recorded assisted in providing non-verbal messages which could not be recorded by the voice recorder. The researcher transcribed the gathered information into English. There was no need for a transcriber to translate the information collected in Xitsonga to English as the researcher is also a Tsonga speaking person. Thereafter, the information was cleaned by numbering each sentence of the collected information in order to prepare for analysis and interpretation of the findings.

In a process of analysing and interpreting the cleaned data, the researcher used the descriptive analysis technique of Tesch's eight steps (in Creswell, 2009: 186), as already proposed in Chapter 1, section 3.5 which entailed the following:

- The researcher read through all the transcripts to get a sense of the whole and jotted down some ideas that could be used as themes and sub-themes.
- The researcher chose one transcript which was shorter and read through it while writing down in the margin the underlying meaning of what was being read. The researcher proceeded to read through all the other scripts in the same manner.
- After all scripts had been read, the researcher made a list of all topics identified. These topics were then clustered according to their similarities and classified into columns marked as "major topics", "unique topics", and "left-overs".
- The researcher assigned appropriate abbreviations to each topic identified and reverted to the data to put abbreviations next to each appropriate segment of the data.
- The most descriptive wording for each topic identified was found and turned into themes. Related themes were grouped together to reduce the total list of themes.
- The researcher made a final decision on the abbreviation for each theme and wrote them down in alphabetical order.
- Using the "cut-and-paste" method, the researcher assembled in one place the data material, including story lines or quotations, which belonged to each appropriate theme and sub-theme and conducted a preliminary analysis.
- The researcher recorded the existing data as it seemed necessary.

Transcripts were also given to an independent coder who had experience in qualitative research methods, to conduct a qualitative data analysis to ensure trustworthiness of the



study. Findings from the independent coder's report were compared with the researcher's findings during a consensus discussion between the researcher and the researcher's promoter. Themes and sub-themes with story lines or quotations could then be compared to assess consistency. (See Chapter 3 for the detailed description of the themes and sub-themes.)

- Data Verification

According to Creswell (2003:196, 1990:157), data verification in qualitative research means a process of checking the accuracy and credibility of research findings from the standpoint of the researcher, the research participants or the readers of the account. It is important that researchers should provide readers with an account of the procedures they used to conduct the research to ensure that the methods were credible and the findings of the research are accurate (Silverman, 2005:209-210). This is why the researcher has provided specific detailed information in this study.

In Chapter 1, section 3.6, the researcher explained how data would be verified to check the accuracy and credibility of research findings using Guba's model of trustworthiness of qualitative data as outlined by Krefting (1991: 215-222). Guba's model of ensuring trustworthiness of qualitative data comprises four aspects, namely truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality.

- Truth value

Chapter 1 section 3.6.1 indicated how the researcher would use methodological credibility strategies to ensure that the findings of the research study are a true reflection of the participants' experiences.

The researcher used the following methodological credibility strategies to achieve the truth value of the findings:

*Interviewing techniques*

The researcher used various aspects of interviewing techniques such as good appearance and demeanour, creating an enabling environment, verbal and non-verbal cues, empathy and

advanced empathy, listening and attending and asking relevant questions as described in section 2.4.4.4. of this chapter, in order to enhance credibility of the information provided by participants during the interview.

### *Triangulation*

Denzin (in Brewer, 2000: 75) explains that triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods, researchers or theoretical frameworks in order to extend the accuracy of data. In this study the researcher had only one group of participants who met one set of criteria, therefore having similarities. Therefore it was impossible for the researcher to compare the responses from the single group of participants with similar characteristics. However, the researcher thinks that the method of triangulation was applied in the process of analysing the data. The researcher did her analysis of data and the independent coder analysed the same data and findings were compared during the meeting between the researcher and her promoter at the promoter's house.

### *Peer examination*

Krefting (1991: 219) explains that peer examination involves discussing the research process and findings with researchers who are experts in qualitative research. Throughout the research process, the researcher consulted with the promoter who is an expert in qualitative research methods. The researcher initially intended to select only three participants for the research study, but through consultation with the researcher's promoter the researcher was advised to select six participants, of whom three must be males and other three females in order to allow the researcher to gain in-depth information that would assist in answering the research question. Furthermore, the importance of reaching the point of saturation during data collection process was emphasized in the research proposal by the researcher. An independent coder was also used to compare the interpretations. The researcher also used her former colleagues who had experience of qualitative research methods and the phenomenon investigated to share her understanding and to debrief her about problems encountered during the research process.

- Applicability

Krefting (1991: 216) indicates that applicability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings. Applicability does not seek to generalize findings to a larger population as the study is conducted in the natural settings of individuals. Krefting (1991: 216) further indicated that in qualitative research, applicability is established through the strategy of transferability, that is, the ability of the research findings to fit into contexts other than that of the study situation, which have some degree of similarity. In order to ensure transferability of the research findings, the researcher used purposive sampling with a clear stipulation on the criteria of inclusion of participants in the study. The study also used a contextual research design, in conjunction with exploratory and descriptive designs, to produce an extensive description of the experiences and expectations of orphans previously in charge of a child-headed household. The researcher also provided dense background information on the research methodology used to allow others to check the transferability of the findings.

- Consistency

Krefting (1991: 216) states that consistency is achieved when the study is replicated using the same participants or similar contexts and still produces the same findings. Consistency is achieved through the strategy of dependability. In this chapter, the researcher has provided a dense description of how the study was conducted to ensure consistency of research findings. The researcher presented the exact research methodology as outlined in Chapter 1 of the study. An independent coder was used to analyse the data. The researcher also analysed the data independently, and gained consensus with the independent coder on the themes and sub-themes to assess consistency. The code-recode procedure as outlined by Krefting (1991: 221) was employed to assess consistency. The researcher re-coded the same data after two weeks and compared the results to check consistency.

- Neutrality

Krefting (1991: 216-217) explains that neutrality is the extent to which the research procedures and findings are free from bias. The researcher used credibility strategies to establish the truth value of the study, as explained earlier in this section, namely

triangulation, peer examination and interview technique. Neutrality was also achieved through the guidance of the promoter. The research was conducted under the supervision of the promoter who provided guidance on decisions taken for each phase of the research process.

## **2.5. Ethical considerations**

Ethics is defined in Chapter 1, section 4 of the study. The researcher is a registered social worker with the South African Council for Social Service Professions, and therefore she was obliged to take into cognisance her personal and professional limitations. The researcher adopted the following ethical considerations when conducting the study as outlined by the code of conduct that governs the social service profession and by (Yegidis and Weinbach 2002:36-40).

- Informed consent

All participants in this study were fully informed about the research project and their role in the study. Based on this information they made an informed decision to participate in the study. The researcher explained to all participants what the study was all about; how the information would be used and what was to be expected. All participants were requested to sign consent forms after the verbal consent (see Annexure V). In instances where kin foster parents were available they were also requested to consent to participation for the participants. The researcher proceeded with data collection only once all research participants had agreed voluntarily to participate in the study and had signed the consent forms.

- Confidentiality

The researcher maintained confidentiality to safeguard the privacy of participants as well as their identity by using pseudonyms in order to ensure their anonymity. In order to protect participants' real identities, the researcher removed participants' identifying particulars from transcripts and notes and replaced them with pseudonyms. It was only the researcher who was able to link participants' real names with the pseudonyms used in the transcripts. The information will be made public behind a shield of anonymity using alphabetical references during the dissemination of the research findings. The researcher asked permission from all

research participants to use a voice recorder and notes to capture the data. She explained to the research participants that the tapes, notes and transcripts would be used only for the purpose of the study. In order to safeguard participants' information, the researcher kept the voice recorder, notes and transcripts in a locked cupboard in the researcher's house where only the researcher had access to the information. The researcher destroyed the real names of participants once data had been coded and alphabetical references assigned. The researcher will erase all recordings on the voice recorder and destroy all notes and transcripts once the research is complete.

- Debriefing.

The interviews evoked intense emotions as participants shared their life-experiences of the phenomenon being studied. Participants shared traumatic experiences about the death of their parents, their relationship with the kin foster parents and about the preparation and the placement process in kinship foster care. With a view to minimising emotional or psychological harm, debriefing of research participants was done by the researcher immediately after each interview with each participant to enable them to work through the experiences of the interviews and emotions that surfaced as a result of the interview.

The researcher concludes that she has effectively applied the necessary ethical conduct during the process of collecting data. Participants were well informed about the research study. The importance of safeguarding against breaching confidentiality was emphasised by using pseudonyms instead of real names, keeping all the information collected in a locked cupboard and the assurance that all voice recordings made will be destroyed immediately after the completion of this study. The emerged emotions evoked by the interview were well attended to by the researcher and further psychological harm was minimized.

## **2.6. Summary**

This chapter provided a description of how qualitative research methods were applied in the process of collecting data from the participants. The chapter also presented the research methodology used in collecting data for the study. The researcher adopted a qualitative approach as it seeks to discover and describe an in-depth understanding of the experiences

and expectations of orphans previously in charge of child-headed households and now integrated in kinship foster care.

Exploratory, descriptive, and contextual research designs were used to indicate how the study was conducted. Further explanation on how the sample was drawn from the population was highlighted. The procedures for gaining entry to the study area and participants were described and explained. The study was conducted in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province, where the researcher was working as a social worker at the commencement of the research study.

Data were analysed using the descriptive analysis technique of Tesch's eight steps and the process was described in this chapter. The chapter also described Guba's model of trustworthiness of qualitative data and how the researcher applied the model to verify the research findings. The application of ethical principles highly considered by the researcher is also elaborated in this chapter. The following chapter will present the research findings and the literature control. This will be done in the form of themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis process.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The aim of the research study was to develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences and expectations of orphans of the process of being placed in kinship foster care after having been in charge of a child-headed household. In order to realize this aim the researcher adopted a qualitative approach whereby the researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect data from orphan children who were previously in charge of a household and now in kinship foster care.

The researcher employed Tesch's eight steps (in Creswell, 2009: 186) of data analysis to analyse data collected from six participants. Transcripts were also given to an independent coder who had experience in qualitative research methods, to conduct a qualitative data analysis to ensure trustworthiness of the study. Four themes, sub-themes and categories arose from the data analysis processes as reflected in Table 3.2 under section 3.3 below. The findings will be presented according to the themes, sub-themes and categories as mentioned above and illustrated by direct quotations from the transcribed interviews that will be contrasted with the existing theories and previous literature in order to establish the credibility and the trustworthiness of the study (Creswell, 2003:196).

#### **3.2. Biographic data on the research participants**

In this section, the biographic data of orphan children who were previously in charge of child-headed households before being placed in kinship foster care will be presented in table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Biographic data on the research participants**

<b>Participant (Pseudonym)</b>	<b>Gender of the participants</b>	<b>Age at the time of conducting the research</b>	<b>Age of commencement as the head of household</b>	<b>Period of heading the household before being placed in kinship foster care</b>	<b>Number of the children being cared for by child the household</b>	<b>Age at the time of placement in kinship foster care</b>	<b>Number of years in kinship foster care at time of research</b>	<b>Nature of the relationship with the foster parent</b>	<b>Birth position of participant in the household</b>	<b>Place of abode of participants after foster care placement</b>
Hlengiwe	F	15	11	1 year	2	12	3	Paternal aunt	Third born	Biological parent's house
Bongi	F	18	14	2 years	3	15	3	Wife to mother's uncle.	First born	Biological parent's house
Mangi	M	18	15	2 years	3	17	1	Maternal grandmother	First born	Biological parent's house
Marubini	M	17	13	6 months	2	+_14	3	Maternal grandmother	First born	Foster parent's house
Sipho	M	17	13	3 years	2	16	1	Maternal grandmother	Second born	Foster parent's house
Tinyiko	F	16	12	1 year	3	13	3	Sister	Third born	Biological parent's house



From table 3.1 it is evident that three participants were males and the other three were females. The equal distribution between the genders in respect of being the head in a child-headed household corresponds with other research that there has been a shift in the patterns of gender and family care. Germann (2005: 90) highlights that in most African countries before the onset of HIV/AIDS, girl children generally provided care to their younger siblings whereas boys were less likely to provide care to their siblings. This was attributed to the gender stereotypes that women were perceived as the caretakers of the family (i.e. occupied with cleaning, cooking, and taking care of the sick), whereas men were seen as breadwinners of their families.

The children's ages when they commenced as heads of the households were between 11 and 15. The period of heading the household by the participants before being placed in kinship foster care varied from 6 months to 3 years. Participants ranged between 12 and 17 in age when placed in kinship foster care.

The ages of participants who previously headed households and were now placed in the care of a kin foster parent at the time of conducting the study indicate that the children's ages ranged from 15 to 18. The Children Amendment Act (Act 41/2007: Sec 137(1)(c)) stipulates that a child who is 16 years old may be considered as head of a household and bear rights and responsibilities as a caregiver. Their ages at the time of placement in foster care indicates that the orphaned children were all under the accepted age of being legally considered as heads of households when they were exposed to the adult responsibilities of heading a household.

The ages of the children at the time of conducting the study indicate that the children fall within the "adolescence stage". This stage includes persons who are about 12 years to 18 years or even up to 21 years of age (Craig & Baucum 2002: 5). According to Craig and Baucum (2002: 407), adolescents must confront the following two major developmental tasks: achieving autonomy and independence from parents and family (although the form this takes varies across cultures); and forming an identity, which means creating an integrated self that harmoniously combines different elements of the personality.

Foster (2004:2) asserted that as a result of the impact of AIDS on communities, an increase in the number of double orphans has led to an increase in the households headed by children, mostly in their teens. This disrupts children's social roles, rights and obligations because as children become orphaned, there is often a premature entrance into the burdens of adulthood

without the rights, privileges and strengths associated with adult status (Barnett & Whiteside 2006:223). Adolescents in this situation have to cope with the deprivation of a childhood and have to cope with the need to be a child and the imperative to assume adult responsibilities as household provider (Nelson Mandela Children's Fund 2001:27). Kelly in Foster et al (2005:67-70) pointed out that adolescents in child-headed households are being deprived of their childhood and have to take adult responsibilities at a young age.

All participants were placed in the care of their relatives. However; four participants remained in their biological parent's home while the other two went to stay with their kin foster parents. The family size that participants were heading ranges between 3 and 4. It is also revealed in table 3.1 that not only the elder child became the head of the household, but also with other children like second and third born as determined by the circumstances became heads of household. This finding was in contrast with the findings by Department of Social Department National (2008: 16) and Nziyane (2010:138-170) that often the older children in the child-headed households are found to be fulfilling parental responsibilities after the death of the parent.

This section focused on the biographic data of the orphaned children who were previously heading households and now placed in kinship foster care.

From the participants' responses and the resultant processes of data analysis by the researcher and independent coder and the consequent consensus discussion, the following main themes emerged:

**Theme 1:** The experiences of death of a parent(s)

**Theme 2:** The experiences of orphans now in kinship foster care about previously being in charge of a child-headed household.

**Theme 3:** The experiences of orphaned children previously in charge of child-headed households about previously being in charge of child-headed households and about their placement process into kinship foster care.

**Theme 4:** Experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of a household about being in kinship foster care

**Theme 5:** Expectations of orphaned children placed in kinship foster care about the process of foster care placement

These themes with sub-themes and categories are presented in the table below:

**Table 3.2: Themes, sub-themes, categories and sub-categories**

<b>THEME 1: THE EXPERIENCES ON THE DEATH OF A PARENT(S)</b>		
<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>
1.1.Orphaned children experienced the death of their parents as very painful.		
1.2. Orphaned children have different experiences about losing a parent (s)	1.3.1.The death of a parent(s) resulted in economic hardship	
	1.3.2. Orphaned children experienced the death of fathers differently from the death of mothers.	
	1.3.3. Orphaned children experienced a diminished sense of identity	
	1.3.4.The death of the second or single parent was experienced as the most painful	
1.3. Orphaned children were confused and at first could not believe that their parents have died.		
<b>THEME 2: THE EXPERIENCES OF ORPHANS NOW IN KINSHIP FOSTER CARE ABOUT PREVIOUSLY BEING IN CHARGE OF A CHILD-HEADED HOUSEHOLD</b>		
<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>
2.1. Orphaned children’s experience of assuming household responsibilities while parent(s) were still alive prepared them for heading households.	2.1.1. Orphaned children heading households assumed responsibility while parent(s) was away from home	
	2.1.2. Orphaned children’s experience of assuming household responsibilities when parents became sick	

2.2. The experiences of orphaned children in kinship foster care relating to previously and currently heading a household.	2.2.1. Orphaned children heading households take care of their siblings	
	2.2.2. Orphaned children heading households experienced their living environment as unsafe.	
	2.2.3. Orphaned children heading households experienced educational challenges	
	2.2.4. Orphaned children heading households experienced lack of parental guidance	
	2.2.5. Orphaned children heading households experienced the sense of realization that they are capable of heading households	
2.3. Various role-players who gave assistance in the life-experience of orphans placed in kinship foster care.	2.3.1. Orphaned children heading households experienced help from elder siblings who are already married and from other relatives by sharing the responsibility of looking after the younger siblings	
	2.3.2. Orphaned children experienced home-based caregivers as having played a mother figure role in their lives	
	2.3.3. Orphaned children heading households experienced the church as helpful because it provides food and spiritual support.	
<b>THEME 3: THE EXPERIENCES OF ORPHANED CHILDREN PREVIOUSLY IN CHARGE OF CHILD-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS ABOUT THEIR PLACEMENT PROCESS INTO KINSHIP FOSTER CARE</b>		
3.1. Experiences of orphaned children during the preparation processes for placement in kinship foster care.	3.1.1. Orphaned children were not involved in the preparation process of placing them in kinship foster care	
	3.1.2. Orphaned children were not involved in deciding whose kinship care they would want to be placed in.	
3.2. Experiences of orphaned children of the placement process.	3.2.1. There was no court orientation experienced by orphaned children prior to the placement processes by the children's court	
	3.2.2. Orphaned children experienced various negative feelings about themselves during children's court	

	proceedings.	
	3.2.3. Orphaned children did not have an idea of what was happening when in the children's court.	
3.3. Orphaned children experienced the prospective foster parents, social worker and magistrate negatively during placement processes.		
<b>THEME 4: EXPERIENCES OF ORPHANED CHILDREN WHO WERE PREVIOUSLY IN CHARGE OF THE HOUSEHOLD ABOUT BEING IN KINSHIP FOSTER CARE</b>		
4.1. Orphaned children were left at their original home, there was no change in place of abode.	4.1.1. Some orphaned children who remained at their original home continued heading the households and were cared for by the foster parent receiving the grant.	
	4.1.2. Some orphaned children who remained at their original home heading households were not cared for by the foster parent receiving the grant	
4.2. Some orphaned children went to live with foster parents	4.2.1 Some orphaned children who went to live with the foster parents experienced kinship foster care positively.	
	4.2.2. Some orphaned children who went to live with the foster parents experienced kinship foster care negatively.	
4.3 The children's experience of the use of the foster care grant by the foster parents.	4.3.1. Some experienced the use of the foster care grant by the foster parents positively.	
	4.3.2. Some experienced the use of the foster care grant by the foster parents negatively.	
4.4. Other experiences of orphaned children's in kinship foster care	4.4.1. Orphaned children's experiences of the social worker	
	4.4.2. Orphaned children in kin foster care experienced a lack of advocacy	
	4.4.3. Orphaned children experienced developing coping strategies	

**THEME 5: EXPECTATIONS OF ORPHANED CHILDREN WHO WERE PREVIOUSLY IN CHARGE OF HOUSEHOLDS ABOUT THE PROCESS OF BEING PLACED IN KINSHIP FOSTER CARE**

<p>5.1. Orphaned children placed in kinship foster care have expectations about the process of being placed in kin foster care and about the kin foster parents, the social worker and the children's court.</p>	<p>5.1.1. Orphaned children expect to be involved in any decision that affects them (orphan children).</p>	
	<p>5.1.2. Orphaned children's expectations about the social worker</p>	<p>5.1.2.1. Orphaned children placed in kinship foster care expect the social worker to carry out supervision after foster care placement</p>
		<p>5.1.2.2. Orphaned children placed in kinship foster care expect social workers to establish rapport and trust with them, and also to be treated with respect and dignity</p>
	<p>5.1.3. Orphaned children's expectations about the children's court</p>	

**3.3. Overview of themes, sub-themes and categories**

In the remainder of this chapter, five themes with their accompanying sub-themes, categories and where applicable sub-categories will be presented and confirmed by providing direct quotations from the interviews conducted with orphaned children who were placed in kinship foster care after previously being in charge of child-headed households and now integrated in

kinship foster care. The identified themes, sub-themes, categories, sub-categories and the complementing excerpts from the interviews will be discussed and compared with the body of knowledge available (i.e. a literature control will be provided).

### **3.3.1. Theme 1: The experiences on the death of a parent(s)**

This theme and its accompanying sub-themes presented in this section were derived from the information articulated by the participants. Although this study focused on the experiences and expectations of orphaned children who were previously in charge of child-headed households about their preparation and placement process in kinship foster, participants often related their experiences from the period when their parents were still alive until their death.

The following sub-themes emerged during the data analysis process:

- Orphaned children experience the death of their parents as very painful.
- Orphaned children have varying experiences about losing a parent.
- Orphaned children were confused and at first could not believe that their parents had died.

Sub-theme 1.1: Orphaned children experience the death of their parents as very painful.

The following story lines testify to the painful experience endured by participants during the death of their parents.

*“...but on that very same night things became different...we all found ourselves asleep, the reason being that there was no scream nor a call for help from my mother. We slept almost the whole night. Early in the morning I realised that unusual sleeping pattern has occurred and I suddenly jump out of the sleeping mat to the bed where my mother was sleeping...I could sense that something has gone wrong...I call her...but she was silence...at that time my younger sister woke up, she anxiously run to join me and asked me if is everything*

*alright...and I told her that it seems to be fine...I didn't want to tell her that I am observing something strange from my mother...I then told her to run to one of our neighbour's house to call her to come to our house. Our neighbour came and she asked me to make a call to magreasa [grandmother]. Our neighbour couldn't tell us that our mother has died, but she was no longer allowing us to get inside our mother's bedroom...I was young but I could make*

*one plus one...and my younger sister was keeping on asking me why are we not allowed to enter the house...she could also see that eeh...eeh...our mother could be dead...She holds me tight and we both couldn't able to hold in our tears...we cried...and cried bitterly. When our grandmother and uncle arrive, she also cried and we all cried. That was the end of our mother".*

It was also evident from Mangi's experiences that he had suffered pain over the loss of his mother. The following utterance made by him bears testimony to this:

*"Hey...my mother [referring to the researcher] it was tough...ja... [eyes were full of tears, trying to hold them back] it was very tough..."*

As the participants shared about the painful experiences during the death of their parents, four of them went to the extent of indicating the intensity of that painful experience as follows:

*"I felt as if it is the end of the world".*

*"for me life was just like a living hell..."*

*"It was so hard; I thought it was the end of my life too"*

*"The death of my mother was a blow to me, because I could understood that now I am a real orphan"*

From what the participants uttered, the researcher deduced that life was perceived as meaningless after the death of parents by the participants. The death of a parent is regarded as a crisis for any child, involving the loss of the love, care, support and security that parents should provide (Foster, Levine & Williamson 2005:47). Germann (2005:240) stated as well that the loss of a highly important person, such as a parent, is one of the most painful experiences for any human being. The experience is even far more intense for children who care for their sick parents since they have to watch their parents die. The children can suffer from anxiety and depression (Subbarao et al., 2001:4). A report by World Vision Canada (2007) confirms that children are faced with a situation of watching their sick parents go through the stages of a disease and death. Such children suffer from psychological trauma that haunts them for life.



## Sub-theme 1.2: Orphaned children have varying experiences about losing a parent

Of the six participants in this study, three girls were from double parent households (i.e. Hlengiwe, Bonggi and Tinyiko) had lost both parents, while the other three male participants, (i.e. Mangi, Siphso and Marubini) had lost their single parent. Hence it emerged from their stories that they had experienced different meanings about either loses one parent or both parents or also of losing the only parent (i.e. single).

The following categories revealed their experiences in this sub-theme:

- The death of a parent(s) resulted in economic hardship.
- Orphaned children experienced the death of fathers differently from the death of mothers.
- Orphaned children experienced a diminished sense of identity.
- The death of the second or single parent was experienced as the most painful.

### Category 1.2.1: The death of a parent(s) resulted in economic hardship

The following are the excerpts taken from the interviews referring to economic hardship, especially lack of food, experienced and reported by the participants:

*“First of all there was no income here at home...there was no food to eat...nothing at all my mother [referring to the researcher] for us to live. My mother was a single parent”*

*“A moment where I suppose to cook and discover that there is no food to be cook and no electricity, I feel like disappearing in this world. My brothers would stare at me as if they are saying “make a plan”.*

*“Lack of source of income is a challenge. There are some other times where you find that we don't have mielie-meal just to cook porridge; I am not talking about other luxurious food”.*

*“To head a household is so difficult, more especially that period where we were not receiving foster care grant. It was difficult for me when my siblings were hungry and you find that there was no food to give them...hmmm...I felt so painful...”*

These storylines by four different children attest to the economic hardship experienced. Maclellan (2005:14) stated that several NGOs run sponsorship programmes which provide food and assist with school fees. However, child heads of households admit that the food does not go far enough. The economic distress of children living in child-headed households in the same municipal district where this study was conducted has also been revealed in the study conducted by Nziyane (2010:138-170) in which all participants had experienced the lack of food in their households.

Category 1.2.2: Orphaned children experienced the death of fathers differently from the death of mothers

The findings of this study revealed that the death of fathers is experienced differently from the death of mothers by the participants. Two of the participants, Hlengiwe and Bongi, attest:

*“...I can’t even explain the pain; the death of my mother was so painful than the death of my father to me...I knew that he is dead and I won’t have a father anymore...the death of my mother was a [bigger] blow to me”*

*“...we thought our agony was over [referring to the death of a father]; little did we know that the worst [the death of the second parent, i.e. the mother] is still coming”*

*“...I remember it was 2005 when my father passed away, life was no longer the same at home. My mother was forced to go out and look for a job after taking off the “muzilo”, [meaning the mourning clothing]...she [mother] was my hope [eyes were full of tears]... When she is at home on weekends; she would buy all things, including food that we would be running short of. She would attend all the family problems. Now...life has moved from bad to worse”.*

It is evident in these storylines taken from the participants’ shared experiences that the meaning attached to the death of each parent was mainly related to the impact of the roles played by each parent in their life. The researcher also concludes from what the participants uttered that all these three participants had lost their father first, and then their remaining parent [mother] took over to have dual-responsibilities of providing economically and emotionally to the participants, hence the death of their mothers as a second parent became

most painful. The researcher argues that the death of a second parent, whether, the mother or the father, can be more painful. Subbarao et al., (2001:4) affirm that children who lose their mothers suffer immense grief over the loss of motherly love and nurturing while the death of a father entails the loss of income for the household.

#### Category 1.2.3: Orphaned children experienced a diminished sense of identity

The death of a parent results in a feeling of a diminished sense of identity by orphaned children. The following excerpts from the storyline of the three participants revealed:

*“She was all that we have...it is really hard to discover who I am now, because I don’t have a mother...”*

*“it is really hard to discover who I am now, because I don’t have a mother, our house has been taken away from us...”*

*“... leaving my home [due to the death of a parent] which I was used to be made me feel sad, I felt as if part of me has died...”*

An orphan child achieves a sense of identity when he relates himself to significant others such as parents and siblings, and non-living things like a house. Death of a parent(s) leads to confusion in of the life-experience of a child. Nichols and Pace-Nichols (1993:301) asserted that orphan children should be encouraged to accomplish a sense of self-identity in order to cope successfully with the loss of the parent. Grobler, Schenck and Du Toit (2003:13) cited by Rogers (1987) assert that no person lives in isolation. Everybody interacts with others, and our perceptions of these interactions become part of who we are. In other words a child can perceive him/herself as a child in relation to his/her own parent.

#### Category 1.2.4: The death of the second or single parent was experienced as the most painful

The death of the second parent and of a single parent is experienced as the worst painful experience as described by some of the participants during the interview.

*“...we thought our agony was over [referring to the death of a father]; little did we know that the worst [the death of the second parent, i.e. the mother] is still coming”*

*“She [single mother] was all that we have...”*

*“...life moved from bad to worse after the death of my mother [second parent]”*

The researcher deduced from the storylines by these three participants that the death of the second or single parents was experienced as most painful since the children lost the only surviving parent, which means that they are then left as orphans. It is apparent in this theme that all participants in this study had experienced pains of losing their parent(s) through death. Participants had different experiences about the death of the first parent, second parent and a single parent. The intensity of the pain experienced is mainly determined by the meanings attached on that particular death. Some participants have experienced their life as meaningless and felt a diminished sense of self-worth. Foster *et al* (2005:100) conclude that orphaned children may have suffered losses other than the loss of one parent. Many children have had to watch one parent deteriorate for months or even years and this creates insecurity and personal vulnerability in children. They may doubt their ability to go through and cope with all that for a second time with their other parent (Foster *et al.*, 2005:100).

Sub-theme 1.3: Orphaned children were confused and at first could not believe that their parents had died

The feeling of confusion was evident in the excerpts below taken from the interviews conducted with the participants:

*“...confused as we were, another call came in...it said: “your mother is gone [I asked] ...gone...gone...where...? I could not understand that she might have passed away”*

*“...it was hard; I couldn’t believe that indeed my mother was gone, she was all that we have mind you...”*

*“...we expected our mother to come back home...dzaa! [means the mother did not arrive] ...we started to panic, the following morning, it was on Saturday, we receive a call that told us that your mother is admitted at Matikwane Hospital”*

Three participants in this study related their experiences of being confused and the difficulty of believing that the news of their parents' death was real. Kelly (in Foster et al, 2005:75-82) indicates that trauma and psychological distress experienced by children can harm their capacity to learn as the stress impairs their thinking, their ability to assimilate death. Some of the children have witnessed the death of their parents and this has profound long-term consequences such as chronic depression, learning disabilities and disturbed social behaviour (Smart, 2003:8).

### **3.3.2. Theme 2: The experiences of orphans now in kinship foster care about previously being in charge of a child-headed household**

The absence of the parents, either by being away from home due to work or due to death, has led to the emerging of the child-headed household in which it was headed by the orphaned children. The experiences of orphaned children in kinship foster care about being in charge of the household became prominent during the interviews. Thus theme 2 with its sub-themes and categories was pursued as a background to this research study that assisted the researcher to understand the experiences and expectations of orphaned children placed in kinship foster care within the context of their preparation and the subsequent process of placement in kinship foster care.

This theme has been divided into the following sub-themes:

- Orphaned children's experience of assuming household responsibilities while parent(s) were still alive prepared them for heading households.
- The experiences of orphaned children in kinship foster care relating to previously and currently heading a household.
- Various role-players who gave assistance in the life experience of orphans placed in kinship foster care.

Sub-theme 2.1: Orphaned children's experience of assuming household responsibilities while parent(s) were still alive prepared them for heading households

This sub-theme was divided into the following categories:

- Children assumed household responsibility while parent(s) were away from home

- Children assumed household responsibilities when parents were sick

Category 2.1.1: Children assumed household responsibility while parents were away from home

The following excerpts demonstrate the experiences of assuming household responsibilities by some of the children heading a household prior to the death of a parent.

*“My mother was a single parent and she was working in a farm at Moduping (not the real name of the farm), she came home on weekends. We were left alone at home, me, my younger brother and my younger sister. I have to wake up early in the morning, make fire to prepare water for bath and breakfast in the morning for myself and my two siblings. When I come back to school I will start cleaning the three-roomed house and go out to fetch water so that I can start cooking”*

*“...I remember it was 2005 when my father passed away, life was no longer the same at home. My mother was forced to go out and look for a job... she came home on weekends only. I was responsible for taking care of my siblings’ including my younger brother who is staying with my sister now”*

*“My mother was leaving us to go to Gauteng where my father was working, they were sending us clothes and money” [implying that she was responsible for the household]*

Some of the children described their experiences of assuming household responsibilities beginning from the time when their parents were still alive, but away for a job and some began from the time of the illness of a parent. From the above storylines it is evident that some participants were responsible for all the household chores such as taking care of the siblings before the parents’ death because they were working far from their home and only came home at weekends. Sloth-Nielsen (2004:2) maintained that children were used to heading households due to parents migrating to urban areas to seek employment before the advent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In a study by Department of Social Development, National (2008:37) on child-headed household, it emerged that more households came about not only as a result of deaths, but also through other socio-economic development issues such as war, displacement, separation, desertion and migrant work.

### Category 2.1.2: Children assumed responsibilities when parents were sick

The below storylines from four participants reflect the experiences of assuming household responsibilities by children who were looking after their sick parent and their younger siblings.

*“... I then quickly prepared soft porridge for her”*

*“... I have to wake up early in the morning and walk those fifteen miles to go and bath her, prepare food and feed her, and walk back again fifteen miles to do the same thing for my siblings”*

*“... I am a man imagine, bathing my mother, washing clothes and preparing food for her...”*

*“... I moved out of my bedroom into the bedroom where my mother and my sister slept so that I could assist my sister at night because my mother would scream out of pain and sometimes call for water or pain tablets. My younger sister and I took turns to take care of my mother.*

The children had assumed responsibilities such as preparing food for the siblings and the sick parents, feeding and bathing the parents, washing clothes and nursing the parents. This is supported by Foster (2004:9) who stated that children are increasingly taking on adult responsibilities at a young age, including providing care for a sick parent. One of the findings on the realities of the children living in child-headed households conducted by Nziyane (2010:269-271) revealed that orphan children heading households were taking care of their terminally ill parents, as well as their siblings. Those children have endured the pain of taking care of their sick parents, witnessing their death and of losing them at the end. Young Lim (2009:83) cited that prolonged illness incapacitates parents and often pushed children to take on a role of *de facto* primary caregivers for their ill parents and younger siblings. As illness debilitates parents, and children often have to provide culturally sensitive care, such as toileting and bathing them and often need to cope with parents' mood swings and declining mental capacity.

Sub-theme 2.2: The experiences of orphaned children in kinship foster care relating to previously and currently heading a household

This sub-theme and its accompanying categories of participants' experiences emerged during the interviews and concerned being in charge of the household. Some participants remained as the heads of households even after being placed in kinship foster care. Thus the storylines provided under this theme are referring to both prior and after placement.

The five accompanying categories are presented as follows:

- Orphaned children heading households take care of their siblings
- Orphaned children heading households experienced their living environment as unsafe.
- Orphaned children heading households experienced educational challenges
- Orphaned children heading households experienced lack of parental care and guidance.
- Orphan children heading households experienced the sense of realization that they are capable of heading households.

Category 2.2.1: Orphaned children heading households take care of their siblings

Some of the participants in this study articulated one of their responsibilities as to take care of the younger siblings. The findings revealed below are excerpts from the storylines recounted by the three participants:

*"...in a real sense I am looking after my siblings and taking care of everything in the house"*

*"I was so very young to know what am I supposed to do, I learned to cook, take care of my younger sister who was six years".*

*"Washing my younger sister's clothes was a very serious problem to me..."*

*"We take her [younger sister] once a month for check-up and medication, but sometimes we go there even three times in a month in instances where the doctor is not available.*

The care of siblings in this study included running the whole household, cooking, washing and health care. Maclellan (2005:3) mentioned that the view that children are expected to play is universal in most countries, while in some cultures children are also expected to tend herds, pound maize, wash clothes and dishes, fetch water, care for crops and look after



siblings. The study conducted at Bushbuckridge by Nziyane (2010:153) also revealed that the eldest child in the family, irrespective of gender, assumed parental responsibilities after the death of the parent. The caring roles include bathing of younger siblings, cooking, cleaning or fetching water and providing food. In this study the additional responsibility of health care was also mentioned.

Category 2.2.2: Orphaned children heading households experienced their living environment as unsafe

Some orphaned children who participated in the study are on their own and not under adult care. One of the participants, Hlengiwe, is staying with her brothers in the well-constructed house left by their parents; however the challenge she experienced is that there are electrical cables that are hanging out and without a meter box that controls the running of the electricity. Hlengiwe demonstrated a feeling of frustration and fear of being at risk. The below excerpt is an indication of the frustration she was experiencing:

*“ [with a very loud voice] We have lot of problems in this house, which need to be fixed...can you see this kitchen door; it is out of place...we can't lock it anymore, anyone can just get in when we are out to school. There are electrical cables hanging out there, we told our aunt about it and made a request for electrical meter box, she promised long time ago that she has paid for the service at Eskom and they will come to fix them...no one came up to date...I am afraid we are going to burn inside the house, and a fear that we might find our house burnt while we are still at school”*

*“...life was difficult for us at first...even my younger brother who comes after me, he is in grade 12 now, [while laughing] he run away from home because we were killing a snake nearly every day at home when we were still staying in a shack, he is now back home...but now we have a two-roomed brick house”*

*“At night I was scared, we were locking ourselves early around five in the evening, so that by the time it becomes dark, we should be inside the house... I was scared that bad people might terrorise us... We were scared to be murdered and our body parts cut off and to be raped”*

Some of the participants related their experiences of the unsafe living environment and the accompanying fear in their lives. Their experiences were based on the exposed cables of electricity, the risk of being bitten by snakes and of being the victims of crime such as mutilation practices. Nkomo (2006:79) ascertained that female children living in child-headed households often have concerns and

fears regarding their personal safety as they have no adults to protect them from being sexually molested. The findings of the study by Nziyane (2010:183) revealed also that adolescent girls living in child-headed households are exposed to being sexually abused and exploited.

Category 2.2.3: Orphaned children heading households experienced educational challenges

The educational status of the participants is significant in the study as it provides an insight into the participants' life experiences as heads of households, the change processes that took place in their lives as well as experiences in kinship foster care and the effect of these experiences on their access to educational opportunities. Table 3.3. serves as evidence:

**Table 3.3: Educational status of participants in kinship foster care**

<b>Participant (pseudonym)</b>	<b>Grades of participants during the period of commencement as heads of households</b>	<b>Grades of participants when placed in kinship foster care</b>	<b>Grades of participants during the time of conducting the research</b>	<b>Ages of participants during the time of conducting the study</b>
Hlengiwe	5	6	9	15
Bongi	9	11	Passed grade 12	18
Mangi	11	Dropped out in grade 11	Dropped out in grade 11	18
Marubini	Dropped out in grade 7	Returned back to school in grade 7	10	17
Sipho	8	10	11	17
Tinyiko	7	10	11	16

From the data provided in the above Table 3.3. it is clearly indicated that some participants were still at school, while others were no longer in schooling. It is evident from the findings that Bonggi is the only participant who is matriculated, but not furthering her studies during the time this research study was conducted and another one dropped out of school at grade 11. Mangi was forced to drop out of school in order to go out and seek for a job so that he could be able to provide the needs of his siblings. The findings in this study further revealed that Marubini was doing grade 10 during the period of study but had been forced to drop out of school in grade 7 in order to take care of his sick mother, however he managed to go back to school a year after the death of his mother.

Dropping out of school permanently was low in this group. From their provided age ranges in Table 3.3. it is evident that out of all participants who are still in schooling, Marubini seems to be a year behind his grade, mainly for the reason that he dropped out of school for a year to take care of his sick mother. Bongi had completed her matric a year before the commencement of this study, and from the above table it is clear that she was 17 years old when she completed her matric. The researcher thus deduces that the experience of the death of the parents had not resulted in deterioration in the educational progress of all participants who were still at school during the conducting of this study.

The following are experiences that participants heading households described:

*“I have completed my matric last year, mm...2010. Now I am just sitting at home doing nothing...”*

*“...I was forced by the circumstances to leave school soon after the death of my mother to go out and search for a job”*

*“...I remember we were always late at school and the educators knew that we were coming late to school almost nearly every day”.*

*“The clothes were having stains as well as our uniform. I remember one of my classes teacher called me and ask about with whom are we staying at home...I was not confident over me because some school children will make a joke over me and laugh as if something is wrong with me ”.*

Educational challenges experienced by the participants included being not furthering their studies after completing grade 12, arriving late at school, having dirty school uniforms, lacking confidence and being ridiculed. In their study, Foster et al. (2005:39-47) stated that HIV and AIDS put families under huge economic stress. Children may be forced to drop out of school due to the family loss, or reduced income and the inability to afford school expenses such as school fees or school uniforms. Children may also be forced to drop out of school to seek employment in order to generate income for the family. Wild (2001:8) supported this idea by saying that orphaned children risk dropping out of school prematurely, either to go out to work, look after the home, care for their siblings or an ill person, or because the family cannot afford schooling costs.

#### Category 2.2.4: Orphaned children heading households experienced lack of parental guidance

The category above indicates that children in child-headed households were on their own and without the guidance of an adult person. However, the role played by the caregiver in the life of the girl called Tinyiko is highlighted by the below excerpts:

*“Since my mother passed away in 2007 up to date, I have been responsible to look after this family...we have never seen her [referring to the aunt] in our house; other than the time that she came to take the three of us to Mhala Magistrate court [to be placed in foster care].*

*“We are looking after ourselves [period after placement]...I also started to see my period and did not know whom to tell, I have to use a piece of cloth as sanitary pads, but sesi [referring to the caregiver] taught me how to take care of myself when I was on periods and she went to an extent of adding sanitary pads on the food parcels they were handing out to us”.*

The experiences attested above by the participants indicate that some of the participants who were still heading households even after legal placement in kinship foster care experienced a lack of parental guidance. The Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund (2001:118) found that forty-three percent of the children in child-headed households felt that they lack parental guidance, support and protection. Foster (2004:4) states that children who grow up without parental or adult care face unrelenting problems such as: food insecurity, problems of access to education and skills training, the struggle to meet material needs, the absence of psychosocial support, poor life skills and knowledge, abuse and exploitation, absence of an extended family network, poor housing conditions and insecurity of tenure, as well as poor access to health care.

#### Category 2.2.5: Orphaned children heading households experience the sense of realization that they are capable of heading households

The excerpts below taken from the experiences of some participants serve as testimony to this category:

*“Realizing that I am capable to take care of a household which comprises of boys and they are my brothers, makes me feel good. I also like the fact that we understand each other as siblings”*

*“I enjoyed to be given a money to buy bread for the whole week and pocket money for all of us to carry at school...so I was like Trevor Manuel and I was making sure that I spend the money intelligently because I have to account to my mother when she is home on Friday...and*

*she will ask my siblings whether I was making tea with bread for them...they were like the scorpions... [both the researcher and the participant laughed]”.*

*“... so me and my siblings we have chosen our own life. My mother has taught us to respect each other...so I was thinking that if I can allow my siblings to go and stay with our maternal grandmother, they won't have good behaviour... my brother who is sixteen now, he still listen and respect me, that's what our parents taught us when they were still alive”*

The findings in this study revealed that orphaned children heading households attained feelings of confidence when realizing that they are indeed capable of heading households, Williams et al. (2008:338) state that recent research confirms that even children who are exposed to stressful life experiences, although being vulnerable to the psychological effects of their life circumstances, still have the capacity to thrive amidst those adverse circumstances. Germann (2005:248) confirms that despite an array of gruelling life circumstances which children in charge of households experience, they still find ways to survive and show resilience in their life situations.

Sub-theme 2.3: Various role-players in the life-experience of orphaned children heading households that gave assistance

Participants also mentioned in the interviews a number of significant people whom they experienced as having played a vital role in their life. This sub-theme is categorized as follows:

- Orphaned children experienced help to take care of younger siblings from elder siblings who are already married and from other relatives by sharing the responsibility of looking after the younger siblings.
- Orphaned children experienced home-based caregivers as playing a mother figure role in their lives.
- Orphaned children experienced the church as helpful in providing them with food and spiritual support.

Category 2.3.1: Orphaned children experienced help from family and elder siblings who are already married and from relatives by sharing the responsibility of looking after the younger siblings

The findings of this study revealed a feeling of relief by some participants when they experienced assistance in taking the responsibility for caring for the younger siblings by their sisters and aunt. The following excerpts obtained during the interviews reveal:

*“I’ve got a sister who is married; she stays at Gauteng with her husband and my younger brother Vutivi [not his really name]...she took my younger brother to lessen the burden for me after the death of my mother. ...”.*

*“We are all five and one is married. There are three boys, i.e. myself...I am eighteen; Xihlamariso, he is eight and in grade 4; Xihambano, he is thirteen years old and in grade 6; Matimba she is fifteen and in grade 8, but now she is staying with my sister Tsakani (all names mentioned are not real names) at Acornhoek, Xihambano is staying with our aunt at Greenvalley and I am left with Xihlamariso. ..It is a relief for me, my sister and my aunt also told me that they are assisting me because I would have not managed at my age to look after three siblings. Jaaa... they sometimes visit us and we also visit them.”*

*“She is well now...hmmm...she was very sick in such a way that I couldn’t know what to do next until our grandmother, the one who is receiving the foster care grant on our behalf, decided to take her to the hospital for the test. Myself I did not think of that; but she did and took my little sister to stay with her so that she can monitor her health closely...now she is well and back again home”.*

*“We are looking after ourselves [period after placement]...I also started to see my period and did not know whom to tell, I have to use a piece of cloth as a sanitary pad, but sesi [referring to the caregiver] taught me how to take care of myself when I was on periods and she go to an extent of adding pads in the food parcels they were handing out to us”.*

Orphaned children heading households experienced help in taking care of their younger siblings from elder siblings who are in a marriage and from other relatives who volunteered to assist. Mkhize (2006:21) concurs with the findings of this study by asserting that sometimes the extended family is overwhelmed by large number of orphans. In instances where one particular member of the extended family cannot absorb the orphaned children, children are fostered in different families. The right to love, protection and care is amongst

the children rights stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996. According to Beall & Sternberg (1995:418), the need for love is met when the child is experiencing a loving, stable, continuous and dependable relationship with his/her caregiver. It is through this relationship that the child comes to the realisation of personal identity and feelings of self-worth. Mkhize (2006) mentioned that in circumstances where there is no parent, a caregiver who is a mature adult plays a significant role in meeting this particular need.

Category 2.3.2: Orphaned children heading households experienced home-based caregivers as playing a vital role in their lives

Some participants in this study stated that they were relating well to the caregivers and that their needs for subsistence and affection were being taken care of. The below excerpts bear evidence to this:

*“Sesi [referring to the care-giver] came yesterday to tell us that you’ll be coming today”*

*“I also started to see my period and did not know whom to tell, I have to use a piece of cloth as a dipper, but sesi [referring to the caregiver] taught me how to take care of myself when I was on periods and she go to an extent of adding pads on the food parcels they were handing out to us”*

*“Oh...you mean sesi Rirhandzu (not her real name), I know her, and she is our caregiver from the local home-based care. She assisted us a lot with food before we receive a grant from the social worker. She was here...when was it? oh...ja...two days ago, to tell us about your visit”.*

*“She [school educator] referred us to the local home based care, thus where I get to know Sesi (caregiver), she helped us a lot in managing the household...she was just like a mother to me”.*

These three participants in the above excerpts revealed that the home based caregivers from Wisani and Nhlengelo played a mother figure role in their life experience by managing their households, providing food and life skill guidance such as how to take care of menstrual periods.

Mkhize (2006:10) mentioned that community groups have been identified as agents for change in helping extended families to cope with disaster by encouraging the establishment of volunteer-based visiting programmes for at-risk households. Home-based organisations are

the non-profit organisations that have been established by local communities as a response to the alarming increase in orphaned children due to HIV & AIDS.

Category 2.3.3: Orphaned children experienced the church as helpful in providing them with food and spiritual support

It has been asserted by some of the participants in this study that the church has played a distinct role in the life of the orphaned children as illustrated by the following excerpts:

*“The Pentecostal Assemblies of God has played important role in our lives, we still need their support...my pastor and mothers in our church were providing us with different kinds of food”.*

*“ ... I am also a member of Z.C.C church and the church always encourages us that all things shall be well”*

*“...The support that I get from my paternal uncle’s wife, from my life orientation teacher and from my church minister makes me to stand all the challenges I come across”*

Participants experienced help from the church such as the provision of food and the spiritual support that gives them courage and makes them face all challenges encountered in their life-world experiences. Mkhize (2006: 220) finds however that there was a lack of support to children in need by various religious groups. Members of various religious groups would sometimes visit the children and pray with them without offering any form of material support.

This theme has illustrated the experiences of orphaned children placed in kinship foster care about previously being in charge of child-headed households. Some orphaned children in kinship foster care have experienced the assumption of household responsibilities while their parents were still alive, but away from home due to work. Some were prepared for heading households during the period of illness of their parents. Households’ responsibilities that were common to all of them were to take care of the sick parent, bathing the sick parent, and doing washing and cleaning the house. In the case of Bongi she was also taking care of the physical health condition of a younger sister who was on continuous medication and needed to be taken to the hospital for medical check-ups. However, some participants experienced a helping hand in taking care of their younger siblings from their elder siblings who are married and from other relatives.



It also emerged from the excerpts that participants experienced challenges as heads of households like living in an unsafe environment, lack of parental guidance and educational challenges. Various role-players who were experienced as helpful are the home based caregivers and the church. They were helpful by providing food, life skills and spiritual support.

### **3.3.3. Theme 3: The experiences of orphaned children in kinship foster care who were previously in charge of child-headed households about their preparation and subsequent process of placement into kinship foster care.**

The questions asked about their [participants'] experiences and expectations about the preparation and subsequent placement process into kinship foster care led to the development of theme 3 which describes the experiences and expectations of orphaned children placed in kinship foster care about their preparation and process of placement in kinship foster care. This theme has been outlined in terms of three sub-themes that emerged during the data analysis process. They are:

- Experiences of orphaned children during the preparation processes for placement in kinship foster care.
- Experiences of the placement process by orphaned children previously in charge of the household.
- Orphaned children's experiences of role-players during placement processes.

Sub-theme 3.1: Experiences of orphaned children during the preparation processes for placement in kinship foster care

This sub-theme has been categorized with only two sub-categories which the researcher thinks are important for the purpose of this study.

- Orphaned children were not involved in the preparation process of placing them in kinship foster care.
- Orphaned children were not involved in deciding whose kinship care they would want to be placed in.

Category 3.1.1: Orphaned children were not involved in the preparation process of placing them in kinship foster care

The findings in this study revealed that some orphaned children experienced non-involvement in the preparation process when placed in kinship foster care:

*“Soon after the burial after my mother, the elders of the family came together and decide who should take over the responsibility of looking after us. Then my paternal aunt indicated that since she is an elder child in our father’s clan, she will assume the proposed responsibility...we were not involved...we have just been told about the decision made by our paternal uncle that his sister [our paternal aunt] volunteered to be the one who would take care of us...”*

*“...she [grandmother] run to the social workers’ offices alone and make the applications... she was...she even did not bring me or my sister closer to this matter of social workers, she was running around alone to show that it was her own agenda”*

*“...soon after the death of my mother magreasa [meaning grandmother] took our certificate and the death certificate of my mother to the social workers. We just heard that she is going to apply a pension meant for the children who do not have parents”.*

Children were not involved in the decision-making process about being placed in kinship foster care nor did anyone help them to deal with their trauma and loss of caring for ill parents, the death of the parent(s) and fending for themselves for longer or shorter periods and the accompanying experiences, negative and positive, as described by themes 1 and 2. This type of practice was confirmed by the annual report for Child Welfare South Africa (2002-2003) which stated that the number of orphaned children on Child Welfare caseloads nationally had reached extreme proportions, with numbers having trebled between 1999 and 2002. Thus social workers are trapped in having to place orphans in kinship foster care, without adequate opportunity to explore feelings and experiences of being in child-headed households (Thiele, 2005:15).

It is also evident as well from the excerpts above that kin foster parents are not screened and received no training on foster care. In the study conducted by Nziyane (2010:269-271) at Bushbuckridge, social workers who participated in the study confirmed that orphaned children are not properly screened due to the backlog of foster care cases and furthermore, indicated that there is pressure exerted by social workers’ supervisors to reach certain target

number of placement in a month. In this regard, it seems as if the quantity and not the quality of foster care placement determine the performance standard of the social worker involved.

Category 3.1.2: Orphaned children were not involved in deciding in whose kinship care they would want to be placed

Orphaned children who were previously heading households experienced non-involvement in deciding with whom they should be placed. This is evident as attested by the orphaned children in the excerpts below:

*“I think the social worker should have found out from us about who do you think can receive the grant on our behalf”*

*“We should have been asked if we want to stay with the grandmother or to stay in our mother’s house. Also to check with us whom do we think can receive the grant on our behalf .I would have chosen to remain in my mother’s house and a sister to Magreasa [grandmother] would be the one to receive the grant on our behalf. She has a good heart...although she is staying far at Gauteng, she sometimes buys for us whatever we request...and she listened to us when we talk to her through telephones”.*

*“She [elder sister] who lives in her own house appointed herself...She visited the social workers’ office alone to apply for the grant for us. At first we were excited; we thought our sister is doing good work for us, no one was against that because she was the one who was staying with us, but she also did not involve us at all”*

Some participants had an idea of whom they were willing to be placed with, however it is indicated in the above excerpts that they were not given an opportunity to make their own decisions and choices in regard to their preferences of kin foster parents. It is been found in the exploratory study of the life experiences of AIDS orphans in kinship foster care in South Africa conducted by Tissiman (2008:68) that one of the participants in the study mentioned that he would have chosen to live with his grandmother and little sister in Durban if given an opportunity to decide about a kin foster parent. According to the National Department of Social Development (2008:19), one of the national norms and standards concerning child-headed households is to ensure the participation of the children living in the household in all matters affecting the functioning of the household. Skelton (1998:40) indicated that article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child makes provision for the right of

the child who is capable of forming his/her own views to express those views freely in all matters affecting him or her.

### Sub-theme 3.2: Experiences of orphaned children of the placement process

Participants also shared their experiences on how the placement process was conducted when placed in the care of the kin foster parents. This sub-theme is categorized as follows:

- There was no court orientation experienced by orphaned children prior to the placement processes by the children's court.
- Orphaned children experienced various negative feelings about themselves during children's court proceedings.
- Orphaned children did not have any idea of what was happening when in the children's court.

Category 3.2.1: There was no court orientation experienced by orphaned children prior to the placement processes by the children's court.

Some participants in this study experienced no orientation about the children court's proceedings. The below excerpts taken from the storylines serve as testimony:

*“No...It is only one day when a lady came to our house and we were told she is a social worker and she told my sister that she should come with us to court for the application of the grant”.*

*“That man, whom I believe he is the magistrate told us that we must not trouble our sister when the money is out...I saw those black gowns worn by the magistrate in the television hanged in the man's chair”*

*“...we have never seen her [referring to the aunt] in our house; other than the time that she came to take the three of us to Mhala Magistrate court [to be placed in foster care].*

The findings of the study revealed that all participants had no idea about the surroundings and the court environment, and therefore they were only making speculations based on their own observations and analysis. Participants came to know the children's court surrounding environment only once when they were supposed to be placed in kinship foster care. This lack of orientation is part of what is supported by Nziyane (2010: 269-271) who found that children are not properly prepared for placement.

Category 3.2.2: Orphaned children experienced various negative emotions about themselves during children's court proceedings

Based on the fact that all participants in this study reported that they had not been prepared for court proceedings, they experienced a number of negative feelings about themselves due to the manner in which they were treated by the children's court. The feelings experienced are presented by the following excerpts:

*"I felt embarrassed and useless, really...I don't want to lie to you...I felt as if I am not existing in this world".*

*"I don't feel okay...it makes me angry for that matter"*

*"I felt bad and useless, people were passing by in that passage we were sitted, and they kept on looking at us...I felt so belittled"*

*"I thought maybe they only wanted to see if we really exist, however; I felt like I was a parcel"*

There is no literature to this effect that could be found. Grobler, Schenck and Du Toit (2003:44) interpret Rogers' explanation of the self and human behaviour where all experiences of the self of a person affect behaviour and a person's identity. In the above storylines the experiences of not being recognised was experienced as demeaning and belittling.

Category 3.2.3: Orphaned children did not have any idea of what was happening when in the children's court

The participants in this study mentioned that they were having no idea of what was happening when in the children's court as no one bothered to explain to them. They also did not form part of the placement processes, but were left to sit outside the children's court.

Below are the experiences shared by some of the participants:

*"...for us to be taken to the Magistrate Court, we should have been informed about why we are supposed to be there. I only know criminals who supposed to go to court?"*

*"I can't really tell you, because we were ordered to sit in a bench that was in the corridor of the Magistrate's office".*

*“One day our grandmother told us that we supposed to go with her to the social workers’ office. When we arrive there we were called to come in one of the offices where we found one woman seated there whom I think she is the social worker...that lady communicated with our grandmother only and told her that it will only take one month and she has to keep on checking at the pension pay point”*

The above excerpts clearly indicate that participants were not forming part of the children’s court proceedings when their placement in kinship foster care was finalised.

The study conducted by Van der Riet (2009:70) revealed that all the participants made no reference of any social worker’s attempt to get their opinions or to educate them on fostering issues and the process of fostering. In her study Pugh (1996:35) explored the views of children on their preparation for fostering. She found a *“...somewhat superficial approach”* on how children were involved in the preparation process. Preparation programmes for foster care placement *“...appears to be the exception rather than the rule...”* (Pugh 1996:36)

Sub-theme 3.3: Orphaned children experienced the prospective foster parents, social worker and magistrate negatively during placement processes

The excerpts below serve as testimony to the negative experiences endured by the participants:

*“I think my aunt, the social worker...even the Magistrate. Neither the social worker nor the magistrate bothered to talk to us”*

*“Firstly...just to greet us...you know...ma’m ...greeting a person it shows ubuntu...in our culture you greet any person you meet for the first time in that day. Everything that they were doing it was about us...at least...they [referring to the social worker and the magistrate] should have involved us...yes I understand that children are not consulted in number of issues, but I still maintain that things did not go right from the beginning”*

*“...but the social worker has never visited us at home until we were called at her office once and it was the end...”That is what I heard that social workers visit orphans in their homes, but with us it was not like that”.*

It is alleged by some of the participants that there was no relationship between them, the social worker and the magistrate. The researcher has found no literature on the topic.

Theme 3 described the experiences of orphaned children placed in kinship foster care about the preparation and placement processes in kinship foster care. It became apparent in this theme that five of the participants experienced that they were inadequately prepared for placement in kinship foster care. These five participants also experienced that kin foster parents had voted for themselves for kinship, except in Bongi's case where she decided for herself on whom their foster parents should be. The experience of lack of court orientation by participants resulted in their feeling anxious in court during the placement proceedings.

#### **3.3.4. Theme 4: Experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of the household about being in kinship foster care**

This fourth theme of the study consists of the following sub-themes:

- Orphaned children were left at their original home; there was no change in place of abode.
- Some orphaned children went to live with foster parents.
- The children's experience of the use of the foster care grant by the foster parents.
- Orphaned children expected love, care and warmth from foster parents.
- Orphaned children's experiences of the social worker.
- Orphaned children in kin foster care experience lack of advocacy.
- Children experience that they develop coping strategies.

Sub-theme 4.1: Orphaned children were left at their original home; there was no change in place of abode

Rantla et al (2002:20-21) in their study on orphans and extended families in Bushbuckridge found that some of the children chose to remain in the child-headed households to protect property left by the deceased parents.

This theme is divided into the following categories:

- Some orphaned children who remained at their original home continued heading the households and were cared for by the foster parent receiving the grant.
- Some orphaned children who remained at their original home heading households were not cared for by the foster parent receiving the grant.

Category 4.1.1: Some orphaned children who remained at their original home continued heading households and were cared for by the foster parent receiving the grant.

The findings of this study revealed that some orphaned children who were placed in kinship foster care by the children's court continued to remain in their parents' home, however cared for by their kin foster parents. The following excerpts serve as references:

*“Our real grandparents, from both sides [maternal and paternal], they were not caring about our well-being...it is this old lady [foster parent] and her husband who are looking after us, they bought food for us and always visit us [at their original home] to see if we are still alright”*

*“My grandmother is making the savings for us from the grant, she buy clothes and pay for school trips...she also record all the spending and took the record to the social worker for her advice”.*

Two participants, Bonggi and Siphso, are being taken care of by their kin foster parents. One foster parent provides the foster children with food and she visits them (foster children) regularly. In the case of Siphso his foster parent is also spending the foster grant appropriately and involves the social worker for her opinions. According to Thomas (2005:116), foster parents must be able to provide the following in fostering:

- Form warm and effective relationships with children and young people;
- Provide good physical and psychological care for them;
- Prioritise the needs of children and
- Work in partnership with social workers and other professionals.

Category 4.1.2: Some orphaned children who remained at their original home heading households were not cared for by the foster parent receiving the grant

It has been revealed in this study that some participants who were placed in kinship foster care and remained at their home were not being cared for by the foster parents receiving the grant. The following storylines taken from the conversation with the participants serve as evidence:

*“There is nothing...nothing at all...the government knows that she is looking after us, but in reality she is not...we are looking after ourselves”.*



*“She does not care about us. She is receiving R1900, 00 pensions for us, but she only gives us R600, 00 a month to buy all the basic needs. This money is too little to meet all our needs”.*

*“She [foster parent] does not use the money to cater our needs; she has built her own house where she is staying with her two kids”.*

With reference to the large number of orphaned children and their caregivers who pass through the courts for foster care placement each month, a magistrate in Umlazi stated that the rationale behind this is not on the whole as a means to ensure that orphaned children have a place to live and adults to raise them, but it is quite clear that these foster parents are in need of money (Bundler, Giese, Johnson & Meintjies 2003:11).

The issue of relatives abusing orphaned children’s grants came out very strongly from the social workers as a hindrance to the family integration of orphaned children living in CHH. From their experiences of being in contact with the children, most social workers found that due to poverty-related challenges, relatives were motivated by social grants to take in orphaned children with a view to providing for their own families’ needs. In utilising the foster child grants, relatives were found to be prioritising their own financial needs rather than those of the orphaned children (Nziyane 2010:222).

Sub-theme 4.2: Some orphaned children went to live with foster parents

The following categories emerged in this sub-theme:

- Some orphaned children experience kinship foster care positively.
- Some orphaned children experience kinship foster care negatively.

Category 4.2.1: Some orphaned children experience kinship foster care positively

The findings of this study revealed that some participants indicated a feeling of satisfaction and appreciation for how they are relating to their kin foster parents. The below excerpts serve as testimony:

*“I am happier, the love that my grandparents, aunt and uncles are giving to us is awesome...my younger sister is now being taken to Gauteng with my aunt for a visit for this school holidays...I think it is much better to stay with your blood family members than to stay with strangers...you know each other before and that makes one to feel at home”*

*“I feel as if my mother is back to life again, she [foster parent] gave us a real mother love. She has her own family; she would have taken some money to support her own family, but she has never done that”*

Maclellan (2005:3) also asserted that orphans who are fostered with extended families will have at least some protection and support, benefits which will be missing in the lives of isolated child-headed households. Mallman (2002:6) stresses the importance of care by the extended family members as it is viewed as the first environment in which a child experiences love and affection. He further maintained that the family provides a child with a sense of belonging and an identity, because they have common roots and the same ancestors, and so much more so that child welfare agencies currently consider kin as the first placement choice when foster care is needed because they are readily available to provide a safe home.

#### Category 4.2.2: Some orphaned children experience kinship foster care negatively

It is revealed in this study that some participants were dissatisfied about their relationship with the foster parents and abuse was also experienced. The experiences shared below are testimony to what they are going through in kinship foster care:

*“In fact I get angry when I talk about how our real maternal grandmother is treating us. I understand that we are children who should always listen to our elders, but you listen only when elders are talking to you, but in this situation, no one told us anything in regard to the issue of foster care grant”*

*“Truly speaking ma’m [referring to the researcher] we are treated badly by my grandmother and my uncle. I sometimes told myself that it would be better if we have been left alone in our mother’s house. We don’t have clothes...now is winter...with myself is fine...but with my little sister is terrible...she is a sickly child...she is asthmatic...but does not dress warm when she goes to school, and even here at home...she does not have warm clothing...but she is receiving a grant...but the grant is controlled by my uncle...when we iron our school uniform, my uncle always complains that we are misusing electricity, my little sister is told to be eating too much...the school uniform ma’m...people just feel pity for us and give us the uniform left by their children”*

*“We are treated as if we are strangers and not part of the family. They make decisions for us and they want us not to live our own lives, but theirs”.*

Foster (2004:2) indicated that cases of abuse, mistreatment or exploitation of orphaned children living with the extended family members have been reported. In other instances, extended family members abused orphaned children physically, emotionally or sexually this also became a hindrance to effectively integrating the children with those extended family members (Nziyane 2010:234). Young Lim (2009:88) stated as well that being “looked after” by family members does not guarantee that children are being well treated and furthermore, when children are taken in by relatives because of the family obligation rather than genuine affection, the children are in a greater danger of being mistreated or abused by their carers than otherwise.

Sub-theme 4.3: The orphan children’s experience of the use of the foster care grant by the foster parents

Participants have different experiences of the use of the foster care grant by their foster parents. Some participants experienced the use of the grant as positive, while other participants experienced the abuse of grants by their foster parents. The following categories highlight those experiences as expressed by the participants:

- Some orphan children experience the use of the foster care grant by foster parents positively.
- Some orphan children experience the use of foster care grant by foster parents negatively.

Category 4.3.1: Some experience the use of the foster care grant by foster parents positively

The excerpts below show how some of the participants experienced the usefulness of the grant in their lives and how it was properly administered by their foster parents.

*“Yes; now life is better, it was difficult even to have mielie-meal, now we do have everything...my siblings also do get pocket money when they go to school, some money is kept safe at the post office...our grandmother do very well in administering our grant, we were staying in a shack when our mother passed away in 2007, but now we have a two-roomed brick house, electrified...electricity meter box and a two plate oven stove that we sometimes use it to bake”.*

*“My grandmother is making the savings for us from the grant, she buy clothes and pay for school trips...she also record all the spending and took the record to the social worker for her advice”*

Category 4.3.2: Some experience the use of foster care grant by the foster parents negatively

The issue of misusing the foster care grant by kin foster parents came out very strongly from some of the participants. The excerpts below indicate the following:

*“She is receiving R1900, 00 pensions for us, but she only gives us R600, 00 a month to buy all the basic needs. This money is too little to meet all our needs. I am a girl, there is other stuff which I should get for myself, but I can't. I and one of my brothers are leaving the house early to attend 6h00 morning study, we left the house with an empty stomach...it is not easy to concentrate at school...she is saying that she is banking the money for us...the next day is another story...she claims that she has paid the shark loaners...”*

*“She will give you what you are asking for, but after she has insulted you and tell you that you are making endless demands. I feel so irritated and I sometimes choose not to tell her even when we have serious needs here at home...my grandmother does not use the grant for us”.*

*“She does not use the money to cater our needs; she has built her own house in her stand”.*

The issue of relatives abusing orphaned children's grants came out very strongly from the social workers as a hindrance to the family integration of orphaned children living in child-headed households. From their experiences of being in contact with the children, most social workers found that due to poverty-related challenges, relatives were motivated by social grants to take in orphaned children with a view to providing for their own families' needs. In utilising the foster child grants, relatives were found to be prioritising their own financial needs rather than those of the orphaned children (Nziyane 2010:222).

Sub-theme 4.4: Other experiences of orphaned children in kinship foster care

This study has revealed other experiences of orphaned children in kinship foster care in the following categories:

- Orphaned children's experiences of the social worker.
- Orphaned children in kin foster care experience lack of advocacy.

- Orphaned children experience that they develop coping strategies

#### Category 4.4.1: Orphaned children's experiences of the social worker

Some orphaned children placed in kinship foster care have not experienced any relationship between themselves and the social worker. The below excerpts serve as references:

*“Those social workers couldn't believe you even if you go and notify them...who am I that they can take me seriously...they don't even know me”*

*“Firstly...just to greet us...you know...ma' m ...greeting a person it shows ubuntu...in our culture you greet any person you meet for the first time in that day”.*

*“...but the social worker has never visited us at home until we were called at her office once and it was the end...”That is what I heard is that social workers visit orphans in their homes, but with us it was not like that”.*

Orphaned children placed in kinship foster care have not experienced the establishment of trust and the building of rapport by the social worker. Home visits to the foster parents' homes had not been experienced by orphaned children in kinship foster care after the placement by the court. It is also revealed in a study conducted by Bundler, Giese, Johnson and Meintjies (2003:23) that in 1999, after the death of Thuliswa [not her real name]'s mother, the local social worker promised to visit the household in order to begin to process a foster application, but she (the social worker) warned her (Thuliswa) that there was a long waiting list. Three years later Thuliswa reported that the social worker had still not arrived.

Demmer (2004:40) stated that social workers can become overwhelmed by the plight of individuals and families affected by AIDS and they may experience frustration themselves at not being able to do more for orphaned children.

#### Category 4.4.2: Experience of lack of advocacy by orphaned children placed in kinship foster care

Some of the orphaned children who participated in this study shared their experiences and pointed to the fact that they do not have anyone to advocate for their rights and needs. The following excerpts reflect what the participants articulated:

*“They are aware...my paternal uncle and his wife are our neighbours, they are aware of what we are going through, but they are afraid of confronting my aunt...they say she will hate them”*

*“When we communicate telephonically with him [the brother] for help he tells us to remain quiet and live my sister [the foster parent] as she is...and he promised to do for us whatever we will be asking for. My brother is that kind of a person who doesn’t want arguments. He believes that things shall be well”*

Maclellan (2005:13) maintained that as minors, orphaned children in kinship foster care are often unable to claim or register assistance and the lack of an adult advocate is a major disadvantage. Maclellan (2005) further says that this role can be taken on by an adult representative of an NGO, a social worker, or even community leader.

Advocacy has been a role assured to social workers since the inception of the profession. In performing this role, the social worker would have to offer support, advice and represent orphaned children in kinship foster care (Hepworth & Larsen 1993:25).

#### Category 4.4.3: Orphaned Children experience that they develop coping strategies

The findings of the study demonstrated that participants in kinship foster care experienced that they develop the coping skills that they use when encountering challenges in kinship foster care. The excerpts below serve as testimonies to children’s coping strategies:

*“Myself...I just go to the sports ground and play soccer with my friends...and I come back home late, knowing that my uncle will be gone...but my younger sister runs to stay to her friends sometimes...there was a time where she left to stay with a boyfriend and his family... I always feel great. I am happier when at the soccer field than when I am at home. I tend to forget all my sorrows and troubles out there...and...(his voice start to tremble, eyes full of tears but he battle to hold it back...the researcher stretches her hand to hold the respondent’s hand, he holds the researcher’s hand very firmly and cries bitterly, the researcher pulls her chair closer and holds his shoulder with another hand...then followed a moment of silence to give him an opportunity to assimilate his experiences)*

*“My mother taught us to respect each other...so I was thinking that if I can allow my siblings to go and stay with our maternal grandmother, they won’t have good behaviour.*

*“My mother was [and even though she has passed on she is still] my inspiration...she always told us that we should stand for ourselves and never lean on another person because that person can leave you and you would fall down and get hurt”.*

Some children cope by doing sport; others find that the memories of what they learnt from their parents still inspires them to cope. Germann (2005:248) confirms that despite an array of gruelling life circumstances which children in charge of households experienced, they still find ways to survive and show resilience in their life situations.

The ability of the participants to thrive despite exposure to stressful life experiences and pervasive adversity has been supported by Bonanno (2004:20) who asserted that many people are exposed to loss or potentially traumatic events at some point in their lives and yet continue to function optimally and show positive emotional experiences. Williams et al (2008:338) state that recent research confirms that even children, who are exposed to stressful life experiences, although being vulnerable to the psychological effects of their life circumstances, still have the capacity to thrive amidst those adverse circumstances.

In dealing with life circumstances, resilient children use dispositional proactive coping strategies such as high self-efficacy and self-esteem, and they have inner control and a positive self-concept which makes them more responsible, achievement-oriented, assertive, and independent (Bauman & Germann 2005:109).

The findings in theme 4 revealed the experiences of participants about being placed in kinship foster care. Some participants continued to remain in their parents' home despite the court order for foster care placement by the children's court, but some went to live with their kin foster parents. Experiences of not being cared for by foster parents were raised by some participants who are “in” and also by those who are “out” of kin foster parents' home. It is also apparent in the findings of this study that some participants experienced the abuse of grants and some experienced that their grant is properly administered by their foster parents. The experiences of lack of relationship, trust and advocacy by both the social workers and other family members were emphasized by the participants. The findings revealed that social workers did not bother to visit them after placement in kinship foster care. In the midst of all the adverse experiences by participants, they found nevertheless that they had developed coping strategies.

### **3.3.5. Theme 5: Expectations of orphaned children who were previously in charge of the households about the process of being placed in kinship foster care**

This last theme of the study revealed that orphaned children who were previously in charge of households had a number of expectations about foster care placement. The expectations are explained in the following sub-theme:

Sub-theme 5.1: Orphaned children placed in kinship foster care have expectations about the process of being placed in kinship foster care, about the social worker and the magistrate in the children's court

The following categories emerged during the data analysis of this research:

- Orphaned children expect to be involved in any decision that affects them (orphaned children).
- Orphaned children's expectations about the social worker.
- Orphaned children's expectations of the children's court.

Category 5.1.1: Orphaned Children expect to be involved in any decision that affects them (orphaned children)

The study revealed that orphaned children expect to be involved in any decision-making process that affects them. Some participants in this study articulated their expectations as follows:

*“The family elders, including me and my brothers should have sat down together and address our problem...”*

*“I think the social worker should have found out from us about who do we think can receive the grant on our behalf”*

*“I think we should have been asked about whom we think can take care of us so well”*

The need for participating in any decision-making process that affects them is emphasized in the findings of this study. These findings are consistent with Nyamugasira (1998:7), who maintained that although children in child-headed households need a voice to help them articulate their needs, in most cases their voices are not heard. Nyamugasira (1998:8) highlights that children who participated in a qualitative needs-assessment study on children



living in child-headed households which was conducted in Rwanda revealed their need to be heard and represented.

Similarly, the study conducted by Nziyane (2010:312) revealed that the need for involving the orphaned children in the planning phase of the family integration process was strongly expressed by some of the children and some members of the extended families who participated in this study. Some of the child participants strongly emphasised that the social workers and the extended family members should listen to their voices before making any decision regarding their placement (Nziyane 2010:312). Section 137 (6) of the Children's Amendment Act stipulated that the foster parent, caregiver and the social worker may not take any decisions concerning child-headed households without consulting:

- (a) The child heading the household; and
- (b) given the age, maturity and stage of development of other children, also any other children in the household.

#### Category 5.1.2: Orphaned children's expectations about the social worker

Participants expect social workers to conduct supervision and monitoring of whether the foster care grant is effectively used to address the needs of orphaned children placed in kinship foster care, and also to have a good relationship with them that is characterized by trust, respect and dignity.

This category is divided into the following sub-categories:

- Orphaned children expect the social worker to carry out supervision after foster care placement.
- Orphaned children in kinship foster care expect social workers to establish rapport and trust with them, and also to be treated with respect and dignity.

#### Sub-category 5.1.2.1: Orphaned Children expect the social worker to carry out supervision after foster care placement

The findings from some participants in the study revealed that orphaned children who are placed under the care of kin foster parents expect social workers to carry out after-care

services such as supervision. The following utterances from some of the participants serve as evidence:

*“...the social worker should check whether the social grant is being used in a correct way and advise us”.*

*“Ohhh... (he kept quiet and seems to be in deep thought) oh...ja...I think the social worker is the government because he [social worker] is working for government. But my mother [referring to the researcher] social workers were not supposed to make a follow up of whether this money serves a right purpose?”*

In the study conducted by Nziyane (2010:213) it has been found in all three interest groups (i.e. children heading CHH, extended families and social workers) that social workers should involve children when they monitor and support the placements. Involvement of the children will assist social workers to identify and address problems and challenges which may arise

during the integration period of the children with their extended family members and which could threaten the placement. The early identification of the problems will also avert potential abuse of the orphaned children and enhance the sustainability of the placements.

According to Costin, Downs, McFadden and Moore (2004:344), welfare organizations are responsible for children in alternative care, including foster care. Therefore they are obliged to monitor placement situations continuously, ensuring that proper care and treatment is given. In South Africa the National Department of Social Development designs, monitors and partly implements social welfare policy and it retains the overall responsibility for managing statutory social services (Thiele 2005:26,27).

Sub-category 5.1.2.2: Orphaned children in kinship foster care expect social workers to establish rapport and trust with them, and also to be treated with respect and dignity

The following excerpts taken from the storylines indicate that orphaned children in kinship foster care expects to have a good relationship with social workers and also to be treated with respect and dignity.

*“Those social workers couldn’t believe you even if you go and notify them...who am I that they can take me seriously...they don’t even know me, but if it is them discovering on their own how we are living with our relatives, it would be much better”.*

*“...but the social worker has never visited us at home until we were called at her office once and it was the end”.*

*“Firstly...just to greet us...you know...ma’m ...greeting a person it shows ubuntu...in our culture you greet any person you meet for the first time in that day. Everything that they were doing it was about us...at least...they [referring to the social worker and the magistrate] should have involved us...yes I understand that children are not consulted in number of issues, but I still maintain that things did not go right from the beginning”.*

There was no literature found in this category. Donalek and Soldwisch (2004:354) recommend that social workers should create and maintain relationships with orphaned children when conducting an interview to ensure that they (orphaned children) feel comfortable in sharing their stories which sometimes can be sensitive.

#### Category 5.1.3: Orphaned Children’s expectations about the children’s court

The below excerpts are the articulated expectations of participants:

*“I expect my aunt, the social worker...even the Magistrate. Neither the social worker nor the magistrate bothered to talk to us”*

*“Firstly, my expectation is...just to greet us...Everything that they were doing [in the children’s court] it was about us...at least...they [referring to the social worker and the magistrate] should have involved us...yes I understand that children are not consulted in number of issues, but I still maintain that things did not go right from the beginning”*

It has been revealed in a study conducted by Bundler et al (2003:22-23) that in rural areas there are no dedicated children’s courts. One magistrate in an area conducts roughly three children’s court inquiries per month. It is further stated that in one of the courts in greater Tzaneen (Limpopo Province), the magistrate only grants time to children’s issues from 07:45 to 09:00 on Fridays only.

Section 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act. 108 of 1996, makes provision for recognising that children have a right to grow up with dignity and a feeling of self-worth and that they are entitled to make decisions about their own lives. According to the South African Council of Social Service Professions’ code of conduct concerning a client is,

amongst others, the need to maintain a professional relationship with the client and acknowledge the right to self-determination.

The findings in theme 5 revealed that orphaned children who were previously in charge of child-headed households had expectations on how their placement in kinship foster care should have been conducted. Participants in this study revealed that they expect visits and monitoring of their placement in kinship foster care. In so doing, participants believe that social workers could be able to assess and observe their living situation in kinship foster care. It is further expected that supervision of foster care placement should be done in order to assist on how foster care grants can be effectively and efficiently used by kin foster parents. Lastly, participants expect that their rights to be treated with respect and dignity be promoted by both the social workers and the children's court.

### **3.3. Summary**

In this chapter the presentation and discussion of findings were compared with the existing body of knowledge by means of a literature review. The chapter began with the presentation of findings pointing to the demographic data of the participants. Participants were three males and three females. The findings of this study revealed that ages of children who previously headed households and were now placed in kin foster care at the time of conducting the study ranged from 15 to 18. The Children's Amendment Act (Act 41/2007: Sec 137(1)(c)) stipulates that a child who is 16 years old may be considered as head of a household and bear rights and responsibilities as a caregiver. This indicates that the orphaned children were all under the accepted age of being legally considered as heads of households when they were exposed to adult responsibilities of heading a household.

The chapter also listed five themes that emerged during data analysis. The themes have been explored in terms of the categories and sub-categories in order to provide an exposition of the experiences and the expectations of orphaned children who were previously in charge of the household and now integrated in kinship foster care.

The first and second themes describe the experiences of the orphaned children in child-headed households as a background to this research study. The first theme provided an exploration of the experiences of the orphaned children now in kinship foster care about the death of the parent. The findings of the study revealed that orphaned children experience the death of their parents as painful, devastating and as if the world is coming to an end, and also

that they have different experiences about losing a parent. Some orphaned children started to assume responsibility while parents were still alive, they took care of their sick parents and of the young siblings when parents died.

The second theme highlighted other experiences of orphans now in kinship foster care about previously being in charge of a child-headed household. The findings of this study revealed that some orphaned children in child-headed households experienced their living environment as unsafe, with a lack of parental care and guidance. Orphaned children who headed households have experienced education and financial challenges. Various role-players like churches, relatives, neighbours, and elder siblings who are married have featured in the life-experience of orphaned children in child-headed households.

The three last themes in this chapter focused on answering the research question of this study (i.e. What are the experiences and expectations of orphan children placed in kinship foster care who were previously in charge of child-headed households?). Theme 3 provided the experiences of orphaned children previously in charge of child-headed households about their placement process into kinship foster care. The findings of the study revealed that orphaned children previously heading households were not involved in the preparation process of placing them in kinship foster care. Orphaned children who were in charge of the households experienced no court orientation; hence the placement process was accompanied by emotions as experienced by the participants. Various role-players during the court placement process were experienced negatively by all the participants. There was no research done on this theme, so that only limited literature was found to control the findings.

The fourth theme also provided the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of the household about being in kinship foster care. Various experiences about kinship foster care were shared by orphaned children. The findings of this study revealed that some orphaned children remained alone without the care of an adult person despite the court order on placement under kinship foster care. Some experienced being cared for by foster parents while some experienced lack of care by foster parents. The experiences on the use of foster care grants by foster parents were shared as well. Some experienced the use of foster grants to be serving their needs but others experienced the use of the grant as serving the needs of the kin foster parents.

The findings of this study further revealed that orphaned children have expectations when placed in kinship foster care. Expectations of orphan children in kinship foster care emerged and presented as a 5<sup>th</sup> theme of this research study. Participants expected to be loved and cared for by their foster parents and also to be involved in all decision-making that involves them. Participants experienced that there is no one who is willing to advocate for them in kinship foster care. The findings of this study revealed that social workers do not conduct after-care supervision and that other family members are also not willing to intervene in the orphaned children's experiences of kinship foster care.

Furthermore, orphaned children experience that they have developed coping strategies in the midst of all the circumstances they came across in kinship foster care. These findings will be discussed further in the next chapter which will present the conclusions of the study. From the experiences of the children about placement it is evident that they had not experienced any counselling by the social worker from the period of losing a parent to a period of placement in foster care. Since the researcher is a social worker herself, she concludes that it is in the best interest of the child to receive counselling after the traumatic experience of losing a parent(s).

## CHAPTER 4

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the content of the research study, followed by conclusions and recommendations arising from the research conducted on the experiences and expectations of orphaned children previously in charge of the household and now placed in kinship foster care about their preparation and subsequent placement in kinship foster care.

In Chapter 1 of this research report the researcher provided a research plan outlining the research methodology she proposed to use for investigating the topic under discussion. The researcher explained the relevance of the topic as well as the method in which it was investigated.

Since the goal of this research study was to develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences and expectations of orphaned children regarding the process being placed in kinship foster care after having been in charge of a child-headed household, Chapter 2 of the research study furnished a description of the qualitative research process and design that were used in this study, as described by Donalek and Soldwisch (2004), Grinnell (2001) and Neuman (2006) who asserted that qualitative research seeks in-depth understanding of a phenomenon under study from the participants' point of view because participants are experts in their experiential worlds and are able to articulate and describe their experiences and feelings until the researcher has attained full understanding of the phenomenon or part of the phenomenon.

Chapter 3 presented the findings of this qualitative study in accordance with the themes, sub-themes, categories and sub-categories that emerged during the process of data analysis as outlined by Tesch's eight steps (in Creswell 2009), and these findings were confirmed by storylines from the transcribed interviews, and compared and contrasted with the existing body of knowledge.

This final chapter concludes the qualitative research endeavour by demonstrating how the goal of the study was achieved and also summarizing briefly the key points of all the chapters, the conclusions drawn from these chapters and the researcher's recommendations based on the whole research study.

Below is an outline of the structure of this chapter:

- Research question, goal and objectives;
- Research methodology, which includes summary, conclusions and recommendations;
- The findings, summary, conclusions and recommendations regarding the experiences and expectations of orphans previously in charge of child-headed households and now integrated in kin foster care about their preparation and subsequent placement in kinship foster care.
- Conclusion of this chapter.

#### **4.2. Research question, goal and objectives**

Before concluding this qualitative study, it is important to evaluate the research question, goal and the objectives of the study formulated at the outset of the study (see Chapter 1, section 2). The research question of the study was posed as follows:

*“What are the experiences and expectations of orphans placed in kinship foster care who were previously in charge of child-headed households?”* This research question led to the formulation of the research goal as follows:

*“To develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences and expectations of orphans of the process being placed in kinship foster care after having been in charge of a child-headed household”.*

In order to achieve the above goal, the following research objectives were set:

- To obtain a sample of orphans previously in charge of child-headed households who are now integrated in kinship foster care.



- To conduct semi-structured interviews to explore
  - the experiences of orphaned children now placed in kinship foster care about previously being in charge of a child-headed household
  - the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of the child-headed household about the process of their placement in kinship foster care
  - the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of the child-headed household about being in kinship foster care.
  
- To sift, sort and analyse the data obtained according to the eight steps of qualitative data analysis constructed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009:186).
  
- To subsequently describe
  - the experiences of orphaned children now placed in kinship foster care about previously being in charge of a child-headed household
  - the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of the child-headed household about their placement into kinship foster care
  - the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of the child-headed household about being in kinship foster care.
  
- To interpret and analyse the data and conduct a literature control in order to verify data.
  
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations informing social workers and social work interventions about the experiences and expectations of children who were previously in charge of child-headed households and are now in kinship foster care.

In the opinion of the researcher, the research question was adequately answered in the study and all the objectives of the study were achieved and the goal was attained through the objectives set down in Chapter 1. The next section summarises how the researcher applied the research methodology to achieve this goal.

### **4.3. The research methodology**

This section provides a summary, conclusions and recommendations on the research methodology that was followed in order to answer the original research question and reach the research goal.

#### **4.3.1. Summary, conclusions and recommendations**

This research endeavour was approached from a qualitative perspective as the goal of the study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and expectations of orphans previously heading child-headed households and now placed in kinship foster care about their preparation and subsequent placement in kinship foster care.

- Selecting the research problem

Placing of orphans under kinship foster care has become a common occurrence in social work practice, especially around Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga Province. Social workers are facing a challenge of an alarming increase of foster care cases due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic in the area. According to the annual report of Child Welfare South Africa (2002-2003), the number of orphaned children on Child Welfare caseloads nationally has reached extreme proportions, with numbers having trebled between 1999 and 2002 (Thiele, 2005:15). Thus social workers are trapped in having to place orphaned children in kinship foster care, without knowledge and understanding of the experiences and expectations of children previously heading households but now placed in kinship foster care.

- Choosing the qualitative approach

A qualitative research approach was adopted because the goal of the research was to develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences and expectations of orphans in the process of being placed in kinship foster care after having been in charge of a child-headed household (see Chapter 1, section 2.2).

- Selection of qualitative design

The researcher selected an exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design to explore and describe the experiences and expectations of orphaned children who were previously in charge of child-headed households and now placed in kinship foster care about their preparation and subsequent placement in kinship foster care. The exploratory design was selected because the research was examining an unexplored new topic in order to generate more precise research questions for future research, while the descriptive design provided the researcher with an opportunity to collect information provided by participants during the interview process on “who”, “when”, “where” and “how” (Neuman 2006:35).

During the interview process the researcher listened to their experiences and meanings attached in relation to the “self”, significant others such as kin foster parents, social workers, religious leaders and home-based caregivers. Neuman (2006: 158) explains that a contextual research design is used in a qualitative research study to understand the social meaning and significance of an event or social action from the social context in which it appears. The life experiences of the participants were related by them starting from the period of heading the household prior to the death of their parents up to the present moment of being placed in kinship foster care.

In view of the fact that little is known about the experiences and expectations of the orphaned children placed in kinship foster care about their preparation and subsequent placement in kinship foster care, the researcher arrived at the conclusion that an exploratory mode of inquiry fitted well with this study.

- Data collection

Firstly this phase involved the strategies on how data would be conducted. To gain access to the study area and to the research participants the researcher acknowledged the existing leadership structures by consulting the Department of Social Development at Ehlanzeni District at Mpumalanga Province telephonically with a follow-up written request to access the potential participants for this study (see Annexure 11 & 111).

The request was transferred to the Manager of the same department in the Bushbuckridge Municipality (see Annexure 1V) and social workers were contacted to identify suitable participants who met the criteria of inclusion (see Chapter 2, section 2.4.4). This was unsuccessful and the researcher was referred to two Home Based Care Organizations (i.e. Wisani and Nhlengelo) rendering services to child-headed households in two areas of Bushbuckridge who assisted the researcher to identify the potential participants.

In this research study, the specified population considered was made up of all orphaned children who were previously in charge of child-headed households at Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga Province and were now legally placed in kinship foster care (see Annexure 1 for the map of Bushbuckridge) in agreement with Arkava and Lane (in De Vos et al., 2005:193) that a population refers to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics. Purposive sampling was then used to select a sample of six participants who met the criteria of inclusion for the purpose of this study.

The caregivers informed the participants of the researcher's intended contact. The researcher contacted them individually in their homes to explain to them about the research study and the accompanying implications. The researcher offered the participants an opportunity to ask questions for clarity before giving their consent to participate. The researcher wanted to ensure that they had a clear understanding of the study and how the process of gathering data would unfold.

It was of advantage to the researcher to be referred to the Bushbuckridge area since she had rendered social work services in the same area for eight years and was known to the social workers and the home-based care organizations. Being assisted by the caregivers to identify and prepare the potential participants for the research (see Chapter 2, section 2.4.4) was an advantage since the participants had good relationships with the caregivers (see Chapter 2, section 2.3.3).

The researcher prepared a semi-structured interview schedule with possible questions. A pilot study was done to test the effectiveness of the research tool that would be used to collect data. One participant was selected based on her accessibility for the purpose of testing the interview. Piloting the study first was effective and is recommended because the researcher was able to identify and address gaps in her interviewing skills and to plan properly for her

full scale data collection phase. To guide her to conduct the interview with participants, semi-structured interviews were then conducted with the selected participants at their homes in Xitsonga. Open-ended questions were used when probing for clarity on what the participants articulated. The flexibility of the guide allowed the researcher to explore additional information which the participants raised. The use of open-ended questions by the researcher encouraged participants to provide more depth on the issue under study (Meadows 2003:466) and gave them (participants) freedom to communicate openly with her at all times. Saturation of data was reached after six interviews.

As the probability of collecting the relevant data as required to answer the research question is solely dependent on the positive relationship between the researcher and the participants, the researcher intentionally used the mentioned interview techniques (see Chapter 2, section 3.4) and especially attempted to be flexible throughout the interview process. The data were collected in Xitsonga, which is the preferred language of the participants, then translated into English by the researcher who is also a Tsonga speaking person. The researcher concludes that conducting the interviews in the language of the participants in a setting with which the participants were familiar also proved successful for this study as it enabled the participants to express themselves freely and with ease.

The interview was recorded by means of voice recorder with the consent of the participants and important aspects which the researcher wanted to explore further for instance were noted down in writing. This assisted the researcher to play back the voice recorder when alone and write down all the information gathered during the interview process. The interviews were then transcribed by the researcher. Thus the researcher concluded that the use of voice recordings and note taking was appropriate for this study as it provided the researcher with the opportunity of listening attentively and attending to all the verbal and non-verbal messages of the participants.

- Data analysis

The analysis was done according to the eight steps provided by Tesch (cited in Creswell, 2009: 185-186).

- Data Verification

Lastly, data verification was done according to Guba's model of trustworthiness of qualitative data as outlined by Krefting (1991: 215-222). The researcher used voice recordings and the independent coder to enhance the accuracy of the research findings. The findings were discussed first with the study promoter in order to reach consensus about those research findings.

The verification of data was conducted to ensure trustworthiness and to check accuracy of information in order to confirm the collected data. The researcher concluded that Guba's model of trustworthiness (Krefting, 215-222) was appropriate in establishing the accuracy and credibility of the research findings.

#### **4.3.2. Conclusions and Recommendations on qualitative approach**

The researcher's conclusions and recommendations regarding the use of the qualitative approach in research are outlined as follows:

The researcher concludes that the qualitative research approach, design and methodology proved to be an appropriate choice for this study as the approach and the design followed provided findings that have promoted a better understanding of the experiences and expectations of orphan children previously in charge of child-headed households and now placed in kinship foster care (Creswell 2009:175-176, Fossey et al 2002:727, Meadows 2003:464-465, Donalek & Soldwisch 2004:353-356).

The qualitative approach was well suited to the purpose of arriving at a better understanding of the experiences and expectations of orphan children previously in charge of child-headed households and now placed in kinship foster care. The participants proved to be experts on their own experiential worlds and were able to articulate and describe their experiences and expectations from their point of view until the researcher attained an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Donalek & Soldwisch 2004:356).

#### **4.4. The research findings**

In this section, the summary and conclusions of the research findings will be presented according to the five themes and accompanying sub-themes, categories and sub-categories that emerged in Chapter 3 during the data analysis processes.

##### **4.4.1. Summary and conclusions pertaining the research findings**

The findings of the research were presented in Chapter 3 and are summarized as follows.

**Theme 1** concerns the painful and devastating experience of the death of a parent(s) by orphaned children placed in kinship foster care. The findings of the study revealed that orphaned children had different experiences about losing a parent for the first time, the second parent and the single parent and also that different meanings are attached to each death experienced. Nevertheless, all participants experienced more or less similar challenges when the death of parents subjected them to the position of heading households, taking care of the siblings and the household, economic hardship, diminished sense of identity and educational challenges. Some participants started to assume household responsibilities when parents were away from home, while some started during the period of sickness of the parent.

From these findings the researcher concludes that the death of a parent is experienced as painful and devastating to every child. The researcher further concludes that although orphaned children were exposed to adult responsibility while parents were still alive, the worst experience is when they also had on the additional function of taking care of a sick parent. Those children endured the pain of taking care of their sick parents, witnessing their death and of losing them at the end.

**Theme 2** described the experiences of participants about previously being in charge of the child-headed households including the historical context and background of being placed in kinship foster care. Before being placed in kinship foster care participants had various experiences as heads of households such as financial and educational challenges, experiencing the living environment as unsafe, including vulnerability to social crimes; lack of parental guidance and the development of a sense of resilience. They had experienced help from various role-players such as older siblings who are already married, the home-based caregivers and the church. Furthermore, amid all the adverse experiences orphaned children

experienced some help from individuals and existing community organisations and possessed an intrinsic nature of striving towards the actualization of a better life. The existing community organisations also have the potential to play an even more prominent role in the future life of orphan children.

The experiences described in themes one and two include many traumatic events and indicate areas that could receive attention by social workers during the process of placement of children into foster care to help them cope better in subsequent foster care and in life. The intrinsic striving towards actualisation of a better life also provides the potential on which to base social work intervention.

**Theme 3** described the experiences of orphaned children previously in charge of child-headed households about their placement into kinship foster care. It is apparent that orphaned children in this study were not adequately prepared for placement in kinship foster care by either the relatives or the social worker involved in the process of placing them in kinship foster care.

The findings in this theme revealed also that kin foster parents mostly presented themselves for fostering the participants. The lack of court orientation to the participants resulted in them experiencing fear and their non-involvement by the children's court magistrate made them feel bad, embarrassed, angry, demeaning and belittled during the court proceedings.

From the experiences described in this theme, the researcher then concludes that protocols such as the constitutional rights of the children as described in the Constitution of South Africa, UN Convention on children's rights and section 10 of the Children's Act, 108 of 2005, as well as section 180-190 of the same Act which also mentions, among others, that a prospective foster parent and anyone working for or involved in an NPO that manages a cluster foster care scheme must be a fit and proper person to be entrusted with the foster care of the child; be willing and able to undertake, exercise and maintain the responsibilities of such care, were not acknowledged by the social worker during the preparation and the placement of the participants.

**Theme 4** gives a description of the experiences of orphaned children who were previously in charge of the household about being in kinship foster care. The findings of this study revealed that some orphaned children are left at their original home; there was no change in place of



abode despite the order made by the children's court. Some were cared for by the foster parent, but some were not cared for by the foster parent receiving the grant. The experiences of use of the foster grant were regarded as positive by some participants and negative by others. Therefore kinship foster care was experienced as positive by some participants while others experienced it as negative.

From the findings presented in this theme the researcher concludes that social workers did not spend quality time on assessing the existing relationship between the kin foster parent and foster child, and that they (social workers) mostly relied on the information provided by a kin foster parent alone to process the placement of orphaned children in kinship foster care.

The researcher concludes as well that foster parents were also not trained and skilled in the area of managing the foster care grant.

**Theme 5** described the expectations of orphaned children previously in charge of child-headed households and now placed in kinship foster care about their preparation and subsequent placement. The expectations revealed in this study are that orphaned children expect to be involved in any decision that affects them; social workers should carry out after-care supervision after foster care placement, social workers should establish good relationship with the children who want to be treated with respect and dignity. On the basis of the described expectations of the participants in this last theme, the researcher concludes that section 186 of the Children's Act 108 of 2007 is not recognized by the social workers involved in foster care placement as it requires a social service professional to visit the child in kinship foster care at least once every two years to monitor and evaluate the placement and, in addition, the social auxiliary workers could play a role here by monitoring the placement and reporting the findings to the social worker.

The above findings contribute to an understanding of the experiences and expectations of the orphaned children heading households and provide information that can be used to assist service providers like social workers, social development management, policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders to develop strategies that can address the needs of children heading households and being placed in kinship foster care.

#### **4.4.2. Recommendations pertaining to the research findings**

**Theme 1:** The researcher recommends that social workers should provide intensive counselling as part of the preparation of orphaned children who are in charge of households and in the process of being placed in kinship foster care (cf. Chapter 4, theme1).

**Theme 2:** With reference to the findings based on this theme, the researcher concluded that orphaned children are vulnerable to social crimes. Furthermore, orphaned children possess an intrinsic nature of striving towards the actualization of a better life in the midst of all adverse experiences. Existing community organisations have a prominent role to play in the future life of orphan children (see the more expanded conclusion above). In the light of the stated conclusions, the researcher recommends that social workers should give attention to all the traumatic experiences of orphaned children in order to help them cope better in subsequent foster care and in life. Orphaned children heading households should also be assisted by receiving training in life-skills such as HIV & AIDS and Love Life programmes.

**Theme 3:** It has surfaced in this study that orphaned children were not adequately prepared for placement in kinship foster care by either the relatives or the social worker involved in the process of placing them in kinship foster care. With the derived conclusion the researcher recommends that:

- Social workers assigned for foster care placement should make an effort of preparing orphaned children for kinship foster care.
- The application of section 10 of the Children's' Act 108 of 2007 should be ensured which states, namely, that: "every child that is of such an age, maturity and stage of development as to be able to participate in any matter concerning that child has the right to participate in an appropriate way and views expressed by the child must be given due consideration"
- Kin foster parents should also be screened before the processing of a court order and training be offered as well to kin foster parents on the attached responsibilities and implications but this is not being done by the social workers.
- The application of section 180-190 which also mentions, among others, that a prospective foster parent and anyone working for or involved in an NPO that manages a cluster foster care scheme must be a fit and proper person to be entrusted

with the foster care of the child; and be willing and able to undertake, exercise and maintain the responsibilities of such care.

The relevant legislation, policies and procedure guidelines on working with orphans and vulnerable children such as the Constitution of South Africa on the rights of children, UN Convention on children's rights; Children's Act, 108 of 2005 applicable to orphans and vulnerable children should be acknowledged and enforced at all times by all implementers of foster care services. Social Workers should at all times recognize the values of their profession as outlined by Grobler et al. (2003:85-110) as:

**Respect** which refers to the attitude and belief that every person is worthy of respect and esteem

**Self-determination:** Social workers should pursue orphan children's growth and self-actualization by allowing their self-determination during the placement process.

**Individualization:** Each orphan child's situation should be treated as unique; hence more effort must be put in by social workers when working with orphaned children.

**Theme 4:** The researcher deduced from these findings that some orphaned children who are not residing in the same household with the kin foster parents experience a poor relationship with the respective kin foster parent, while those who are in the same vicinity as kin foster parents have an opportunity of observing and discovering whether the closeness is to their advantage or not. The use and abuse of grants was emphasized in the findings of this study.

In this regard the researcher recommends that:

- Social workers should spend quality time on assessing the existing relationship between the kin foster parent and foster child, as well as not relying on the information from one person who votes him/herself to be a foster parent, but to conduct a thorough investigation into the whole family system.
- Foster parents should be trained and skilled in the area of managing finances, and an expenditure plan be drawn up monthly in consultation with the head of household and records such as invoices, receipts etc. are kept safe.

**Theme 5:** The researcher arrived at the conclusion that the ethical principles that guide social workers when working with the clients were not fully observed. Orphaned children's rights to freedom of speech and to be treated with dignity are violated in the process of foster care placement. Although some participants were positive about the use of foster care grants by kin foster parents, it came clear that the majority of the participants are experiencing the abuse of grants by their kin foster parents.

Upon reflection, the researcher recommends the following:

- That the Minister of Electoral Committee, Head of Department, Executive and Senior Managers at the strategic level should endorse and enforce the implementation of the relevant legislation as far as after-care supervision is concerned.
- It is further recommended that social workers should have monitoring and evaluation systems/tools in place that can assist them to check the effectiveness of the utilization of foster care grants.
- The court should also monitor the foster care placement by for example requiring social workers' reports to be submitted timeously or ordering the child and/or foster parent to appear before it to inform the court about compliance with its order or to allow the court to vary or withdraw the order as recommended by the Children's Institute (UCT) and National Association of Child Care Workers (2011:47). If a court makes an order that no social work supervision or report is required and that the foster care placement extends for more than two years, section 186 of the Children's Act 108 of 2007 still requires a social service professional to visit the child in kinship foster care at least once every two years to monitor and evaluate the placement. Social auxiliary workers could play a role here by monitoring the placement and reporting the findings to the social worker.
- That social workers, foster parents and other role-players who work directly with orphaned children who are to be placed in kinship foster care should at all times strive

to listen to the children's voices before attempting any intervention in their situation as stipulated in section 188(2) of the Children's Act 108 of 2007.

#### **4.4.3. Recommendations pertaining to further and future research**

In view of the fact that there was no previous research done on the experiences and expectations of orphaned children in regard to their preparation and placement in kinship foster care, the researcher recommends that this type of research be done on a much large scale.

#### **4.5. Conclusion of the chapter**

This final chapter has concluded the qualitative research project by demonstrating how the goal of the study was achieved. The chapter began by evaluating whether the findings of the research study had answered the research question, goal and objectives of the study.

This chapter has included a summary of the biographical details of the participants with the accompanying conclusions and recommendations made by the researcher. The summary, conclusions and recommendations of the qualitative research project and of the research findings are presented as well in this chapter.

This study has covered the problem formulation and the research methodology envisaged to answer the research question as outlined in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 elaborated on how the research methodology was applied when collecting data. The findings based on the experiences and expectations of orphan children previously in charge of the household and now placed in kinship foster care about their preparation and subsequent placement in kinship foster care are captured in Chapter 3, where the information gathered was compared and contrasted with the literature reviewed. The conclusions and recommendations in this regard were presented in this final chapter.

This study was a particular challenge to the researcher because she was not financed for the study. The study had cost implications which made it difficult for the researcher to accomplish certain research functions such as collecting data on time. There was a stage of analysing and interpreting data which was so challenging to the researcher that she even

thought of giving up the study. However, despite all the challenges, the researcher has finally developed an understanding of how to apply the qualitative approach when conducting a research study. Having reached the goal of this study gave the researcher a sense of self-fulfilment, growth and development on the field of research.

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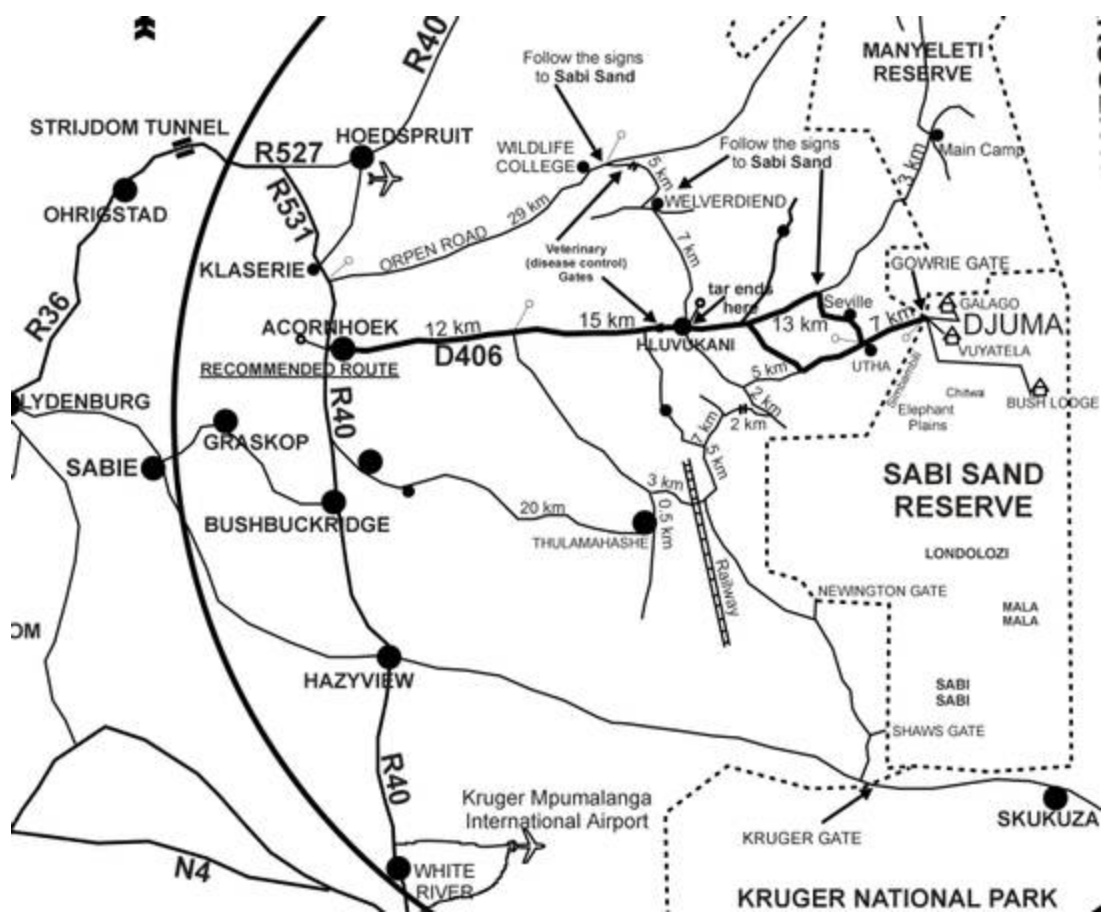
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# ANNEXURES

## ANNEXURE 1

### MAP OF BUSHBUCKRIDGE



## ANNEXURE 11

### LETTER OF REQUEST TO CONDUCT THE RESEARCH

P.O Box 1198, Thulamahashe, 1365, tel: 015 294 3220, Fax: (015) 294 4522 e-mail: mathebulats@agric.limpopo.gov.za

ENQ: T.S Mathebula

21 May 2010

Mr D.E. Mkhize  
Director: Department of Social Development  
Enhlazeni District  
Nelspruit  
1200

Dear Mr Mkhize

#### **Re: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

The researcher Ms T.S Mathebula is a registered social worker and a part time masters' student in the Department of Social Work at UNISA. She is also employed by the Department of Agriculture in Polokwane since the year of 2008 as a Deputy Manager for Employee Health & Wellness programme. Previously she was employed by the Department of Health & Social Development in Mpumalanga for about eight years. That is where she perceived a need for conducting a research project based on her day to day experiences and challenges she came across during the process of service delivery.

The research topic is: *“From being in charge of a child-headed household to being placed in kinship foster care: The experiences and expectations of orphaned children previously in charge of child-headed households.* The purpose of the study is to explore and describe the experiences of orphans who were in charge of child-headed households about their preparation and consequent placement in kinship foster care. The units of analysis will be six children between the ages of 14 and 18 who have lost both parents, and were in charge of the

household, but now placed under the foster care of a relative; and they should be residing in the Bushbuckridge Municipality in Enhlazeni District.

Your cooperation is always appreciated

Yours Faithfully

T.S Mathebula (Mrs.)

Researcher

## ANNEXURE 111

### A LETTER TO INDICATE PERIOD OF CONDUCTING RESEARCH

*P.O Box 1198, Thulamahashe, 1365, tel: 015 294 3220, Fax: (015) 294 4522 e-mail: mathebulats@agric.limpopo.gov.za 015-294 3220(W) 08285137 88 (Cell)*

ENQ: T.S Mathebula  
4/02/2011

Ms D.D.T. Mathebula  
Manager: Department of Social Development  
BUSHBUCKRIDGE Sub-District  
THULAMAHASHE  
1365

Dear Mrs Mathebula

#### **Re: SCHEDULED DATES FOR CONDUCTING A RESEARCH**

**Research topic:** “From being in charge of Child-headed household to being placed in Kinship Foster Care: The experiences and expectations of orphaned previously in charge of Child-headed households”

Following our telephonic conversation kindly be informed that research shall be conducted in two phases.

The first phase will be a pilot study. With this kind of a research the researcher will be testing the accuracy of the research instrument as outlined in the research proposal. She is expected to transcribe, translate and analyze the data before ascending to the whole part of the research. It is therefore decided that this first face shall be conducted as from the **15-17/02/2011**. The unit of analysis in this regard is an “orphan child, male or female, who is under 18 years, previously heading a household and currently being placed under kinship foster care”

The second phase will be the ascension of the research wherein the research shall be carried out with the two remaining participants. The dates shall be determined by the response of the researcher’s promoter in the pilot study before, hence the dates provided below are tentative and guided by the time frame developed with the promoter. The tentative dates are: **14-**

**18/03/2011.** However, you'll be notified in time about any changes of dates as the study progresses and more specifically as new developments are anticipated throughout the process.

I am so grateful about your cooperation and commitment in this regard.

Yours Faithfully

T.S Mathebula (Mrs)

-----  
Researcher

ANNEXURE 1V

LETTER OF APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

**MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT**

Bushbuckridge Sub-District  
Stand No. 1706  
Thulamahashe next to Neyi Stadium  
THULAMAHASHE  
1365



Private Bag X1347  
THULAMAHASHE  
1365  
Tel: (013 773 0350)  
Fax: (013 773 0691)

**Department of Social Development  
BUSHBUCKRIDGE SUB-DISTRICT**

Litiko Lokothuthukiswa Kwesive      Umyango Wezoku Thuthukiswa Kumphakathi      Department van Maatskaplike Ontwikkeling

**To: Ms T .S Mathebula  
P o Box 1198  
Thulamahashe  
1365**

**Date: 09/02/11**

**Re: Permission to Conduct Research**

Your letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> /02/11 is acknowledged.

The Sub-District will be happy for the research to be conducted in the area and be able to know what is happening with the clients they serve.

The Sub-District will also be happy if the outcomes of the research can be forwarded to us so that if there are improvements to be done it can be addressed.

Hope and trust that whenever you are in the sub-district conducting the research you will let us know so that if ever you will need the social workers it can be easy to make an appointment.

Thanks

*Yours faithfully*  
*Mathebula D.D.T*  
Sub-District Head



1

P.001/001

(FAX)

15/02/2011 11:02 Rodney

## **ANNEXURE V**

### **CONSENT FORMS**

#### **UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**RESEARCHER:** Thandy Shirley Mathebula (Ms)

Research Participant's name:

Researcher's number :

#### **CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH**

##### **Research Topic**

The experiences of orphans who were in charge of child-headed households about their preparation and placement in kinship foster care

##### **Purpose and Background**

This study seeks to explore and describe the experiences of orphans who were in charge of a child-headed household and who were subsequently placed in kinship foster care, about their preparation for placement in foster care and about their kinship foster care placement.

The sample of orphan children who were previously heading households and now placed under the kin foster parents will be selected from the number of foster care cases at the Department of Health and Social Development through the permission by the Head of the Department.

##### **Services/Procedures**

If I agree to take part in this study, the following steps/procedures will be followed:

1. I will be asked questions about my experiences and feelings in regard to the preparation and placement under kinship foster care. Conversations will be recorded and reflective notes will be taken.

2. I may be asked about my previous or current experiences about being a head of the household and the subsequent change to being a child under the care of the kin foster parent. I may refuse to answer any question at any time.
3. The interview will be conducted in a venue where I feel comfortable and at arranged times so that it is convenient for both interviewer and myself.
4. The interview will be conducted in Tsonga

**Risks and Discomfort**

1. Some questions are personal in nature.
2. The information I have to give will not be given to any person or legal authorities without my approval, except in a situation where my life or the life of other people are at risk.

(Initials.....)

**Benefits**

There will be no financial reward for my involvement in the study. My participation may provide an opportunity to learn and develop new perspectives in regard to my present situation.

**Confidentiality**

All the information I provide for research will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. Only a pseudo-name [pseudonym] will be used to identify the source of information in the study. My name will not be linked in any way to research results, nor will my name be used when results of the study are published.



### **Cost of the study**

Participation is free. The interview should not be seen as counselling or treatment of any kind. If I identify a need for treatment of any kind, every effort will be made to refer me to the relevant service or professional available

### **Compensation**

During the research process the researcher will refer me if necessary to services like counselling, rehabilitation, community health workers or support groups. I will be reimbursed for any expenses incurred as a result of the research such as the cost of telephone calls to the researcher or transport costs for any activities related to the research study.

### **Withdrawal**

Participation in this study is voluntary. I have the right to participate or to leave the study at any point with no future consequences. If I feel uncomfortable at any point during the interview I may discontinue the interview.

### **Questions**

If I have any question about this study I may contact the researcher at the following telephone number: 015-294 3220 (08h00-16h30) during working hours.

### **Consent**

I will be given a copy of the consent form to keep. By signing this consent form I do not resign any of my legal rights.

I have read (or someone has read to me) the contents of this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am aware that all raw data will be destroyed after the completion of the study. I willingly agree to take part in the interview.

.....  
.....

Name of participant (print)

Signature of participant

Date.....

.....  
.....

Name of witness (print)

Signature of witness

Date.....

(Initials.....)

## ANNEXURE V1

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE GUIDE FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN PLACED IN KINSHIP FOSTER CARE

#### PART 1            Family background before kinship placement

- 1.1. Age of the child who was in charge of the household
- 1.2. Are you a male or a female participant?
- 1.3. Are you attending school? If yes, please indicate the grade
- 1.4. How many siblings did you have in the household?
- 1.5. For how long have you been in charge of the household?
- 1.6. What roles were you performing before you took charge of the household?
- 1.7. What roles were you performing after you became in charge of the household?
- 1.8. How did you feel and perceive yourself in regard to the above-mentioned roles indicated in 1.4 and 1.5?
- 1.9. How were you prepared for being placed in kinship foster care?
- 1.10. How long have you been staying with kin foster parent(s)?
- 1.11. What feelings did you experience about being placed in kinship foster care?
- 1.12. How is it for you to be placed in kinship foster care?
- 1.13. What do you like about kinship foster care?
- 1.14. What don't you like about kinship foster care?
- 1.15. How and by whom would you have like to be prepared differently in view of being placed in kinship foster care?
- 1.16. How would you like to be supported in this kinship foster care situation?

## ANNEXURE V11

### **Verbatim transcription of the study conducted with an orphan child who is in charge of a house and now placed in kinship foster care**

Real name changed for confidentiality purposes

#### **Participant A**

**Researcher:** (The researcher has been taken into the house of the respondent by the Wisani home based care-giver who introduced her to the participant) Hello, as already introduced, I am Thandy Mathebula and you are...

**Hlengiwe:** I am Hlengiwe (not her real name)

**Researcher:** I am so glad to meet you, Hlengiwe, I am a research student registered with the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am expected by the university to conduct a research study on the selected topic of my choice that is also approved by the research committee in the institution. The research topic that I am interested in is about the experiences and expectations of the orphans who were in charge of a child-headed household and are now integrated in their kin foster parent's care.

**Hlengiwe:** (she was listening attentively and kept on nodding her head) Okay...Hmmm...I got it...

**Researcher:** I have also made a request for conducting the study from the Department of Social Development at Ehlanzeni District since they are custodians of the programme called "child and family care" (the researcher gave the participant her request letter and the response letter from the Department of Social Development). This is a response letter to my request which has given me a go ahead of conducting my research study.

**Hlengiwe:** Sesi (referring to the caregiver) came yesterday to tell us that you'll be coming

today when we are back from school and that you were here (referring her home) yesterday.

**Researcher:** Okay...it means sesi (referring to the caregiver) has already opened doors for me (the researcher, caregiver and the participant laugh. It was the intention of the statement to put the respondent at ease and establish a good rapport). Let me highlight that participation in this research study is voluntary; it is not an obligation to take part in the study.

**Hlengiwe:** Talking to you might help me in one way or another...so...there is no way where I can say I don't want to talk; others are saying that relevant talk is medication.

**Researcher:** In other words you are telling me that you are interested in participating in the research study. I have consent forms with me here, which must be read before and signed by the participant as a way of giving me permission to interview you. This is an indication that I have not imposed my own interest over yours. Sesi (the caregiver) will serve as the witness of our agreement

**Hlengiwe:** (She read through the consent form and finally signed it and the caregiver witnessed the consent by signing the form as well).

**Researcher:** I would like to talk to you in private, is there any place where we can have a talk? (the caregiver offered to excuse us and walk back to their office where she has been picked up because it was not far from Hlengiwe's place)

**Hlengiwe:** Let us get inside the house.

**Researcher:** Before we can engage ourselves in the interview, I want to indicate that I have a voice recorder which I would like to use to record our interview. The reason is that I want to give what you will tell me more by my ears rather than concentrating in writing what you will be saying. I will do the writing as well, but minimally. The voice recorded will assist me also to rehearse our interview and record it down as transpired. It shall be kept in a locked place and the sound clips shall be deleted as soon as the research study is completed. I am trying to tell you that confidentiality will be maintained

in this regard; however doing the recordings of the interview should be done only with your permission. What do you think about that?

**Hlengiwe:** (She stretched her arms to assimilate what I have told her) You can record...I don't mind.

**Researcher:** Thanks for allowing me (the researcher switched on the voice recorder), now the voice recorder is on... before we can go that far I want to emphasize that whatever is discussed here shall remain confidential. As a student myself I have been allocated a study promoter who guides me with all the applications of the research methods, thus she will go through our interview report as well, but she would not know exactly with whom the interview was conducted because pseudonyms will be used throughout the interview report.

**Hlengiwe:** Okay...it's fine with me

**Researcher:** Tell me how was it for you to be in charge of a child-headed household?

**Hlengiwe:** Hmm... (deep sigh), hahaha... (shallow laughter), I don't know where to start.

**Researcher:** Wherever you feel comfortable to start, you are welcome.

**Hlengiwe:** Hooo... (meaning okay) for me it was and it is still difficult even now to head this household.

**Researcher:** What do you mean when you say: "it was and it is still difficult even now"?

**Hlengiwe:** Since my mother passed away in 2007 up to date, I am responsible to look after this family.

**Researcher:** How difficult is it to look after this family?

**Hlengiwe:** At my age, having to take care of the house, my needs and the needs of my brothers, I find it to be difficult for me.

**Researcher:** At your age...how old are you?

**Hlengiwe:** I am fifteen. I am born in 1995.

**Researcher:** Okay; It means that you were eleven years when your mother passed away, and when you assumed the responsibilities of heading this family.

**Hlengiwe:** Yes

**Researcher:** You sounded to be the only girl in the household, can you clarify me about members of your family.

**Hlengiwe:** Uhhmm...Okay. I've got a sister who is married; she stays at Gauteng with her husband and my younger brother Vutivi (not his really name). She took my younger brother to lessen the burden for me after the death of my mother. Here at home I am left with my two elder brothers. The other one is seventeen and the elder one is eighteen.

**Researcher:** Currently you are the youngest child in the house, how did it come about that you became in charge of the household in the presence of your elder brothers?

**Hlengiwe:** During the death of my mother, nurses from the local clinic came into our house and they said to me... from now onwards you should know that this family is on your hands..., family elders also told me that “dyambu se riperile”, meaning that the sun has dawned...and that I have to stand up as the only girl in the house to bear the responsibility of taking care of my parents' house and my brothers. Since from that time, I told myself that I have to be strong and stand up for the survival of my parents' family.

**Researcher:** The passing away of your mother must have been a painful experience for you; can you share the experiences of that moment?

**Hlengiwe:** Hmmm... (She took a deep breath, pulling down her skirt, bending backwards and forth) alright...I remember it was 2005 when my father passed away, life was no longer the same at home. My mother was forced to go out and look for a job after taking off the “muzilo”, meaning the mourning clothing. She worked as a domestic worker at Mkhuhlu township. She came home on weekends only.

**Researcher:** Your mother was a hope for you, I guess.

**Hlengiwe:** She was my hope (eyes were full of tears).

**Researcher:** Hmmm... I understand that after the death of your father, your mother had to leave you alone and search for a job. Who was taking care of you in the absence of your mother?

**Hlengiwe:** I was responsible for taking care of my siblings including my younger brother who is staying with my sister now.

**Researcher:** Just to check with you, are you telling me that you started to head the family while your mother was still alive?

**Hlengiwe:** Yes. Anyway; life was easy for me when my mother was still alive.

**Researcher:** In which way?

**Hlengiwe:** When she is at home on weekends, she would buy all things, including food that we would be running short of. She would attend to all the family problems. Now... life has moved from bad to worse.

**Researcher:** Can you tell how life has moved from bad to worse?

**Hlengiwe:** Early 2007 I noticed that my mother is not feeling well, haa... I kept silence, not sharing my worries with anyone. When days go by...ha...days go by...one weekend when she came back home, I was from school when a neighbour asked if ever I have seen my mother and I said, no. The neighbour told me that she is home and she seems to be not feeling well. I suddenly rushed inside the house...found her sleeping, greeted she and I realized that she was in pain. I then quickly prepared for her soft porridge. she took the soft porridge and fed herself. For that week she did not go back to work, she consulted a doctor and her health improved. Then, she go back to work the next Sunday. We were using public phones to call and check on how she was doing, and she said it is becoming better.

Haa...come Friday...we expected our mother to come back home...dzaa! (means the mother did not present herself). We started to panic, the following morning, it was on Saturday we receive a call that told us that your mother is admitted at Matikwa hospital. Admitted at Matikwane? We were so confused; we did not have money to visit her at the hospital. Confused as we were, another phone call came in...it said: "your mother is gone". I asked: "gone...gone where...? I could not understand that she might have passed away.

**Researcher:** Losing a parent for a second time was a blow to you I think.

**Hlengiwe:** I felt as if it is the end of the world



**Researcher:** You mentioned earlier that the elders of the family and nurses from local clinic voted you to be the head of the family; I am so concerned about those whom you are in charge of; I mean, your elder brothers, did they cast their vote as well?

**Hlengiwe:** (She laughed, the researcher laughed too) They have accepted the decision...you know... boys do not want to be overburdened by responsibilities. Every time when something is needed from us they just referred the person to me...they will say it is Hlengiwe (not her real name) who knows anything in this house. We understand each other in an amazing way. Any problem that we come across we talk about it. They respect me; I clean the house and cook for them. If there is something to be fixed in the house they tell me and I will consult my aunt for financial assistance.

**Researcher:** How do you feel to be given such recognition by your family members?

**Hlengiwe:** It feels good sometimes, but other times it means lot of work to do.

**Researcher:** What did you like, or what makes you feel good about being in charge of the child-headed household?

**Hlengiwe:** Realizing that I am capable to take care of a household which comprises of boys and they are my brothers, makes me feel good. I also like the fact that we understand each as siblings.

**Researcher:** What did you not like about being in charge of the child-headed household?

**Hlengiwe:** A moment where I am supposed to cook and discover that there is no food to cook and no electricity, I feel like disappearing in this world. My brothers would stir at me as if they are saying “make a plan”.

**Researcher:** What was challenging about being in charge of the child-headed household?

**Hlengiwe:** Lack of source of income is a challenge. There are some other times where you find that we don't have mielie-meal just to cook porridge; I am not talking about other luxurious food.

**Researcher:** What helped you to manage in the child-headed household?

**Hlengiwe:** I am a Christian and a leader of youth in our church, the word of God keeps on strengthening me. The teachers from the primary and the high school, the local nurses, caregivers from the local home-based care are all supportive to me.

**Researcher:** I learned that you are not only a leader at home, but even at church, and that you have a strong support system, that is, the spiritual, educational, health and community-based support systems

**Hlengiwe:** (with a wide laughter) Yes

**Researcher:** You mentioned the support that you get from your school educator, in what grade are you?

**Hlengiwe:** I am in grade nine.

**Researcher:** How are you progressing at school?

**Hlengiwe:** So far I am doing very well

**Researcher:** Tell me about the change process from the child-headed household to kinship foster care placement.

**Hlengiwe:** Soon after the burial of my mother, the elders of the family came together and decided who should take over the responsibility of looking after us. Then my paternal aunt indicated that since she is an elder child in our father's clan, she will assume the proposed responsibility

**Researcher:** Were you part of the meeting?

**Hlengiwe:** No, we were not involved.

**Researcher:** How did you come to know about the agreement of the meeting?

**Hlengiwe:** We have just been told about the decision made by our paternal uncle that his sister (our paternal aunt) volunteered to be the one who would take care of us, and that she would consult social workers concerning a grant meant for children who have no parents?

**Researcher:** What happened after?

**Hlengiwe:** We have never seen her in our house; until such time that she came to take the three of us to Mhala Magistrate Court.

**Researcher:** When was that?

**Hlengiwe:** It was somewhere towards the end of 2008 if I am not mistaken.

**Researcher:** Are you saying that it is about two years that the court has ordered you and your siblings to be under the care of your aunt?

**Hlengiwe:** mmm...yes...

**Researcher:** What happened at Mhala Magistrate Court?

**Hlengiwe:** I can't really tell you, because we were ordered to sit in a bench that was in the corridor of the Magistrate's office.

**Researcher:** Who ordered you?

**Hlengiwe:** I believe the lady was a social worker because I overheard my aunt when she greeted her that she is a social worker.

**Researcher:** Who was inside the Magistrate's office?

**Hlengiwe:** The Magistrate, I believe so, the social worker and my aunt.

**Researcher:** What do you think was happening inside?

**Hlengiwe:** My aunt just told us that they were applying for a pension for us and that in a month time she will be receiving the money on our behalf.

**Researcher:** Correct me if I am wrong, what you are saying is that you have not been involved and prepared for your placement under the care of your aunt and also for the children court processes.

**Hlengiwe:** Eya...eya...eyaa... (meaning Yes...yes...yess...)

**Researcher:** How do you feel for not being part of all the decisions taken about you?

**Hlengiwe:** I don't feel Okay...it makes me angry for that matter

**Researcher:** What matter?

**Hlengiwe:** For the fact that it is us who are suffering now, yes...they have taken decisions for us, but they are not the one who bears the consequences of their decisions.

**Researcher:** Would you have liked to have been prepared differently for kinship foster care?

**Hlengiwe:** Yes

**Researcher:** How differently, Can you explain?

**Hlengiwe:** We should have been involved at first by our family elders in deciding who should look after us. Secondly, for us to be taken to the Magistrate Court, we should have been informed about why we are supposed to be there. I only know criminals who are supposed to go to court?

**Researcher:** Who was your expectations about the court proceedings?

**Hlengiwe:** I expect my aunt, the social worker...even the Magistrate. Neither the social worker nor the magistrate bothered to talk to us.

**Researcher:** How did you feel for your presence not being recognized by those authorities?

**Hlengiwe:** I felt embarrassed and useless, really...I don't want to lie to you...I felt as if I am not existing in this world.

**Researcher:** I understand that when you were at the Magistrate Office, the three of you were legally placed under the foster care placement of your paternal aunt, how is it for you to be in her care?

**Hlengiwe:** Bad, very bad...Hmmm...so very bad (tears were running on her cheeks).

**Researcher:** You seems hurt Hlengiwe about these bad experiences, can you tell me more?

**Hlengiwe:** Our aunt is staying at her own house, six kilometres away from our house. She rarely come to our house to visit us and see how we are doing.

**Researcher:** What you are saying is that she is not there for you, regardless of her voluntarism and

the court order that entrusted her with a responsibility of taking care of you.

**Hlengiwe:** She does not care about us. She is receiving R1900, 00 pensions for us, but she only gives us R600, 00 a month to buy all the basic needs. This money is too little to meet all our needs. I am a girl, there are other stuff which I should get for myself, but I can't. I and one of my brothers are leaving the house early to attend 6h00 morning study, we left the house with an empty stomach...it is not easy to concentrate at school. When I approach her (aunt),she fight me with me...she does not even want to see me with her naked eyes, she told us that she is banking the money for us...the next day is another stories....she claims that she has paid the shark loaners. It is one story after another...if it is me...she does not want to see me in front of she...but, I insist going to her house because we cannot stand for hunger...my brothers are afraid of her. (with a very loud voice) We have lot of problems in this house, which need to be fixed...can you see this kitchen door; it is out of place...we can't lock it anymore, anyone can just get in when we are out to school. There are electrical cables hanging out there, we told our aunt about it and made a request for electrical meter box, she promised long time ago that she has paid for the service at Eskom and they will come to fix them...no one came up to date.

**Researcher:** You seem very hurt, frustrated and angry as well. I can hear that you do not approve the way your aunt is treating you and managing your foster care grant and also that you are concerned about your safety in regard to the exposed hazard of electrical wires that might cause a risk of fire explosion in the house.

**Hlengiwe:** I am afraid we gonna burn inside the house, and a fear that we might find our house burnt while we are still at school.

**Researcher:** I understand that you are telling me that both your life and your house are equal importance, you don't want to lose either one of them. Despite all the gaps that have been mentioned about your relationship with your aunt, what is the good part of being under her care?

**Hlengiwe:** Hmmm....nothing...ee... (meaning no...)there is nothing.

**Researcher:** In this kind of a relationship with your aunt, how would you like to be supported?

**Hlengiwe:** The family elders, including me and my brothers should sit down together and address our problems. The social worker should check whether the social grant is being used in a correct way and advise us.

**Researcher:** Are the people mentioned aware that you are looking for their support?

**Hlengiwe:** They are aware...my paternal uncle and his wife are our neighbours, they are aware of what we are going through, but they are afraid of confronting my aunt. They say she will hate them. I have once advised to visit the social worker and I did. The social worker attempted to talk to her, but there is no change in the situation.

**Researcher:** What helped you to cope in this kinship foster care situation?

**Hlengiwe:** The support that I get from my paternal uncle's wife, from my life orientation teacher and from my church minister makes me to stand all the challenges I come across.

**Researcher:** Before we come to the end of this session, what advice can you give to others who supposed to be placed in kinship foster care?

**Hlengiwe:** I can advise that life has got up and downs...and when it is the time for the ups...stand up and not run away because no one can change the situation for you...it all faces you....and you have to face it as well.

**Researcher:** We have come to the end of our interview. I thank you as well for your voluntary participation in this research study. Have a good day.

**Hlengiwe:** Thank you so much. Bye...