

**THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY YOUTHS LEAVING KINSHIP FOSTER  
CARE IN SOUTH AFRICA.**

by

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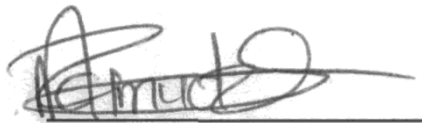
## DECLARATION

I declare that the title "THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY YOUTHS LEAVING KINSHIP FOSTER CARE IN SOUTH AFRICA" is my work and that all the sources that have been used or quoted are indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

C. ZIMUDZI

INITIALS AND SURNAME

DATE: 19 May 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Zimudzi', written over a horizontal line.

SIGNATURE

## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly, I want to thank the Almighty Lord, God who gave me enough ability throughout the journey of my studies. I also wish to express my heartfelt thanks and sincere acknowledgement to the following people and organisations for their support, guidance and direction towards the completion of this study:

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- Last, but most important, the participants without whose participation, this study would not have been possible.

## **Dedication**

*This work is dedicated to my late parents, who were both hardworking and inspirational. I am who I am today because of the foundation they set for me.*

## ABSTRACT

Young people who leave foster care in South Africa typically encounter greater difficulties transitioning into young adulthood when compared to their peers who grow up with their biological parents. The aim of the study is to explore the challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa. The used research approach was a qualitative and exploratory, descriptive and contextual research designs. The participants were selected using purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews, using questions the interview guide contained questions that were used to collect data. The researcher utilised semi-structured interviews as an in depth data collection technique.

The verification of data was conducted using Guba's model. The four aspects of trustworthiness are honesty, reliability, dependability, and credibility were applied, namely; credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. Ethical considerations were observed as follows; informed consent, no harm to the participants, confidentiality, privacy and anonymity, debriefing of participants and management of research data. It is expected that the study will add to existing knowledge, as well as to make recommendations for social work intervention and future research. The researcher concluded that life after kinship foster care was characterised with hardships, namely; poverty, homelessness, unemployment. etc.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter is the introductory chapter for the research entitled; the challenges experienced by youths whose time has expired in the kinship foster care in South Africa. To be contained herein is the background and context of the study, problem statement, rationale and significance of the study, goal and objectives, research questions, assumptions, clarification of concepts and an outline of the structure of the whole thesis.

### **1.2 Background and context of the study**

According to Paulsen and Berg (2016:87), young people moving out foster care usually face a lot of challenges adjusting to independent adulthood when compared to their age mates transitioning from their biological parents' homes. Former foster care youths must take care of themselves with minimal or no support from their biological parents at a young age as compared to their peers. In many cases, these care leavers are desperately in need of financial, social, practical, and emotional support for them to become successful independent young adults (Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016:95). This support is frequently not available to them. The process of leaving the foster care system is very complex and personal as it is shaped by factors such as support available, personality traits of the care leaver, feelings of vulnerability, challenges posed by independent living, potential future challenges, and individual strengths (Courtney et al, 2012:97; Keller et al, 2007:123).

It is evident according to previous research that young people raised within the foster care system are among the most vulnerable groups of people. Usually, these youths are taken into foster care of neglect or abuse and the intention of putting them into the system is to protect them (Vacca, 2018:27). Unfortunately, their placement in foster care may also bring a sense of uncertainty and an unwanted change within them. Even though young people under foster care differ in terms of personality and how they respond to difficulties, the older youths who are brought into the foster care system often experience greater challenges. The older groups of youth, who usually

experience greater instability, are placed away from family and frequently have to transition into young adulthood without obtaining legal permanency (Berkman & Syme, 2011:134).

According to a report by Health and Human Services (HHS) (2016:87), there were approximately two million incidents of neglect or child abuse in 2014 which affected nearly four million children. Of these reported cases, 701 000 were substantiated and 136 765 children went into foster care as a result (HHS, 2016:87). As soon as a reported case has been substantiated, social services departments have the option to take the child from the family or to provide social services for the child at home. If the department chooses to take the child, usually they place the child under foster care (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016:65).

Foster care was introduced as a short-term solution for cases of neglect and child abuse through the provision of temporary places for children to stay with the intention to reunite them with their biological families later. However, the purpose of foster care has evolved with time. The common goal for those who are brought into foster care is for them to be reunited with their biological family and 51% of the youths entering the foster care system do return to their families of origin (Werner & Smith, 2009:321). Some, however, are not able to return to their biological families for various reasons such as abuse or neglect and most of these children come from historically marginalised communities (Thomas & Mabusela, 1991:112).

Aging into young adulthood can be a real challenge for anyone, with some of the youths being more vulnerable than others. There are different forms of foster care arrangements besides kinship foster care which include the following; elevated needs foster care, traditional foster care, residential care, cluster foster care, emergency foster care, specialised therapeutic foster care, and respite care (temporary care) (Hawley, 2017:492). A kinship foster care arrangement is whereby a child's relatives, who can be his/her grandparents, cousins, aunts, or uncles, that are responsible for the provision of a safe living environment for the child (Hawley, 2017:492). Relative or kinship foster care can either be informal, voluntary, or formal.

In addition, non-related foster care is where a child is placed under the custody of a person not related to the child but familiar with him/her such as a family friend, neighbour, coach, teacher, or an acquaintance (Child Welfare Information Gateway,

2016:65). The non-related foster parent or care-giver must be willing and capable of providing a safe and caring environment for the child to live until he/she is reunited with his family or until an alternative permanency plan is found. Traditional foster care is whereby individuals, upon meeting the requirements stated by law, officially become foster parents for a child or a group of children for a specified period (Curry and Abrams, 2015:227). Foster parents are required to work with child welfare professionals for the duration of the foster care period. Specialised therapeutic or medical foster care is a form of care arrangement for children who need to recover from traumatic life events such as abuse or those who suffer from severe medical conditions. These children are placed under the care of specialists and trained professionals who are expected to lead them on the path to recovery. Respite care is a short-term care arrangement whereby a child is moved to another family typically for a weekend or few days as a way of providing relief for the initial foster parents (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016:65).

Under formal kinship foster care, which is the main focus for this study, the state (child welfare department) has full legal custody of the children. In this case each child living under formal kinship care is assigned a case worker who is responsible for ensuring the safety and licensing standards, providing support and supervision and service planning (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2016:65). The child welfare department is also responsible for sanctioning the child's exit from kinship foster care to independent adult living. Marginalised adults, such as those aging out of foster care and those with disabilities, are likely to experience challenges when transitioning into young adulthood (Goemans, 2018:56). Despite this, some of these marginalised adults do go on to fare well in adulthood. Children aging out of foster care often face similar challenges, such as behavioural and low-income problems. The development of comprehensive programmes to assist young people moving out of foster homes is difficult because the foster care system cannot account for all the young people who leave foster care, nor the circumstances that are responsible for them doing so (Bender et al 2015:35). This is further compounded by the fragmented nature of programmes designed to help marginalised and vulnerable groups in South Africa, which means that young people aging into adulthood have obstacles which prevent them from accessing the help they need. There is often limited support for the large numbers of these young people requiring assistance.

Youth who leave foster care often require specialized support in order for them to survive life as independent young adults. The Mamelani Projects in the Western Cape has programmes aimed at helping youth leaving foster care and contains short-, medium-and long-term outcomes (Maphosa & Louw-Potgieter, 2014:2). In the short-term young people are expected to build networks and relationships while expected medium-term outcomes are that the youth secures internships and stable accommodation. The long-term outcomes are that the care leavers stay employed, abstain from drug abuse, practice safe sex, become responsible alcohol consumers, participate in community programmes, and attend mentoring lessons.

The Mamelani Projects in South Africa is one of the few initiatives aimed at assisting care leavers in South Africa to successfully transition into fully independent adults. The programmes are split into two phases. The first phase runs for four years before a young adult leaves the foster care system, while the second phase is intended to offer support to care leavers for the first four years of their lives out of the foster care system. Phase one programmes inclusive of workshops for life skills, experiential outdoor learning, health awareness, career guidance and relationship building (Maphosa & Louw-Potgieter, 2014:2). These programmes are expected to help the youth manage their income effectively, develop effective communication skills, be problem solvers, have knowledge of risky sexual behaviours, know career options available to them, and find employment on their own. Relationship building is aimed at helping young people re-discover and improve family relations; understand family situations and how to become involved in community activities. Phase two, which concentrates on the first or four years out of care, provides programmes such as internships (placements, employment and continued support), mentorships (one-on-one counselling and on-going support) and accommodation (placement). Internships are designed to assist care leavers gain the necessary skills and job references and then later to be employed on a full-time basis. Mentorship programmes help young people to make positive decisions, and express and process feelings, while accommodation programmes help care leavers obtain habitable and affordable housing. However as noted by Maphosa and Louw-Potgieter (2014:2), one of the problematic areas is that, realising the long-term outcomes of these programmes remains a challenge for a poorly educated young people in a developing country.

Despite the importance attached to the role that the foster care system plays in taking care of the most disadvantaged societal groups, often the plight of those who age out of foster care system is ignored (Goemans, 2018:87). There is a substantial need for improvements in the foster care system in South Africa and children in foster care face a lot of difficulties before, during and after transitioning out of these systems. Research studies carried out by (Avery 2010:341), (Curry and Abrams 2015:227), and (Thompson et al 2016:164) have identified several factors which ensure that youths are able to successfully move out of foster care despite the difficulties they have to face. The results of their findings have been used to craft solutions on how children can successfully leave the foster care system. However, there is a lack of interventions directed to the South African context.

The foster care system in South Africa currently suffers from funding constraints and inadequate resources, with statistics indicating that from the total number of children who need foster care only a third of them are currently receiving it (Hall, 2017:432; Jamieson, 2015:102). Children placed in foster care have been taken from their biological parents because of abuse or neglect and most of these children come from historically marginalised communities (Thomas & Mabusela, 1991:112). However, studies have shown that the problem of the lack of adequate foster care is not only present in developing countries like South Africa but is also present in developed nations (Boyle, 2017:199).

In Australia an estimated 1,500 youths from the ages of 15-17 transition from foster care every year (Hawley, 2017:492). The country's legislative frameworks designed to assist these youths to transition successfully is largely fragmented in nature and differs within various states (Hawley, 2017:492). There is very little support that is offered to these youths after they have left the foster care system and there are few programmes available to assist them (Mendes, 2005:55). In addition, these care leavers often have minimum or no support at all from their families post-transition. Presently for the state of New South Wales, there is the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act, 1998, which contains measures designed to help youths who have left the foster care system between the ages of 15-25 years (Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection), Act 1998 No 157). However, the assistance rendered by this act has been deemed insufficient and calls have been made by child welfare organisations for the government to increase funding and commit more resources towards this cause.

In the United States of America (USA), the number of youths who move out of the foster care system annually is much larger with approximately 20,000 youths moving out every year (Avery, 2010:400). There are a number of legislative frameworks in the USA that are designed to assist the youth when they are in foster care, but these frameworks cease to be operational as soon as the youth turn 18 (Atkinson, 2008:183; Avery, 2010:401). In the same manner as Australia, in the USA there are different policies for each state concerning how a youth should be assisted to ensure that they transition successfully, however, the general principle governing all the legal frameworks is that some form of transitional housing programme should be available to better prepare them for independent life. Nevertheless, the programmes are constrained by inadequate funding, lack of advocacy for them and a minimal focus on the transition process. Despite the presence of these transitional housing services for the youths, the quality of these services differs in each state and some care leavers seldom receive these services (about 30%) (Avery & Freundlich, 2009:249).

In Argentina approximately 20,000 children under the age of 21 live under foster care (Incarnato, 2012:92). Argentina does not have family-based care systems. Youths leaving the foster care system in Argentina face similar problems as those in other countries, such as having exposure to vulnerable circumstances, lack of support systems and stable networks. The country has the Doncel programme which is aimed at equipping young people with emotional and practical skills whilst they are still under foster care, to better prepare them for independent living (Incarnato, 2012:93). However, unlike countries such as Norway, the USA and England, which have policies aimed at following up with these care leavers, it is critical to note that Argentina currently does not have such policies and neither does the state contemplate having such legislation (Incarnato, 2012:93).

Literature concerning the fate of youths after moving out of foster care in Africa is scarce (Frimpong-Manso, 2015:73). However, similar studies conducted on the topic in Africa have also reported that most care leavers experience problems such as homelessness, low educational achievements, ill-health and unemployment. In Ghana, support for youth leaving the foster care system is left in the hands of the individual residential institutions taking care of them (Frimpong-Manso, 2012:66). Some residential institutions provide support for youth who would have left the foster care system by providing education, access to health services, and assist youth to



secure three months accommodation after they leave foster care. However, in Ghana, the care leavers lack start-up capital to pursue their own business initiatives especially those who would have left vocational institutions. There is also a lack of follow-up support from the foster care institutions and an inability to track the care leavers. These challenges are further compounded by the attitude of the care leavers who sometimes decide not to seek help when they need it due to fear of being labeled as failures or being degraded.

In Zimbabwe children moving out of foster care are catered for by the Ministry of Labour and Social Services (Mhongera & Lombard, 2018:245). The Ministry developed the National Residential Child Care Standards to provide a set of required standards for all residential childcare institutions. In total there are 14 standards expected from each residential childcare centre which are; the establishment of the residential childcare institution, safety and security, institution design and layout, service provision, leaving care process/ plan of discharge, placement plan, handling of complaints, disciplinary procedures, child health plan, protection from abuse, education, staff recruitment, staff support, and staff requirements (Mhongera & Lombard, 2018:2). Of importance for this study is the care leaving process or discharge plan as it specifies what has to be done to help the youth during the procedure of transitioning out of care.

Furthermore, in Zimbabwe the fate of the youth leaving care systems rests on two institutions, the government, and not-for-profit organisations. These are tasked with the responsibility of delivering services aimed at preparing the adolescents for independent living. Despite the well-crafted legislative policies and frameworks designed to support these orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), Zimbabwe is negatively affected by a lack of adequate financial resources and skills needed to implement them. Both the government and the not-for-profit organisations seem to fail to deliver quality and comprehensive transition services for the young people leaving institutional care (Mhongera & Lombard, 2018:2). Furthermore, the services are fragmented in nature and lack both quality and quantity. Consequently, the majority of the youth leaving care are unable to access the services essential to sustain their lives beyond care, leaving them exposed to poverty and difficulties reintegrating into society.

In South Africa, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended, section 157(1)(b)(iii) alludes to permanency planning and stability for the child in need of care but falls short in terms of providing the exact guidelines detailing how this permanency and stability can be maintained beyond the child exiting the provisions of the same Act (Shaw, 2019:5). The result is that youths moving out of foster care are left without any form of support from the state when they move out. Care leavers in South Africa are ill-prepared to cope with vulnerabilities such as finding employment and building and maintaining critical relationships (Tanur, 2012:325). In South Africa, youths placed in alternative care aged between 18 and 21 years automatically exit care as soon as they are out of school or college and as they will not meet the provisions of Section 176 of the aforementioned Act.

Globally, South Africa is amongst the nations with the highest population of vulnerable youths (Van Breda & Dickens, 2016:356). Furthermore, a 53.6% unemployment rate amongst the youth, ranks among the fourth highest in the world (World Data Bank, 2015). This is in stark contrast with the youth unemployment rates in Australia, the UK, the USA and Brazil which stand at 11.5%; 21.6%; 16.3%; and 13.7% respectively (International Labour Organization, 2013). Marked differences are also evident in the rates of youths not in employment, education or training (NEET) with South Africa having a rate of 32.2% (StatsSA, 2014) compared with 15.9% for UK, 19.6% for Brazil, 11.8% for Australia, and 16.1% for the USA (International Labour Organization, 2013). According to a report by StatsSA (2014), over 55.7% of children were living below the poverty line and most of them relied on social grants, most commonly the Child Support Grant (CSG), for survival. In spite of the ideals of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and the White Paper for Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa, 2006:90) which promote keeping children with their families and communities, many of these young people end up in residential care (Van Breda & Dickens, 2016:356). An estimated 13,250 youths live under residential care in South Africa (Mamelani, 2013:63).

The youth moving out of the foster care system in South Africa constitute the most vulnerable group of the society. The study's main focus will be on youth aged between 19 and 26 years. From 19 years upwards is the most common age at which foster care youths would have left the foster care system to live independently. These shall be referred to as care leavers. Social workers have a critical role to play in the context of the study. The role of the supervising social worker is to assist the foster parents in

their task of caring for the foster child with the aim of improving the child's well-being and promoting opportunities for independent living (Knowsley, 2020:2). The social worker does the screening of prospective parents to ascertain their suitability to be foster parents in terms of section 182 of the Children's Act (Republic of South Africa, 2006:93).

The social worker also provides counselling and support services to the child in preparation for the foster care placement, compiling of the report to the children's court, presenting the report at the children's court as well as facilitating the application for the foster care grant at South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). In cases where the biological parents of the foster child are alive and their whereabouts are known, the social worker also facilitates family reunification through working with the foster child, the biological parents as well as the foster parents in terms of section 187 of the Act mentioned above (Republic of South Africa, 2006:94). In the case of kinship foster care placement, the prospective foster parents are known relatives of the child concerned e.g. maternal and paternal grandmother, maternal and paternal aunt, and/or sibling. The relatives, therefore, through the assistance of the social worker, legalise the placement of the child concerned in their care to enable them to be the recognised or legal guardians of the child and at the same time qualify for government financial support in the form of the foster child grant.

The court order issued in terms of section 155 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended, is valid for a maximum of two years (Republic of South Africa, 2006:81). It is the duty of the social worker to get the court order extended in terms of Section 159 of the aforementioned Act for a further period of time which maybe until the child turns 18. When the child turns 18 and is no longer enrolled at school or college, the foster care placement automatically lapses, which means the child exits the foster care placement. According to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, chapter 176, the court order for the foster child may be extended beyond the age of 18 up to the year the foster child turns 21 if the young adult concerned is still attending school or any recognised and registered college (Republic of South Africa, 2006:90). It is the duty of the social worker to compile a report to the DSD for the extension of the court order in terms of section 176 of the aforementioned Act. On turning 21, whether the young adult is still attending school or college, the court order automatically lapses and cannot be renewed. In other words, youth transition from foster care between the ages of 18 and

21 and have to adjust to life outside of the legal framework of foster care and the financial benefits associated with being in foster care automatically fall away.

The foster parents have the responsibility to meet the day-to-day needs of the child like food, clothing, education, health, protection from abuse, emotional support as well as preparation for the reunification of the child concerned through working with the social worker. According to the Western Cape Government (2020), the foster care court order assigns certain parental roles and responsibilities to the foster parents to meet the day-to-day needs of a foster child which include ensuring the foster child grant received is used in the best interest of the child, ensuring attendance of school, safeguarding health, protection from any form of abuse, guidance and psycho-social support, and participating in the permanency planning with the social worker.

The foster care system in South Africa has, over the years, undergone changes. The focus of social services nowadays is more inclined towards a developmental perspective in cases involving the rights of children (Goemans, 2018:98). Even under this developmental approach, these social services are still required to be accountable in the manner they provide temporary support services to take care of and protect vulnerable children. Just like many foster care systems around the globe, South Africa's foster care system looks after one of the vulnerable groups of society, yet the issue of how successfully these people transition out of foster care, and more specifically those from kinship care, is often ignored (Proudlock, 2014:85).

This study, therefore, sought to explore the challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa. There is a need to develop a standardised model that will help social workers to render effective services as they prepare youths leaving care to become independent young adults. Based on the above introduction, the problem formulation and problem statement will be discussed below.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

A problem statement is a general area of concentration for a research study which specifies an area or situation that needs to be addressed (Padgett, 2015:233; Shaw & Gould, 2016:122). A problem statement seeks to address an area of concern (Cohen et al, 2016:652). It is a brief statement outlining an existing issue that needs timely intervention (Bowen, 2017:305). Therefore, the problem statement, the researchers, they point out the focus that leads the discussion in the right direction and ensure that the research is not distracted from the purpose.

Extensive empirical studies over time have shown that young people who come from foster care are at risk of experiencing negative consequences in the early stages of adulthood (Benderet al, 2015:35). Nevertheless, this does not necessarily imply that every youth that has been raised in foster care will go through these phases, meaning that there may be other factors concerning foster care which can be alleviated to help prevent such negative outcomes. Through more research there is great potential to explore how the positive aspects of foster care can be used to reduce the negative adult outcomes and improve the social support system (Salazar et al, 2011:63). It is important to note the evident gap in knowledge relating to the challenges encountered by young people due to move out of kinship foster care. Although there is extensive research on foster care in general, this research focusses specifically on kinship foster care, and leaves out other forms of foster care like unrelated, residential and cluster foster care. Globally there have been poor outcomes associated with those leaving the foster care system. In South Africa, there is very little that is known concerning the plight of care leavers, the problems they face and the support that is available to them. If this problem is left unattended young people who are ill-prepared to move out of foster care will continue to experience poor outcomes such as homelessness, unemployment, early pregnancy, imprisonment, drug abuse, and lack of financial, emotional, and social support (Paulsen & Berg, 2016:87). Therefore, this warrants research in order to mitigate such challenges as poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and societal rejection. The issue of dealing with the problems experienced by youth transitioning out of foster care needs practical solutions.

The statement of the problem for this study is formulated as follows;

*There is scarce scientifically locally specific information about what challenges youth exiting kinship foster care in South Africa experience. A qualitative study is needed to develop an exploratory descriptive and contextual understanding of this phenomenon to enable social workers rendering services to such youths to contribute to develop culturally and contextually appropriated interventions that will advance this vulnerable group's healthy transitioning into adulthood. The study will also contribute to the development of policies development and the improvement of social work practice.*

The researcher, therefore, intended to embark on a study to explore and describe the challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa. Below the researcher will discuss the rationale of the study. The research is aimed at improving the rationale of foster care for the betterment of the future of the foster children.

#### **1.4 Rationale and significance of study**

The rationale, also known as the justification for the study, should be created from the literature review with a view to unearth the gaps in literature (Bowen, 2017:305). It is usually a statement covered in at most three paragraphs, conveying the importance of the overarching research topic (Cohen et al, 2016:543). It is a sub-proposal outlining why it is necessary to address a stated research problem (Doody & Bailey, 2016:22). The rationale for the study is therefore the researcher's brief justification of the study outlining why it is necessary to conduct the study and the literature gap to be closed.

The process of moving into young adulthood can be a difficult period for any ordinary youth, it therefore becomes an even tougher task for a youth moving out of foster care, particularly in instances where both parents are deceased. The issue of what should happen to care leavers has been the subject of debate, legislation and policy change not only in South Africa but in developed countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Australia (Bond, 2018:32). Just like many foster care systems around the globe, South Africa's foster care system looks after one of the most vulnerable groups of society, yet the issue of how successfully these people transition out of foster care is often ignored (Proudlock, 2014:85). There is a substantial need for proper foster care in South Africa and those children already in

foster care face several challenges in various aspects of their lives while in foster care and after moving out.

**Table 1.1 below shows some of the studies conducted in South Africa related to the topic**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Title</b>
Bond, S.	2010	<i>Adult adjustment and independent functioning in individuals who were raised in a children`s home.</i> Unpublished Masters Dissertation, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University: Port Elizabeth, RSA
Bond, S.	2017	<i>The development of possible selves and resilience in youth transitioning out of care.</i> (Doctoral thesis). University of Johannesburg: Johannesburg, RSA.
Bond, S., & van Breda, A.D.	2018	Interaction between possible selves and the resilience of care leavers in South Africa. <i>Children and Youth Services Review</i> , 94(2018), 88-95.
Chiroro, P.M., Seedat, R., & Woolnough, K	2009	<i>A qualitative study on the experiences of youth who aged out of the foster child grant in South Africa.</i> Impact Research International: Pretoria, RSA.
Dickens, L.F	2016	<i>The contribution of resilience to the 12-month transitional outcomes of care leavers in</i>

Dickens, L.F.	2017	<p><i>South Africa.</i> (Doctoral Thesis). University of Johannesburg: Johannesburg, RSA.</p> <p>One-year outcomes of youth exiting a residential care facility in South Africa. <i>Child and Family Social Work</i> 2(1):63-102.</p>
Dhludhlu, S.L.	2021	<p><i>The challenges and experiences of youth leaving foster care system in South Africa.</i> (Doctoral Thesis). University of Kwa-Zulu Natal: Durban, RSA</p>
Du Toit, W., Van der Westhuizen, M. & Alpaslan, N	2016	<p>Operationalising Cluster Foster Care Schemes as an Alternative Form of Care. <i>Social Work/ Maatskaplike Werk</i>, 52(3), 391-413.</p>
Mmusi, F.I., & Van Breda, A.D.	2017	<p>Care leavers' transfer of social skills from care into independent living in South Africa. <i>Children and Youth Services Review</i>, 81, 350-357.</p>
Nurcombe-Thorne, A., Nadesan, V., & Van Breda, A.	2018	<p>Experiences of "I" and "we" among former looked-after children in South Africa. <i>Child and Family Social Work</i>, 23(2018), 640-648.</p>
Van Breda, A.	2015-2020	<p>Journey towards independent living: A grounded theory investigation of leaving the care of Girls &amp; Boys Town, South Africa. <i>Journal of Youth Studies</i>, 18(3), 322-337.</p>



		<p>The Youth Ecological-Resilience Scale: A Partial Validation. <i>The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher</i>, 27(2), 248-257.</p> <p>The Roles of Agency and Structure in Facilitating the Successful Transitioning out of Care and into Independent. <i>The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher</i>, 28(1), 36-52.</p> <p><i>Grounded theory methods for insights into resilience processes: The case of a young person transitioning out of residential care.</i> Paper presented at the Pathways to Resilience IV Conference, Cape Town, RSA.</p> <p>The Youth Ecological-Resilience Scale: A partial validation. <i>Research on Social Work Practice</i>, 27(2), 248-257. doi: 10.1177/1049731516651731</p> <p>Resilience of vulnerable students transitioning into a South African university. <i>Higher Education</i>. doi: 10.1007/s10734-017-0188-z</p> <p>The first two years out of residential care in South Africa: A critical period for care-leaving services. <i>Child Welfare</i>, 95(6), 63-82.</p>
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		<p>Research review: Aging out of residential care in South Africa. <i>Child and Family Social Work</i>. doi: 10.1111/cfs.12431</p> <p>Patterns of criminal activity among residential care leavers in South Africa. <i>Children and Youth Services Review</i>, 109(2020), 1-10.</p>
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Table 1.1 shows some of the research conducted in South Africa on youths exiting from foster care. There have been extensive studies in South Africa over the plight of care leavers. The element that the topic still warrants more research with some studies being as recent as 2015 and 2021 is proof that it is still a problematic area in which the search for practical solutions continues. Despite the number of studies on care leaving in South Africa a gap still exists, which this research seeks to fill. The gap is that most studies are centred on youth leaving residential care institutions at the expense of other care systems, specifically kinship foster care. It appears as though not much has been discussed about the plight of those care leavers from kinship foster care's living arrangements.

The researcher's five years' work experience in social work, especially in child protection services, has exposed the researcher to children in foster care, and primarily in kinship foster care. When these children reach the age of 18 or in some cases 21 and there is no more foster care grant to the families taking care of them, their living circumstances change drastically. The researcher has personally experienced cases where the relatives of these youths kick them out of their homes with nowhere to go as if their motivation for caring for them was based on the foster care grant. The researcher has also come across some of the young adults who have come out of kinship foster care coming back to social workers for counselling as they struggle to deal with adjusting to living on their own. In some cases, while they were children, they did not receive therapy and support in order to deal with reasons that led to their placement under care and as they become adults, they face challenges in trying to adjust in life, leading in some cases to violence and psychopathy. Some cases

are also complicated with the treatment that they experienced while in kinship foster care compared to the biological children of the foster parents. This leads to anger issues, and in most cases, they have nowhere to go when they start to question the unfair treatment.

The issue of inadequate or lack of support for the youths moving out of foster care is particularly troubling. The study will serve the important function of giving the older youths in foster care and their caregivers a voice to be heard, a chance to express their challenges as they are about to leave care. This information will be critical to the government and not-for-profit organisations so that they can tailor their intervention programmes according to the care leavers' needs.

The study will help develop a greater understanding of the different constraints faced by youths leaving the foster care system so that practical solutions to these challenges can be crafted. Another contribution would be to find ways of developing networks among foster care youths transitioning into adulthood which would serve as a platform for supporting each other and connecting them to each other to ease the transition. By carefully navigating relationships through social networks created among the youth, additional youth support services can be developed by the government. The study will also seek to suggest ways in which more informational and emotional support can be provided for youth exiting foster care to better prepare them for adulthood.

Developing more understanding of the problems experienced by youths moving into young adulthood will lead to developing programmes which will support them to become productive adults and ways in which the foster care system can improve their services and programmes to ease the transition. The study will expound ways in which the social support offered to older foster care children could prevent them from maltreatment which will in turn protect them from adverse outcomes when they transition into adulthood. For policy makers, the study is anticipated to influence them to increase the resources they allocate to youth exiting from care which could be channelled towards increasing mentorship programmes, on the job training or providing more opportunities for networking amongst the youth. Such assistance can only come when there is an adequate understanding of the difficulties being faced by these youth which will be illuminated in this study.

The following section focusses on the goal and objectives of the study.

## 1.5 Goal and objectives

The goal of the study is the purpose for carrying out the study (Akhtar, 2016:67). It is a statement stated in a clear and objective manner stating why the study is being carried out (Korstjens & Moser, 2016:275). The goal of the study does not reflect the bias, or the opinion of a researcher and it is derived from the research problem (Schutt, 2016:337). From the above definitions and descriptions, it can be deduced that the goal of the study is an objectively stated purpose for conducting a study, generated from the research problem to clarify the knowledge to be created.

The goal of this research study is presented below:

- To investigate the challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa.

In order to achieve the above stated goal of the study, objectives need to be set. Research objectives are statements which explain what the research project seeks to achieve (Parveen & Showkat, 2017:431). They seek to describe what a particular study seeks to achieve in a concise manner (Kabir, 2016:25). Research objectives can also be defined as a summary of the accomplishments that a researcher wants to achieve through the study and these direct the study (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013:67). Research objectives must therefore be clear and attainable.

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- To explore and describe the challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa.
- To establish the nature of difficulties experienced by youths leaving the foster care system in South Africa.
- To assess the social support services that are needed for youth leaving kinship foster care in South Africa.
- To appraise the measures to be made for social workers to assist youth leaving kinship foster care.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations about the challenges.

## **1.6 Research questions**

A research question is an answerable inquiry into an area of interest (Taderhost, 2016:18). It is the primary question that a research project seeks to answer (Yilmaz, 2013:311). Research questions are the first steps taken in a research project highlighting what needs to be studied (Bitsch, 2015:221). The research questions therefore form the foundational base of any research project to be undertaken.

The central research question guiding the study is set as follows:

- What are challenges experienced by youth leaving kinship foster care in South Africa?

In order to answer the research question (above), the following sub-questions needed to be answered:

- What social support services are needed for youth leaving kinship foster care in South Africa?
- What suggestions can be made for social workers to assist youth leaving kinship foster care in South Africa?
- What suggestions can be proffered to assist youth leaving kinship foster care early?

## **1.7 Assumptions**

The researcher made the following assumptions;

- Presently there is a lack of adequate support programmes for care leavers.
- There is a lack of policies designed to adequately prepare youths before they transition out of foster care in South Africa.
- The study may benefit foster care leavers by giving them a platform to state the kind of help they need.
- With quality support the youth can successfully transition out of the foster care system to become successful independent young adults.

- Social service professionals and kinship caregivers can benefit from policy development to help foster care youth transition into independent lives.

## 1.8 Clarification of concepts

The researcher found it pertinent to clarify the following concepts;

**Challenge** - It is something that needs immense physical or mental effort for it to be accomplished successfully and thus tests an individual's resolve (Cambridge Dictionary). It is a stimulating task or problem (Merriam Webster Dictionary). The Oxford Dictionary defines a challenge as a task or an event that puts an individual's abilities to the test. For this study, challenge shall be used to discuss to all problems experienced by youths who have left kinship foster care.

**Youth** - For statistical purposes the United Nations (2018) defines youth as people aged between 15 to 24 years without prejudicing other definitions provided by other member states. The African Youth Charter (2006:5) states that a youth as any person aged between 15 to 35 years. The National Youth Policy (2000:10) defines a youth (young person) as a male or female aged between 14 to 35 years. With reference to this research, the term youth will be used to refer to persons aged between 19 and 26 years.

**Care leavers** - A care leaver is a young person between the ages of 16 to 25 years Who has been taken care of by someone or some institution since they were 14 years old, and who is still in care till they reach their 16th birthday or after (Capstone Foster Care, 2020). According to the Care Leavers' Association (2020) a care leaver is someone who has lived under the care of Local Authority for a period of 13 weeks or more after turning 16 years of age. It is also a child aged between 16 and 17 years who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and is still being looked after (Wigan Council, 2020). From these definitions a care leaver is therefore a young person who has lived under care from a young age and was still living under care by the age of 16 years. For the context of this study, the term care leaver shall be used to refer to a young person who has lived under kinship foster care after the age of 16 years.

***Kinship foster care*** - There are cases where grandparents and relatives take custody of children whose biological parents would have failed to provide or to look after them for one reason or another. This scenario is called “kinship care” and it can be formal, private or an informal agreement between the caregivers and the children’s biological parents (Cameron et al, 2018:19). In some instances, this arrangement can happen without the intervention of child welfare services and in other cases the child welfare department may be involved. In situations where a local child welfare department is involved a social worker is assigned to approach an affected child’s relative or a grandparent with the intention for such a relative or grandparent to be involved in a kinship care arrangement (Corcoran et al, 2018:88). There are different types of kinship care arrangements available, including informal care, formal care, voluntary care, and temporary guardianship (Monette et al, 2017:231). The proposed study will be limited to a focus on one type of kinship care which is formal kinship care. Due to time constraints, budgetary issues and the limited scope of the study it will be difficult to cover all types of kinship care.

## **1.9 Structure of the thesis**

The study is divided into six chapters.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction for the study outlining the background to the study, statement of the research problem, research goal and objectives, research questions, rationale of the study, assumptions of the study, clarification of key concepts and the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 provides the literature review of the study.

Chapter 3 covers the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter 4 provides the research methodology for the study. It details the research paradigm, research approach, research design, research methods, population, sampling, sampling methods, data collection methods, pilot testing, data analysis methods, data verification and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 presents the results. Discussion and analysis then follow the presentation.

Chapter 6 discusses the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

### **1.10 Summary**

The chapter has provided an outline to the research on the challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa. Contained in the chapter were the background and context of the study, the problem statement, rationale and significance of the study, goals and objectives of the study, research questions, assumptions and clarification of key concepts. The chapter then ended with an outline of the structure of thesis. The next chapter will look at the literature review.



## **CHAPTER 2: Challenges, experiences, support services and policy implications for youths leaving kinship foster care**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter analyses all the relevant literature related to the challenges that are experienced by youths leaving the kinship foster care system. The chapter discusses the following; kinship foster care, types of kinship foster care common in South Africa, experiences of youths leaving the foster care system, challenges experienced by youths leaving the foster care system, resilience and protective factors, and policy to promote international, regional and local care services. The chapter also discusses a global comparison of care leaving policies and legislation, how the kinship care youths are prepared to live independently, implications for foster youth need support in order to leave care successfully and social support services rendered to youths leaving care in South Africa.

Other aspects related to the topic of young people moving out of foster care are also discussed.

### **2.2 Kinship foster care**

South Africa has got several types of formal care places, including care for relatives cluster foster care, residential foster care and unrelated foster care. However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher focuses on kinship foster care. This section discusses different kinship foster care arrangements.

There are cases where grandparents and relatives take custody of children whose biological parents have failed to provide or to look after them for one reason or another. This scenario is called “kinship care” and it can be formal, private or an informal agreement between the caregivers and the children’s biological parents (Cameron et al, 2018:19). In some instances, this arrangement can happen without the intervention of child welfare services and in other cases the child welfare department may be involved.

The extent and the involvement of the department of child welfare in a kinship arrangement differs by country as each country has its own legislation and policies that govern foster care. It also differs from the individual cases and depends on the age of the child, issues of legal custody, and safety and other needs which may present themselves (Child Welfare League, 2013:67).

In instances where a local child welfare organisation is involved, a social worker is assigned to approach an affected child's relative or a grandparent with the intention for such a relative or grandparent to be involved in a kinship foster care arrangement (Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2018:226). In other scenarios, the biological family may themselves make contact with a local department of child welfare for assistance in these matters. Some of the types of kinship arrangements are discussed in the following sections.

### **2.3 Types of kinship care**

A child may leave his biological family to live with a relative or a grandparent through various ways and in some cases a local child welfare department may be involved. There are four main kinds of kinship foster care arrangements which are; temporary guardianship, informal, voluntary and formal kinship foster care.

#### **2.3.1 Informal kinship care**

The informal kinship foster care arrangement comes into existence when a parent approaches a family member without involving a children's court or a department of child welfare. In such a scenario, the parent may move overseas and leave the child with a grandparent. Parents who are in ill-health and they cannot look after their children properly may give them to an aunt to take care of them. In an informal kinship arrangement, the parent retains legal custody of the child and has the legal mandate to take the child back whenever they please (Gypen et al, 2017:43). Those given guardianship of the children in many situations typically have challenges sending those children to school, putting them on medical care, putting them on health insurance, and having access to benefits which come resultant of having legal custody of a child. However, in some countries the caregivers are given a temporary mandate

to make decisions for these children on behalf of their parents (Hawley, 2017:55). This is made possible by means of consent forms that the parents sign to give power to the guardians or caregivers to make temporary decisions affecting their children. In general, caregivers receive less financial assistance from the government when they are involved in an informal kinship care.

### **2.3.2 Temporary guardianship**

A lawyer may be called by the parent who wishes to have his/her child to live under the care of a relative for a temporary period. The lawyer can then facilitate the process of granting temporary guardianship for that relative. The issue of temporary guardianship under the law differs from country to country. Typically, the lawyer is required to file papers through a court process in which the judge has the final approval (Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016:123). Where temporary guardianship has been legally approved, a relative is mandated to make crucial decisions for the child on behalf of the parent, such as those involving medical aid and the type of education the child is to receive. Such an arrangement can work smoothly if the biological parent takes an active role in the process of ensuring legal temporary guardianship.

In scenarios where a child has left his parents' home to move to a relative to live there out of his own volition and without the consent of his parent, the parent usually does not want to grant temporary legal guardianship to such a relative and it therefore becomes difficult for the caregiver to decide on medical, educational, and legal choices for those children (Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016:123). The caregiver, however, has the option to approach a lawyer for advice regarding how to proceed in such a scenario.

### **2.3.3 Voluntary kinship care**

Under voluntary kinship care children can go and live with their relatives without the department of child welfare's involvement, and under such an arrangement the state does not retain legal custody of the children. In some instances, the court places children under the care of relatives and in other instances it is the child welfare organisation which does the placement without involving the court (Newton, et al., 2013:176). Under voluntary kinship care, depending on the laws governing a country,

the parent may be able to legally grant temporary guardianship to the relative giving them power to make decisions concerning their children on their behalf (Paulsen & Berg, 2016:134-76). In such a type of arrangement a number of clauses may be included, and they differ from country to country. Some of the circumstances that may arise from voluntary kinship care are;

1. A social worker may suspect that a parent is abusing or has neglected the child but may not have enough evidence to convince the court to take legal custody of the children. As a result, parents, social workers and the relative have to agree on a voluntary kinship arrangement whereby the children are allowed to go and live with a relative.
2. Parents may seek assistance from social workers to willingly give their children to relatives for care because they need to go for drug rehabilitation or treatment for mental issues.

A parent may deliberately initiate the process of voluntary kinship care for their children to bar the department of child welfare from involving the courts in the issue in order to force involuntary kinship placement (Newton et al., 2013:163). In some states the parents are required to sign away their children under voluntary placement with a local department of child welfare to place their children under their relative's care.

#### **2.3.4 Formal kinship care**

The process of formal kinship care involves a court process whereby the state takes legal custody of the children and then mandates a local department of child welfare to place the children under the care of a kin of their choice (Monette et al, 2017:231). In such cases the child welfare department acts on behalf of the state and subsequently retains legal custody of these children while the caregiver has physical custody. Crucial decisions regarding the welfare of these children are made by the department of child welfare in consultation with their families. The agency has the right to decide the place where the children are to live. In that regard the local child welfare agency is mandated to make decisions on the children's place of schooling and the kind of medical care they are to receive (Shaw & Gould, 2008:24). Where a court has granted

permission to the parents or other relatives to visit the children, the child welfare department must ensure that these visits do take place. Under a formal kinship foster care arrangement, the caregivers, who in most cases can be grandparents or relatives, have the full certified approval of the courts and have rights similar to those of foster parents and non-relative foster parents.

#### **2.4 Experiences of youths leaving the foster care system.**

Studies have proven that young people raised in foster care are among the most vulnerable groups of people. Usually, children who are placed under foster care have the history of being abused or neglected and the intention of putting them into foster care is to protect them and to safeguard their well-being (Vacca, 2018:27). Unfortunately, their placement in foster care may also bring a sense of uncertainty and an unwanted change within them. Even though young people under foster care differ in terms of personality and how they respond to difficulties, the older youths who are brought into foster care often experience greater challenges. The older groups of youths usually experience greater instability, are placed away from family and frequently have to transition into adulthood without getting a legal permanency (Berkman & Syme, 2011:134).

According to a report by the Health and Human Services (HHS) (2016) globally there were around 2 million incidents of neglect or child abuse in 2014 which affected nearly 4 million children. Of these reported cases, 701,000 were substantiated and 136,765 children went into foster care as a result (HHS, 2016). As soon as a reported case has been substantiated, social services departments have the option to take the child from the family or to provide early intervention social services for the child at home. If the department chooses to take the child, usually they place the child under foster care (Children's Bureau, 2018:65).

Foster care was introduced as a short-term solution to neglect and child abuse through the provision of temporary places to stay for children with the intention to reunite them with their families later. However, the purpose of foster care has evolved over time. The mutual goal for those who are brought into foster care is for them to be reunited with their biological family and 51% of the children entering foster care do return to

their families of origin (Werner & Smith, 2009:321). Some, however, are not able to return to their families for various reasons.

Aging into adulthood can be a real challenge for anyone with some youths being more vulnerable than others. Marginalised adults, such as those leaving the foster care system and those with disabilities, are more likely to experience challenges when transitioning into adulthood (Goemans, 2018:56). Despite this, some of these marginalised adults do go on to fare well in adulthood. Children leaving the foster care system often face similar problems such as behavioural and low-income problems. The development of comprehensive programmes to assist young people moving out of foster homes is hindered by failing to account for the exact population of these young people (Bender, Yang, Ferguson & Thompson, 2015:38). This is further compounded by the fragmented nature of programmes designed to help marginalised and vulnerable groups in South Africa, which means that young people aging into young adulthood have obstacles which prevent them from accessing the help they need. There is often limited support for the large numbers of these young people requiring assistance.

Despite the importance attached to the role that foster care systems have to play in taking care of some of the most helpless societal group, often the plight of those who age out of foster care systems is ignored (Goemans, 2018:87). There is a considerable need for more foster care programmes in South Africa and children in foster care face a lot of difficulties before, during and after leaving care. Studies conducted by (Thompson et al 2016:164) have identified several factors which ensure that youths are able to successfully move out of foster care despite the difficulties they have to face. The results of their findings have been used to craft solutions on how children may successfully transition from foster care. However, there is a lack of interventions which are directed to the South African context. The foster care system in South Africa currently suffers from funding constraints and inadequate resources with statistics indicating that from the total number of children who need foster care only a third of them are currently receiving it (Hall, 2017:432). Many of the children who are placed in foster care have been taken from their biological parents because of abuse or neglect and the majority of these children come from historically marginalised communities (Hall, 2017). However, studies have shown that the problem of the need

for more foster care is not only present in developing countries like South Africa but is present in developed nations as well (Boyle, 2017:199).

Since state care usually ends at the age of 18 or upon the completion of a child's studies and the fact that challenges faced by the foster children extend beyond that period, there has been more attention paid to the topic in recent years given to the need to help youths transition out of foster care successfully. There is limited literature in South Africa on this topic despite the view that most youths aging out of foster care experience common challenges regardless of where they are in the world (Mukundi-Mirugi, 2016:13). Typically, children leaving the foster care system experience homelessness and/or a lack of support.

The challenge of homelessness is a common challenge worldwide for foster youths transitioning into adulthood but in South Africa this challenge is exacerbated by the lack of adequate housing in the country (Curry & Abrams, 2015:25). In addition to these challenges previously fostered youths usually have lower educational qualifications, lower salaries and are unemployed when compared to their peers. According to (Zinn and Courtney 2017:187), the problems these youths encounter are the reason for psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and drug abuse in a bid to self-medicate. (Boyle 2017:125) notes that because of a lack of social support for these groups of people they end up becoming part of groups that demonstrate deviant behaviour. It is therefore imperative that all these challenges are noted so that strategies can be crafted to overcome these problems.

## **2.5 Unique challenges experienced by youths leaving foster care system**

Youths placed in foster care face challenges like those experienced by other youths of their age which include looking for employment opportunities, managing tight budgets, facing new experiences, and searching for higher learning opportunities (Children's Bureau, 2018:7). In addition to that, they must swiftly adjust to independent living as soon as they are no longer under state care. This is a common occurrence for those young people who leave foster care after turning 18 or any other legal age specified in their state. They immediately lose access to a wide range of resources and services they normally had which include support services from a social welfare department (Cameron et al., 2018:165). Furthermore, most of these youths would

already be dealing with several years of abuses, neglect, and experiences of being taken away from their families.

Previous studies have proven that a lot of young people who leave the foster care system experience many challenges in the process of transitioning into young adulthood (Buehler et al, 2012:596). As compared to their peers, there is an increased likelihood that they will experience homelessness or accommodation problems, mental and physical health problems, alcohol, and drug abuse, will not complete high school or have not attained a college degree, will be involved in criminal activities, will earn less money and are likely to have problems finding employment (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2014:78). They are also less likely to have the knowledge and necessary skills essential for independent living such as budgeting their finances properly, cooking, accessing vital health and social services; finding a job and keeping it.

## **2.6 Resilience and protective factors**

Despite the odds stacked against them, there are young people who are able to leave foster care to lead successful and independent lives. These youths would have been able to develop great resiliency along the way, which is the ability to deal with and overcome life stressful situations (Frazier & Richman, 2014:133). Regardless of the difficulties, these youths can deal with their difficult situations, nurture good relationships and have a positive perspective on the future.

There is a greater chance of care leavers succeeding if they are surrounded by protective factors and conditions that minimise risks (violent exposures, poverty etc.). Exposure to these protective factors increases the likelihood of youths becoming successful adults in later life (Gypen et al., 2017:176). Some of these protective factors which are essential for children still under, and those moving out of, foster care include the capability to accomplish their own behaviour and control their sentiments (self-regulation skills), the ability to nurture and develop positive relationships (relational skills), growing in a positive school environment and acquiring skills academically. According to a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' [HHS] (2016) report, children under foster care can be assisted to develop their levels of resiliency through the following ways:

- Cultivating a spirit of positivity in them.



- Working on improving their self-confidence.
- Assisting them in developing peer relationships and connecting well with others.
- Encouraging them to set goals and work towards attaining them.
- Teaching them to see challenges not as obstacles but opportunities to learn.
- Teaching them self-love and self-care.
- Encouraging them to help others wherever possible.

## **2.7 Policies guiding foster care services internationally, regionally and locally**

There are various policies or legislations guiding foster care services globally, regionally and locally. These policies and legislations are discussed below:

### **2.7.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (UNCRC) (1989)**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) is one of the most comprehensive pieces of legislation governing children's rights. The UNCRC is widely known for its emphasis on the three (3) Ps which are participation, protection and provision. The widespread success of the Convention has been widely attributed to Article 12 which focuses on the participation of children (Reynaert et al 2014:16).

The UNCRC provided a legislative framework that forced governments to relook at their childcare policies to focus on ways of safeguarding the dignity of children (Reynaert et al, 2014:18). At the time of its establishment, the Convention was a ground-breaking legislation in view of the longstanding social reform challenges which preceded it (Petty, 2018:12). The UNCRC contains guidelines which the states or governments must implement in their respective childcare policies, two of which are critical. Firstly, all states are required to have functional childcare services and facilities as well as putting the necessary strategies giving a guarantee to ensure that such services are easily accessible. Secondly, the Convention stipulates that the childcare services and facilities meet a set of predetermined standards. They must be of good

quality. Consequently, organisations such as child and youth care centres (CYCC) or any other organisation acting in that capacity, have a critical role to play in the protection of children's rights at a local level and thus are regarded as essential for the implementation of the UNCRC guidelines.

The adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 marked the start of an era which recognised the importance of safeguarding children's rights. However, Pan-Africanists held the view that the UNCRC did not adequately address the needs of the African child, and this led to the establishment of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 1990 essentially to serve as a complement to the UNCRC while also dealing with the unique needs of the African child (Gyan & Nyarko, 2018:67).

### **2.7.2 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (1990)**

The ACRWC is made up of 48 articles, the majority (31) of which are provisions of children's rights while the remaining deal with oversight and procedural matters (Reynaert et al., 2014:19). The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) oversees the ACRWC and has the prerogative to investigate missions, to analyse reports from member states and receive information when there have been desecrations of the rights of children stipulated in the Charter (Petty, 2018:12).

As a follow up to the ACRWC there is an African Youth Charter (AYC) formed in 2006 by the African Union and this is a document providing a strategic direction for youth development and growth on the African continent (Zukane & Tangang, 2017:158).

### **2.7.3 The African Youth Charter (AYC) (2006)**

The African Youth Charter (AYC) advocates for young people's rights to participation in all societal activities and countries to have measures in place which encourage the active participation of the youth in communities (Reynaert et al., 2014:19). The charter also states that member states must develop their own coherent and comprehensive national youth policy.

In view of this objective, South Africa has, over the years, developed its own set of legislative policies aimed at youth development and protecting children's welfare. One of the major stances taken by the post-apartheid government was to reconfigure all policies so that they reflect a commitment to change from an apartheid society to a democratic one. In line with that standpoint, the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) was adopted containing policies which favoured a developmental approach to social welfare.

#### **2.7.4 The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997)**

The White Paper for Social Welfare ushered in a social welfare system that was more equal, participatory and suitable to meet the requirements of all South African people (Lombard, 2008:17). The adoption of the White Paper for Social Welfare essentially set the tone for redesigning the social welfare system of South Africa (Patel et al, 2008:5). Ever since the legislation was adopted, there have been marked changes and a new philosophical approach towards welfare in the country, access to benefits and services is no longer done along racial lines and the social welfare system is now integrated. The policy controls two main programmes, namely; social security and social welfare services. Social grants have been one of the main methods of alleviating poverty in the country and have been more successful in reducing poverty when compared to other transformational social welfare and developmental programmes which have made generally slow progress (Patel et al., 2008:7).

#### **2.7.5 Children's Act 38 of 2005**

In 2005 the Children's Act 38 of 2005 was adopted to afford children with essential assistance, care, and protection so that they are able to develop to their maximum potential (Department of Social Development, 2010:18). The Children's Act 38 of 2005 contains a series of developmental social welfare principles aimed at guiding social workers in providing child services and these principles include universal access, self-reliance, participation, accessibility, appropriateness, and empowerment (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015:231). The Children's Act 38 of 2005 was developed as an alternative to the Child Care Act which was considered as too narrow in its approach towards

children's rights and welfare. The Children's Act provides a much wider focus as it incorporates developmental social welfare principles when it comes to the constitutional rights of the child and their participation in making decisions that affect them (Patel et al., 2008:7). Another significant difference from the Child Care Act 74 of 1983 is that the Children's Act 38 of 2005 sufficiently provides solutions to current 21st century challenges. It also supports the developmental social welfare principles contained in the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997). The Children's Act is committed to prevention and prompts intervention services when dealing with foster children, which is one of its major strengths.

There are also other intervention strategies aimed at intensifying and improving the quality and quantity of care that children get from their parents and/or caregivers in South Africa and these are mandated pieces of legislation such as the National Plan of Action for Children 2012-2017, Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007 and the White Paper on Families in South Africa (2013) (Petty, 2018:12). Presently parenting programmes are the most preferred parenting interventions as reports have emerged over the positive impact these programmes have had on improving parent to child relationships, improving children's behaviour, and reducing parents' stress (Petty, 2018:12).

### **2.7.6 National Plan of Action for Children 2012-2017**

The National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) 2012-2017 is a legislation designed to improve the status of South African children as well as the quality of their lives. It is an overarching legislation that was also created to monitor the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) principles in South Africa. It is a comprehensive policy framework whose objective is to bring together all national and international legislation created for the protection, development, participation, and survival of South African children. It essentially harmonises the UNCRC, the United Nations Special Session on Children (UNGASS), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and the South African government's five priorities.

The guiding principles of the UNCRC which are implemented through the NPAC include children's entitlement to basic rights without being subjected to any form of discrimination, the principles of acting in the interest of the child prioritising the

children's rights to live, development and survival. In accordance with the broad goals of the UNGASS, the NPAC monitors the progress of the implementation of these goals which include, promoting healthy living among children, providing access to quality education, protecting them against violence, exploitation and abuse and contesting the spread of HIV/AIDS. The government of South Africa is also committed to guarantee that the SDGs are achieved, and these have an impact on children's rights. Some of the SDGs which are of interest to the NPAC include the extermination of poverty and starvation, the realization of universal primary education, women empowerment and promotion of gender equality and the reduction of child mortality among others. The NPAC 2012-2017 intends to bring momentum to national planning, monitoring, implementation, and evaluation of priority legislations. In that regard the NPAC is directly linked to the country's five priorities, education, health, combats criminality and exploitation, economic growth, sustainability and rural development and food security. The protection and implementation of children's rights cannot take place in isolation; thus, it is the intended purpose of the NPAC to mainstream children's rights into the broader macro and micro commitments.

### **2.7.7 Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007**

The Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007 was created as an amendment to the Children's Act of 2005 to insert specific definitions. Amendments were made to the Children's Act 38 of 2005 to provide for limited care for children, early childhood development, more child protection provisions, prevention and early intervention, alternative care for children, alternative care, alternative care, and child and youth care centres and alternative care centres (South Africa, 2007:2). In terms of partial care, the Children's Act 41 of 2007 covered aspects such as a measures regarding short term care, the provision of partial care, standards and values, registration of a partial care facility, consideration of claims, conditional registration, and record and inspection of a partial care facility to mention a few.

Chapter 11 of the Children's Act 41 of 2007 focuses on alternative care covering aspects such as the description of what constitutes alternative care, leave of absence, transfer of child in alternative care, change in residential care programme, removal of child already in alternative care, discharge from alternate care and remaining in

alternative care beyond the age of 18 years (Republic of South Africa, 2007:4). Chapter 14 focuses on the introduction of drop-in centres which are facilities designed to provide physical, emotional and social support to vulnerable children. Drop-in centres can provide programmes such as social and life skills, educational programmes, community services, recreation, computer literacy, outreach services and primary health care which are all aimed at meeting the developmental needs of the youth in attendance.

### **2.7.8 The White Paper on Families (2013)**

The White Paper on Families (2013) is a more recent piece of legislation introduced by the DSD in South Africa aimed at promoting the welfare of families. The document is based on three objectives; the first objective aims to foster a healthy family lifestyle by emphasising the point that a family is an important aspect of a society (Zukane & Tangang, 2017:158). This objective also promotes the maintenance of good family morals and values while also encouraging the active involvement of fathers in raising their children. The second objective stresses a commitment to supporting families in their roles as caregivers and to promote the spirit of unity in a family. The final objective seeks to speed up prevention, prompt intervention, statutory, family reunification and services rendered after care.

In 2015, the South African government developed the National Youth Policy (NYP) for 2015–2020 for all South African youths with the overall objective of correcting past wrongs and solving the unique problems and immediate concerns of the youths (National Youth Policy, 2015:1).

### **2.7.9 The National Youth Policy (2020)**

In 2015, the South African government developed the National Youth Policy (NYP) for 2015–2020 for all South African youths with the overall objective of righting past wrongs and solving the unique problems and immediate concerns of the youth (NYP, 2015:1). The National Youth Policy (2020:3) seeks to strengthen all youth-centred initiatives aimed to empower young people to change the society and the economy at large. To achieve this goal, the National Youth Policy was set up to create

opportunities, promote positive relationships, outcomes and choices and also to provide support that is major developmental point, particularly those in the previously marginalised communities (Petty, 2018:324). The policy stresses the need for a concerted effort to develop youth interventions that are holistic in nature to meet the different needs of South African youths. The main target of the policy is to have an empowered youth that can fulfil their potential and have a clear understanding of their responsibility and roles to make telling contributions on the development of a democratic, prosperous, equal and non-racial South Africa (National Youth Policy, 2015:17).

## **2.8 Global comparison of care leaving policies and legislation**

The International Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood from Care (INTRAC) is a group of research experts from different countries around the globe committed to conducting studies related to moving out of care systems and transitioning to adult life. INTRAC conducted a comprehensive study on multinational comparisons of care-leaving policies, laws, and practice (Strahl et al., 2020:3). Studies were conducted by Canada, South Africa, and Germany in a bid to promote an empirical approach for addressing difficulties encountered by youth transitioning out of care.

### *Care-leaving policy and legislation*

It is critical to analyse different countries' legislation as it is the way in which countries formally express their social values and belief systems. Figure 2.1 below presents the results of a survey conducted in 36 countries seeking to investigate the presence and absence of legislation on care, how developed it is and the number of countries with after care programmes. The countries were from different parts of the globe and each continent was represented to obtain a truly representative sample. From the countries sampled 89% (32) indicated that they had legislation on care-leaving in place (Strahl et al., 2020:3). This implies that these countries had mechanisms in place to assist vulnerable children, these mechanisms were formally recognised and funded by the government and the rights of these children under care were protected. From these 32 countries with foster and residential care legislation 64% (23 countries) had well-developed legislative policies while 8 countries described their policies as rudimentary.

**Figure 2.1: Legislation for care and after care**



Source: Strahl, et al., 2020:7

From the total sample of 36 countries only 17 had after care legislation in place to assist young people as soon as they left the care system which constitutes nearly 50% of the total countries sampled. The countries which had no child governing policies had no after care policies in place. From the 17 countries with after care legislation, only 8 (22%) had well developed after care legislation which went beyond just having a basic structure in place (Strahl et al., 2020:3).

Table 2.1 lists the level of development of both care-related and after care-related legislation for all 36 countries in the sample.

**Table 2.1: CARE LEGISLATION STATUS FOR COUNTRIES**

	Well-developed legislation	Rudimentary legislation	No legislation
Legislation on care <sup>a</sup>	Australia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bangladesh
	Austria	Canada	Botswana



Belgium	Kenya	Ethiopia
Brazil	Nigeria	Lesotho
Croatia	North Macedonia	
Czech Republic	Switzerland	
Denmark	“West Africa”	
England	Zambia	
Estonia		
Finland		
Germany		
Hungary		
India		
Israel		
Romania		
Russia		
Scotland		
Serbia		
South Africa		
Spain		
Sweden		

	The Netherlands		
	USA		
Legislation on after care	Australia	Belgium	Austria
	Denmark	Estonia	Bosnia and Herzegovina
	England	Hungary	Brazil
	Finland	North Macedonia	Canada
	India	Russia	Croatia
	Romania	Serbia	Czech Republic
	Scotland	South Africa	Germany
	USA	Spain	Israel
		“West Africa”	Kenya
			Nigeria
			Sweden
			Switzerland
			The Netherlands
			Zambia

Source: Strahl et al., 2020:3

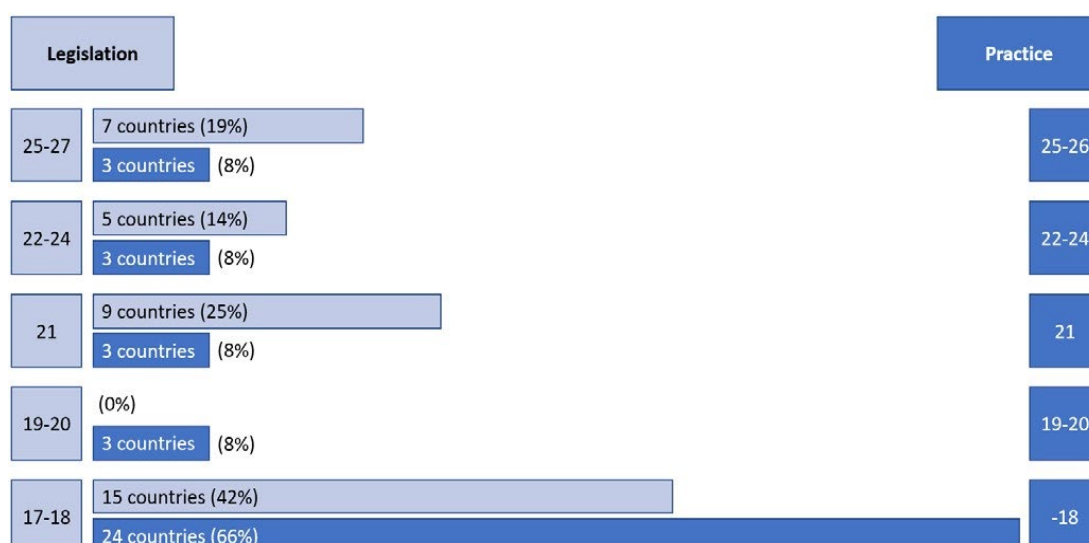
The results indicate that legislative protection diminishes as the youth grow out of foster care into independent maturity. This is proven by the significant numerical reduction of countries with after care legislation when compared to those with

legislation on care (i.e. only half of the countries with legislation on care also had after care legislation). A significant decrease in the rigor of care legislation also serves as further proof as it reduces from nearly two thirds for those in care to only a half for those transitioning out of care (Walter, 2016:278). Therefore, while only 64% of the countries had well-crafted legislation for that in care, only 22% had comprehensive legislation for those who have left care.

### Care-leaving services

The amount of support that youths get as they age out of the foster care system determines the age at which they can continue to depend on the support from social and child welfare services. As can be shown in the Figure 2.2 below, legislative protection decreases as youth age out of care systems. The research conducted revealed that there is a huge disparity between the actual age when support is discontinued and the officially stated age (as stated under policies or state law) when support is supposed to stop (Van Breda, 2018:516). The results denote that there is a huge alteration between the official position and what actually happens in reality as the foster care youth tend to exit the care system much earlier than permitted by the law.

**Figure 2.2: Age up to which young person remains in care according to legislation and practice**



About 20% (7 countries) of the countries investigated stated that support for foster care youth is available up to 27 years maximum as stated under legislation while 14% of the countries investigated confirmed that support is offered up to 24 years at most. Twenty-five percent of the countries studied (9 countries) stated that state care is available up to 21 years which is the legal age of majority for these countries (Marion & Paulsen, 2019:431). In about 42% of the countries, state support is offered until the child reaches 18 years which is commonly recognised as the legal age.

Nonetheless, the laws governing the right to be under care are not always followed. As shown in Figure 2.2 for the youth above 20 years, the number of youths supported by the state significantly drops in many countries even though these countries have legislation stating that support should be available for that age. Even though 7 countries officially state that support should be granted until 27 years, only three (3) countries in reality continue to offer support up to that age (Strahl et al., 2020:12). The same trend is also visible for the 22 to 24 years and the 21 years age groups. For these groups, only three countries offer support to youth up to those ages despite three and nine countries respectively who have policies stating that support should be offered up until those ages. In contrast, 66% of the countries studied (24 countries) report that in reality, state support for the youth in care ends at 18 years or less even though only 42% of the countries (15 countries) actually limit support to that age. In summation, nine countries that formally prescribe for youths to continue staying in care after turning 18 do not really permit them to stay in care after they turn 18.

## **2.9 How the kinship care youths are prepared to live independently**

It is critical to prepare youth in foster care well so that they can successfully lead independent lives when they leave care. Several studies reveal that leaving foster and residential care systems can be a source of increased burden on already vulnerable considered as vulnerable and at hazard (Mendes & Rogers, 2020:1517). Former foster care youths transitioning into independent living desperately need special support in order to equip them for life after care. The cancellation of state support after a foster

youth reaches 18 years of age negatively impacts on the development that the youth would have undergone all those past years. Foster care youths and those raised in residential care set ups face almost similar challenges when they transition into adulthood.

### **2.9.1 Preparation for those moving out of kinship foster care in the US**

Depending on the country and resources available there are several ways by which kinship foster care youths are prepared for independent living. In the United States of America (USA), a child welfare department has the responsibility for the placement of these youths in schools, referrals to institutions that provide services for foster care youth (Factsheet for Families, 2016:7). Children under formal kinship care arrangements are more likely to benefit from the services offered by the child welfare departments as compared to those living under voluntary (informal) kinship care arrangements (Newquist et al, 2020:336). Once the children are legally under state custody, the child welfare assumes the responsibility of ensuring that they have access to services and assessments that will be discussed in detail. In the USA there are numerous services designed to prepare young people moving out of kinship foster care and these are:

- *Therapy and counselling*

Therapeutic and counselling services are offered to children who have been moved from their biological parents as they often require these services (Newquist et al., 2020:336). Where therapy and or counselling services costs are borne by a private insurance company, the number of times they will be offered are limited to curb costs (Mendes & Rogers, 2020:1517). Children who come from a background of neglect or abuse often also have traumatic experiences. As such it is essential that they be assessed if they have experienced trauma, so that they can be given treatment to reduce the negative long-term ill-effects. For these therapy and counselling sessions kinship caregivers are advised to follow up on any progress their children make and at times are invited to participate or are advised on the parenting styles they should use on their children when at home (Koh & Testa, 2014:1498).

- *Financial Support*

Many kinship caregivers, who are usually grandparents or other relatives, usually do not have adequate financial resources to cater for the needs of the children they care for. In the USA, financial support is provided that is dependent on factors such as the income of the caregiver, number of siblings, age of the caregiver, child's income, type of living arrangement (voluntary or formal kinship care) and the disability status of the child under care (Johanna et al, 2020:67). Some of the common financial assistance packages provided include:

- *The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)*

This is a grant given to low-income earning families to boost their levels of income so that they can cater for their families. In order for a caregiver to qualify for this grant, there are no stringent requirements. The caregivers are not required to have legal custody of the children and they also do not have to strictly meet the TANF's prescribed definition of a kinship caregiver (Newquist et al., 2020:336). The caregiver can be assisted by a caseworker for the eligibility criteria, where to get the documents required, how to apply for the benefits and whether to apply for the benefits for the children only or for the whole family. Relative caregivers or their family are still able to apply for benefits for children under their care even if they themselves might not be eligible for the TANF benefits. In such scenarios, the state considers the children's income when deciding whether the family qualifies for the benefits. When the children's income is little or they have no source of income altogether, the family which takes care of them are likely to get the TANF grant. Depending on the laws of the state in which they live, the benefits will be discontinued when the children turn 18.

- *SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)*

The federal food program, the SNAP, is a programme that is available to low income earning families. In order to determine which families are eligible for this programme, an entire family's income is considered, and the kinship foster parent's children are also included (Johanna et al., 2020:18). When applying for the SNAP the caregiver

must include the whole family as it is not only for the children under his/her care. The TANF offices oversee handling applications for the SNAP.

- *Kinship guardianship or foster care payments*

These are payments given to relative caregivers. The eligibility criteria used to determine who receives this payment differs from state to state. Nonetheless, states can also opt to fund the kinship guardianship assistance programme (GAP) as a way of supporting young people living with their relatives as guardians. Relatives who have acquired all the necessary documentation for them to be officially recognised by local courts or a child welfare agency as foster parents can also qualify to receive these payments (Newquist et al., 2020:336). The amount of funds they receive from these payments is much higher than other kinship benefits like the TANF and the SNAP.

- *Health Insurance*

Most young people and children living under the care of their relatives qualify for health insurance which comes through the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) or Medicaid. With Medicaid, kinship foster care children and youth, especially those from low income earning families, can have access to several health care services such as medical check-ups, visits to the doctor, hospitalisations, prescriptions and screenings (Atkinson, 2011:191). The CHIP, which is a state funded programme, caters for the medical costs of those children who are not covered by Medicaid, however its eligibility criteria and coverage differs from state to state. The most frequently used criteria to determine eligibility for both the CHIP and Medicaid is the child's income rather than the kinship caregiver's income. Caseworkers assist kinship caregivers on how and where to apply for these health insurance programmes. Relative or kinship caregivers and/or grandparents are allowed to apply for both health insurance programmes for the children they care for. It is also critical to note that even without having legal custody of the children under their care, the caregiver still qualifies to apply for Medicaid or CHIP.

- *Support Groups*

The child welfare department can create a local support group for kinship caregivers where it connects different kinship caregivers. In these support groups the sharing of stories and experiences by caregivers in the same circumstances can help ease stress, depression and other challenges faced by those looking after a relative's children or grandchildren (Newquist et al., 2020:336). Social media platforms like Facebook are used to sponsor and facilitate these kinship caregiver support groups.

- *Kinship Navigator Programmes*

Navigator programmes for kinship caregivers are available in selected areas to provide assistance for kinship caregivers to locate and get the services and help they require to take care of their relatives or grandchildren (Johanna et al., 2020:18). A staff 'navigator' is employed to help caregivers with information related to legal aid, access to health insurance, how to navigate through the court process, how to obtain emergency services and other issues related to kinship foster care. Other duties of the navigator may include linking kinship caregivers to support groups, community services and counselling.

Since 2009, the US Department of Health and Human Services has helped to create and support more than 26 kinship navigator programmes and has funded over seven TANF/Child welfare collaboration navigator programmes in 2013 (Mendes & Rogers, 2020:1517). The funding of these programmes is in accordance with legislature such as the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008.

### **2.9.2 Preparation for those moving out of kinship foster care in other parts of the world**

There are many reasons why a child may end up in foster care. Some of the common factors which lead to the placement of children in foster care include sexual abuse, neglect, psychological abuse and physical abuse which mostly take place during a child's early years. Usually if a child does not recover from these childhood experiences, he/she may end up developing behavioural problems and low self-



esteem as a result of externalising and internalising these experiences (Atkinson, 2011:191). Besides this, traumatic experiences can cause problems such as anxiety, lowered expectations, post-traumatic stress disorder and poor academic achievement. These problems are further amplified when the youth has to move out of foster care without being ready to live independently (Goyette, 2019:235). They suddenly find themselves having to survive without the social, emotional, and economic support they previously had access to as they would now be considered legal adults who are able to fend for themselves. Nonetheless, in reality, many of these foster youths reach the age of 18 without having the skills required to survive on their own as they are usually ill-prepared to face the challenges of life on their own (Courtney, 2019:76; Havlicek, et al, 2016:8).

Research about youth moving out of foster care conducted by Courtney (2019:77), found out that most of the youths leaving care experienced poor outcomes, which is a worrying trend. The study showed that about 30% could not settle in one place after moving out of care, many desperately need social assistance, a quarter of them became parents, and nearly 50% suffered from health problems such as depression after leaving care (Keller et al, 2016:241). The youths who left care reported that losing supportive relationships and financial difficulties were jointly two of the most serious challenges of moving out of care. One crucial aspect to note according to O'Higgins, Sebba and Gardner (2017:199) is that currently it takes longer for young people to be able attain stability in their lives than it did in past years. Currently for one to get a desirable job, more education and training is needed than in previous years. (O'Higgins et al 2017:200) further argue that in the past young people took the leap from adolescence to adulthood in their late teenage years whilst presently people become young adults in their mid-twenties.

## **2.10 The impact of support required for foster youth leaving care**

Basing on the results from previous studies on young people exiting the foster care system, it is imperative that assistance be extended for the youth moving out of foster care so as to achieve stability and accomplishment once they are on their own. Provision of more assistance to foster care youth counts as an investment into their lives is essential for their future survival as adults (Newquist et al, 2020:336). The

period leading up to young people becoming independent is one that can be described as high-risk, since there are risks of challenges such as joblessness, imprisonment, mental health problems, homelessness, and drug abuse (Keller, et al, 2016:242). It is clear that, transitional programmes designed to help prepare young people whilst they are in care and also supporting them after they leave care are essential for successful independent living (O'Higgins et al., 2017:200).

These programmes are termed Independent Living Programmes (ILP) or transitional programmes which continue after a youth has left care. Studies done on ILPs have shown that these programmes have a positive influence on a youth's outcomes and their ability to survive on their own once they leave care (Goyette, 2019:235). These studies also revealed that most youths who take part in ILPs are able to successfully finish their high school studies, have a higher employment success rate and are usually financially independent by the time they finish the ILPs. A study by Mendes and Rogers (2020:1517) indicates that former foster care youths frequently tried to reconnect with someone from a department of social welfare or a drop-in-centre to look for resources to assist them to cope with the demands of independent life. One critical element of ILPs is that relationships and support networks formed during the programmes are of an ongoing nature and individualised support continues to be available for youths who have left foster care (Strahl et al., 2020:11). (Keller et al. 2016:242) note that support after the ILPs continues to be available for former foster care youth for a minimum of three years.

### **2.10.1 Factors that constitutes successful Independent Living Programmes (ILPs)**

Typically, Independent Living Programmes (ILPs) offer a variety of services for the youths to prepare them to survive on their own especially those aged between 16 and 21 years. Ideally these programmes are meant to help lessen the challenges experienced by youth their transition to independent living (O'Higgins et al., 2017:200). Youths are offered ILPs before they move out of foster care in order to empower them with necessary expertise to live independently. The focus of these programmes is youth self-sufficiency after exiting the foster care system through an integration of life skills training; preparatory training for employment and skills to manage the

complexities of everyday life (Mendes & Rogers, 2020:1518). The youths are examined at the completion of each training programme to determine the levels of competency attained and how ready they are to live on their own. Youths involved in an ILP work closely with a social worker who acts as a mentor helping them to meet set targets and create an independent-living plan tailor-made to suit each youth's specific needs.

The youths are also able to receive a wide range of individual services which are offered in a community group setting such as personal counselling, life skills instruction, job readiness, and resource referrals. The social worker typically has access to community resources from where he/she gets health care services required by the youth. The social worker to youth ratio is usually equal to but not greater than 1:10 to ensure that there is regular contact between the worker and the youth and to facilitate the easy distribution of resources (O'Higgins et al., 2017:200).

### **2.10.2 Services offered by Independent Living Programmes**

ILPs offer a variety of services designed to assist the youth to lead independent lives, and some of the services provided include the following:

- ***Preparation for transition and independence*** - this encompasses emotional and practical training to prepare young people for independent living.
- ***Support with accommodation*** - affordable accommodation is offered to youth soon after they exit foster care. This is a very important component of the ILPs as it is essential that the youths are provided with a plethora of secure, safe and stable accommodation options before being discharged from care. The accommodation problem is one of the root sources of stress and anxiety among young people leaving foster care. If not helped in securing their own place to stay, care leavers end up being homeless and living on the streets (Walther, 2016:278). Multiple options need to be available for care leavers. Marion and Paulsen (2019:412) emphasise that ILPs should take note of the fact that even if young people are empowered with the necessary life skills, unless they get support to live on their own these skills and training programmes will not have much impact.

- **Financial support** - Allowances to cater for basic expenses such as food, clothing, transport, and other minor expenses are critical. Such allowances can be provided on a weekly basis. However young people are also encouraged to seek part-time employment to cover personal expenses which go beyond the basics (Courtney, 2019:136).
- **Life skills training** - This includes training on financial management; planning; time management, housing, use of public transport; use of community resources, decision making; building support networks; employment skills; social skills; problem solving; food preparation and; finding and keeping a job (Havlicek et al., 2016:9).
- **Emotional support and guidance** - A mentor will be available to provide emotional support and guidance to young people whenever they need it. The mentor will also be able to offer young people help in setting their future goals and how to navigate life's challenges. There should be a collaborative relationship between the mentor and the young person as they work towards ensuring that the young person becomes an independent self-sustaining individual who is able to fully utilise his/her own developmental skills (Walter, 2016:278). Much of the time allocated for the ILPs is spent on emotional support and guidance because it constitutes a vital aspect of cultivating behaviour change within a young person.

## **2.11 Social support services for independent living for former kinship foster care youth**

### *Supported and supervised independent living in Liberia*

In Liberia there is supported independent living which provides support to young people aged 18 and at times older so that they may be able to successfully transition to independent life through the after-care services they receive and the supported living interventions available (Okpych, 2015:82). Supported and supervised independent living programmes in Liberia were developed from concepts of the International Guidelines for Alternative Care of Children, best practice, and global studies. It is a relatively new programme designed to assist care leavers in Liberia (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, 2014:12).

According to Okpych (2015:82), during supported independent living, the young adult continues to receive support whilst living on his/her own as a way of helping him/her to become fully independent. Furthermore, the youth receive support and assistance from support workers but does not receive any supervision as the youth is independent. The objective of supported independent living is to prepare youths to transition into independent adulthood (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, 2014:12).

This can be differentiated from supervised independent living because the youth still retain the ability to make their own decisions regarding their daily lives, for instance they have the freedom of movement and power to do their own budgeting. A young adult under supported independent living typically is monitored through guidance and the support services received and not obliged to follow compulsory rules unless otherwise agreed upon. In cases where it is proven that the youth is having serious difficulties and is at risk, a caseworker may transfer him/her to another place (Newquist et al., 2020:336).

For supervised living (which can be in the form of independent living or in a group home) the child is required to adhere to a set of rules, for instance not to indulge in drugs (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, 2014:12). Failure to observe these rules has consequences. In this type of arrangement, the child is usually a state guardian.

In Liberia, just like in other parts of the world, the youth who come from foster care, institutional care, from the streets or from other circumstances outside their biological family, face problems when transitioning into adulthood. The children are vulnerable in these instances and are at risk of facing consequences such as poverty; ill-health; poor academic achievements; incarceration; teenage pregnancy; substance abuse; interpersonal and societal issues; unemployment and suicide when compared to their peers growing up in stable families (Deborah, 2012:17). After care services such as supported independent living have been proven, through studies, to reduce outcomes such as homelessness, renewed placement under institutional care and delinquency while at the same time improving the young people's health, economic, social, and educational outcomes (Deborah, 2012:17; Newquist et al., 2020:336).

Table 2.2 below compares supported independent living with supervised independent living whilst Table 2.3 shows the circumstances which lead to the implementation of supported independent living and supervised independent living.

**Table 2.2 Comparisons between supported and supervised independent living**

Supported Independent Living	Supervised Independent Living
Children surviving without daily supervision in his/her own home, apartment, hostel, or other accommodation	Child lives in a 24-hour or regularly supervised living situation, such as overseen properties or small group home with professionals providing supervision
Social workers deal with the provision support, connection to services, planning and monitoring	Social worker provides systematic support and supervision, linkage to services, case planning and monitoring
Goal is child living as an autonomous adult without regular support	Goal may or may not be full autonomous living
The option of care is for children who leave institutional care, kinship, foster care, or move on to street-backed living or other vulnerability.	Options of care are to be transferred to institutional care, relatives, or children who give up care or to a supported life from the city or other vulnerable circumstances.

**Table 2.3 When and when not to implement supported living**

Supported independent living ...	
may benefit children who are ...	may not be necessary or suitable when ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These individuals are no longer able to live in an institutional setting, such as foster care or care in an out-of-home placement. They may be eligible for reunification, adoption, or placement with kinship family or working on the streets and in which placement in alternative care and reunification, adoption or kinship care is not an option;</li> <li>• People who want to live on their own or in a residential care facility often do not want to be around family or other people unable to live within a family environment due to trauma, separation and distress (i.e., victims of severe domestic abuse and neglect, child soldiers, children living on the streets, children on the move, child labourers, adolescents, etc.), but who can be independent with minimal support;</li> <li>• Those who do not experience psychological or physical disturbances which make independent living difficult are not considered disabled. for themselves and for others, who are pregnant or parenting and need the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The placement is not in the child's best interests and may cause them to be separated from their family or friends. The child has physical, emotional, behavioural or other special needs that require supervised living arrangements;</li> <li>• The child may be in danger of hurting themselves or others if they're not supervised, including potentially suicidal tendencies, substance abuse, and other self-harming behaviours. The child is not old enough or mature enough to live independently.</li> </ul>

additional support to live independently and to be successful parents;

- with demonstrated maturity needed for independent living.

### *Support services, control and closure of cases in independent living conditions*

A caseworker assigned by the department of social welfare recommends and supports a child in independent living. Many of these supported independent living arrangements are informal or community based, therefore the Department of social welfare has to work in cooperation with the community, chiefs, religious leaders, civil society, community structures and families to monitor these arrangements (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, 2014:12). In order for there to be adequate oversight in these arrangements, preferably observing has to be done by different people both legally and casually.

However, a critical point to be noted is that effective monitoring of any independent living arrangement largely depends on the youth's willingness to be monitored. In some cases, the child may strongly resist monitoring or assistance perceiving it as a sign of interference in his/her personal life (Newquist et al., 2020:336). All monitoring mechanisms and follow-ups must thus be conducted in a sensitive manner and with the children's consent and involvement. It would be beneficial for the youth to themselves state the kind of support they prefer receiving and the follow up method that should be employed. In all respects, the youth should have a say in all issues related to the supported independent living process.

Apprenticeships, mentorship programmes and training should be arranged for the care leavers by the social workers working in conjunction with the community to facilitate skills development and to encourage networking among care leavers (Okpych, 2015:82). Regular visits should also be conducted by the social worker or community groups for a stated time frame and a case plan should be available for every individual care leaver so as to enable more effective planning (Newquist et al., 2020:336). If the care leaver has support within the community (from a support group for instance), that



support group should be allowed to have contact with the care leaver so as to alert the social worker or social welfare department when the youth is exposed to an imminent risk.

The community support group and the social workers are required to monitor the care leaver's:

1. Living conditions (accommodation).
2. Food supplies and other basic resources.
3. Mental and physical well-being.
4. Relationship with family, peers and other significant people.
5. Employment status, source of livelihood, apprenticeships, independent living programmes, peer support group networks or mentorship programmes currently engaged in.

Communication between the care leaver's biological family, mentor, community or kinship foster parents is facilitated by the social worker and it is encouraged that it be frequent.

**Table 2.4 Courses, training, assistance programmes and support services that can be offered to youth leaving kinship foster care.**

<b>Courses &amp; Training</b>	<b>Assistance Programmes and Support Services</b>
Independent life skills (budgeting and accounting, housework, time management, hygiene and healthy lifestyle.	Micro-loans, business development and employment assistance
Vocational training and literacy	Apprenticeships, attachments, or internships
Business development	Physical and reproductive health services
Sexual reproductive health	Nutritional support
Premarital counselling and parenting	Counselling, therapeutic help, mediation and disaster management  Recreational and cultural activities  Support services for children with special needs  Legal assistance  Link to employment and information resource centres  Associations and networks for care leavers

## **2.12 Social support services rendered to youths leaving care in South Africa**

There is not much research on *Independent Living Programmes* and *moving out of kinship care* has been conducted in South Africa. This field of study seems to still be underdeveloped in South Africa, which explains the lack of extensive local studies on these topics.

Independent living skills are very important for youths exiting residential care or foster care, so that they may be able to successfully survive as independent adults. Independent living programmes are recognised under the Children’s Act 38 of 2005

under the following two sections: Section 191(3) stipulates that CYCCs, in addition to the residential programmes that they offer can also provide transitional programmes for children living under their care or at home in order to help the children when they exit the foster care system after turning 18 years of age. Regulations 69 to 71 concerning cluster foster schemes stipulate that for children under cluster foster care, their best interests should be promoted by providing of different services especially those meant to help young people during the process of moving out of cluster foster care upon turning 18 years of age.

A critical point worth noting is that while the Act states that youths should be prepared and supported as they transition out of care, it does not state the after-care services that should be offered when the youths are discharged from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005. It is critical to note that, this is the period when support is most needed (Johanna et al., 2020:18).

#### *The Project Lungisela (2010-2011)*

The Project Lungisela (2010-2011) is one of the programmes piloted in South Africa to develop independent living skills for the youths in the country. The programme discovered that many marginalised youths in the country have challenges establishing complete independence (Tanur, 2012:326). Even though it is critical that programmes be developed to assist young people moving out of care, with particular focus on the impartation of independent living skills, interdependent living skills may be of much greater value (Mamelani Report, 2011:5). This implies that the point of focus will change from solely developing independent living skills in young people to connecting them with a network of support and to places where they can access support to meet their different needs.

Project Lungisela was developed by Mamelani Projects as a response to the growing concerns raised by youths leaving Elukhuselweni Children`s Home over the past five years. The programme was supported by comprehensive studies on the preparations for young people before they leave care (Tanur, 2012:328). The project consisted of both independent living skills to prepare young people before moving out of care and After Care Support programmes for young people when they become independent young adults.

The piloted program lasted for 18 months, and it focused on the following four areas;

- Instruction and assessment
- The Skills of Life
- Career guidance and further education, and
- Identification of local resources and support networks

**Table 2.6 Programmes offered by the Project Lungisela.**

<b>Orientation and assessment</b>	<b>Life skills</b>	<b>Career Guidance and further education</b>	<b>Identification of local resources and a support network</b>
<p>Focus: Introduce the programme to identified families and assess the needs of young people as part of the pilot. This is achieved through home visits and individual consultations.</p>	<p>Focus: Life skills courses that have developed the soft skills needed to move to adulthood using individual development plans to develop and help young people set goals and plan for their future. These plans focused on career guidance, subsequent education and training, as well as organizing basic documents. Life skills were also exchanged in the ground therapy camps.</p>	<p>Focus: Youth have identified possible career options and have studied how to acquire the skills needed to begin the path of independence. Emphasis was also placed on identifying community-based resources and skills development opportunities. Family support is also provided at this stage to ensure that families are able to support young people during their journeys.</p>	<p>Focus: Building relationships and links with local resources and support networks and continued support was provided to ensure educational and emotional support to ensure that young people are able to achieve their goals.</p>

Source: Mamelani Report (2011:11)

*Key findings*

As part of the background check before the programme commenced the study discovered that youth leaving foster care are usually faced with circumstances similar

to those raised in residential care institutions. In some instances, these children are forced to move out of foster care once their grants have been discontinued when they turn 18 (Johanna, Sara, Sarah & John, 2020:18). Some of the foster care families do not want to continue looking after these children at that point. They therefore have to contend with the same problems experienced by their peers, looking for accommodation, accessing emotional and educational support once they start living on their own. There is a misconception that because they once lived in a family set up, they would have acquired some life skills when compared to colleagues who are raised in residential care facilities. Nonetheless they still need to acquire independent living skills especially those related to living independently.

The key findings which emerged from the programme were as follows (Tanur, 2012: 328): In order for the participants (youth under care) to become fully independent individuals, they needed material support for further education and skills training as well assistance in looking for jobs. Receiving an income grant was actually an impediment for young people which prevented them from taking bold steps towards independence. The youth involved in the programme lacked vital resources such as money for going to career programmes, job interviews and even money to print their CVs which made it difficult for them to seek employment and further their skills.

All participants involved in the study needed practical and emotional support to set them up towards gaining independence. The participants revealed that the most important part of the program was personal support offered that took a holistic approach in addressing problems related to education, career choice, possessing essential documents, further education and creating networks of support. Even though possessing independent living skills is important for individual development, being able to live a totally independent life was not at that point a priority for the youths who participated in the research. Both the youth and the foster care families involved in the programme lacked valuable information regarding how and where to access local resources.

## **2.13 Conclusion**

The chapter has discussed literature related to the challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care. There are different kinds of foster care placements in South

Africa such as residential foster care, cluster foster care and kinship foster care; however, the study focused on kinship foster care. Kinship foster care is available in different types which include informal, temporary guardianship, voluntary and formal kinship care. The focus of the study was on formal kinship foster care. Care leavers experience a number of challenges when they transition into independent living. While some go on to become successful independent young adults, a large number of care leavers experience negative outcomes such as accommodation problems, mental and physical health problems, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse and failure to complete their studies. They suddenly find themselves having to live without the support services they were accustomed to. Resilience has been seen as critical for care leavers to successfully transition into independent living. Resiliency needs to be strengthened by protective factors which shield the youth from exposure to risk factors. The plight of care leavers and those living under various care systems is governed by a plethora of national, regional, and international legislation. The UNCRC of 1989 is one of the mostly widely recognised legislation on children's rights advocating for participation, protection, and provision.

In Africa there is the ACRWC and in South Africa there are legislations such as the Children's Act 38 of 2005, White Paper for Social Welfare, White Paper on Families in South Africa (2013), and the National Youth Policy (NYP) to mention a few. These legislative frameworks were enacted to protect the rights of young people, empower them, and provide support crucial for their development. South Africa is named amongst the countries with the most developed care and after-care legislation. However, a critical point to note is that legislative protection diminishes as the young people grow out of foster care into independent adulthood. Global studies have also shown consistent disparities between what policy says and what is implemented on the ground.

In many cases there is a huge disparity between the actual age when support is discontinued and the officially stated age at which support should be discontinued. Nonetheless, there are a number of independent living programmes available to assist care leavers lead successful independent lives. Currently in South Africa, the fields on *Independent Living Programmes* and *moving out of kinship care* are still underdeveloped. Liberia is one of the countries in Africa with well-structured independent living programmes (supported independent living and supervised

independent living). The next chapter looks at the research methodology employed for the study.



## **CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses theories related to the topic: The challenges that are being experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa. A theoretical framework is made up of concepts, definitions, and existing theories for a specific study (Silverman, 2010:332). A theoretical framework explains, predicts, and seeks to understand phenomena and in many instances, challenges the existing body of knowledge (Creswell, 2012:58). Therefore, it is crucial in any study to be undertaken that the existing theories, models, and concepts that are relevant to a topic are understood. The chapter will discuss theories related to the advantages of kinship foster care, kinship ties as a resource of social capital, and social capital increasing caregiver investment in children. The chapter will be anchored by the resilience theory, the social support theory and social capital theory before concluding.

### **3.2 Theories related to the advantages of kinship foster care**

Those strongly in favour of kinship foster care believe that it is beneficial to children as it reduces the pain of not having biological parents present by providing them with social relationships from the extended family (Hegar, 2012:16). In that way kin networks ensure that familial relations continue and there is cultural continuity. Besides that, the fact that the kin caregiver is a blood relative of the child means that he/she is more likely to be committed to look after the child due to the biological ties that exist between him/her and the child (Downs et al 2013:63). A concept can be developed from these assumed benefits of kinship foster care under the theory of social capital. The social capital theory is able to provide the discipline of child welfare with a theoretical framework that explains how kinship networks function as an element of social capital.

### **3.2 The Resilience Theory**

Young people in foster care and those who are about to leave the foster care system, are commonly called “youth at risk” in the media as well as in various pieces of literature. It is evident that there are risk factors which come from being placed in foster care as a young person, in the same vein resilience factors may also be applicable to these young people forced by circumstances to live under foster care. As a result of the difficult conditions which lead to young people being forced to enter foster care, it is imperative to come up with a framework or structure to analyse the factors that will enable the child to successfully transition into adult life. For this study, the resilience framework is essential in providing an adequate contextual understanding of the challenges and the factors which lead to a successful transitioning of the youth out of the foster care system.

Research on resilience and the definitions associated with it have evolved over time. (Adler 2014:56) defines resilience as an individual’s ability to return to previous patterns of competence and variation which characterised an individual before experiencing periods of heavy stress. In addition, resilience can be defined as an individual’s ability to mentally function at a greater level than that which is expected considering the difficult experiences one may have faced in the earlier stages of life (Higgins cited by Meztger, 2018:120). In essence, the concept of resilience acknowledges an individual’s adaptation skills in response to highly stressful situations one may have faced in life. Children who have been exposed to difficult life experiences exhibit great resilience (Schofield, 2016:67). Some of these difficult life experiences include violence, drug abuse, poverty, separation from family, family discord and abuse. These experiences make it difficult for these ‘at risk’ youth to succeed in later life (Rutter cited by Schoefield & Beek, 2015:69).

According to Rutter (cited by Meztger, 2018:121), resilience cannot be considered a fixed characteristic of a person but is an attribute that is subject to change depending on circumstances. He further proposed that an individual can successfully deal with a stressful situation at one point but may also equally fall apart when confronted by the same stressful situation in a different context. Thus, changes in situations may well alter an individual’s levels of resilience (Schoefield & Beek, 2015:69). Research that has been carried out concerning resilience has been aimed at developing a better

understanding of how self-resilience can be enhanced. According to research conducted by Rutter (cited by Meztger, 2018:121), being able to successfully deal with an adverse family past and accepting one's past mistakes, have been considered some of the greatest achievements by young people who were formerly under foster care. These young people also considered not making the same mistakes as their parents, as one of their greatest achievements.

According to Werner and Smith (2009:32), the effect of protective and risk factors varies depending on one's stage of life. Their study on vulnerable children identified that resilience depended on the various factors affecting an individual's life during various developmental stages of life. At the different development stages, they discovered that there were significant changes between difficult life experiences that exposed an individual's vulnerability and protective factors that improved resilience (Werner & Smith, 2009:37). As these children grew into adolescence, they became more responsible individuals, with a set of defined principles and they exhibited higher levels of social maturity than their peers. Towards the end of secondary school, these resilient young people exhibited self-positivity and an inner locus of control. Furthermore, they were more goal-oriented, accountable, and nurturing.

In addition to this, there were other factors which were discovered and considered to have had an influence on their resilience and these included having adequate emotional support from a caregiver, being raised by a responsive and nurturing caregiver, being in a foster family where there were few children (less than 4), actively taking part in out of school sporting activities, and not being separated from their caregivers for prolonged periods of time (Werner & Smith, 2009:40). These studies can be useful to direct the treatment of young people about to exit foster care to focus on areas of development which include having a positive self-esteem, building relationships and attachments, improving their social skills with their age mates, developing coping skills, rewarding them for any success they achieve and developing their self-regulation (van Breda, 2016:71). Nonetheless, of critical importance is that all these objectives must be obtained through building relationships with other people; this should be the foundational principle.

In order to understand risk and resilience there is a need to adopt a multi-systems framework which considers both the nature and encourage of human beings and the

link between them. This will provide a good conceptual framework developed to understand what really makes some individuals resilient in certain circumstances (Schoefield & Beek, 2015:69). Studies on risk and resilience are critical in that they guide the designing, planning and implementation of social development programmes that are aimed at building youth life skills needed by those youths about to leave the foster care system (Hawley, 2017:17; Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2018:87; Frazier & Richman, 2014:23; Darling, 2013:77).

### **3.2.1 Resiliency theory (van Breda's perspective)**

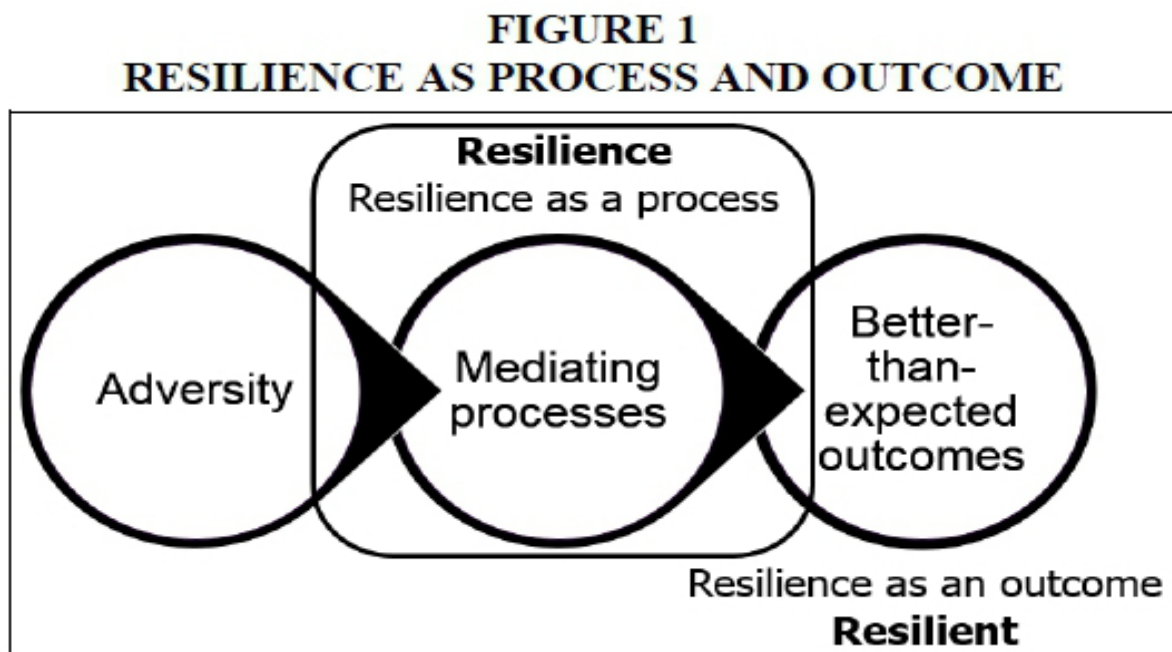
The resiliency theory is derived from adversity studies; particularly how difficult life experiences negatively affect people. According to Antonovsky (1979:13), this is termed 'pathogenic' emphasis which is a situation whereby the source of an illness or an interruption in social well-being is traced. The pathogenic focus has of late dominated both medical and social sciences. Work on resilience emerged from vulnerability studies done by researchers such as Emmy Werner who studied children living under adverse conditions in Hawaii for decades (Werner, 2013:67). Vulnerability issues were also addressed by Rutter when he studied the generational transmission of disadvantage and poverty, and Garmezy when he studied the effect of genes and environmental factors in causing schizophrenia (Masten, 2015:12). These studies showed that vulnerability led to negative consequences in the future lives of those who were being investigated.

Vulnerability comprised of different factors such as a history of psychological ailment in a family (genetic vulnerability), complications in the neonatal and prenatal period (insufficient neonatal care, smoking or maternal malnutrition), family problems (poor parenting or marital problems), and a broad range of societal problems (high neighbourhood crime rate, war, or poverty) (van Breda, 2016:86). The outcomes were mainly concentrated on mental health issues because most of the academics were psychiatrists and psychologists, nevertheless Werner's outcomes were broader covering social, intellectual, and physical development (van Breda, 2015:83).

According to van Breda (2018:16), resilience studies are based on three interconnected factors, namely; adversity, mediating factors and outcomes. He argues that it is impossible to discuss resilience without including these three critical elements.

Nonetheless, one challenge with the result component of the pliability process is that while it stresses that in the end there are positive outcomes which are realised in the face of challenges; it falls short of explaining them. The lack of an explanation limits the application of this theory and therefore the process definition of resilience is thus preferable. As a concept, the process of resilience therefore leads to an outcome which is hinged on the success of the mediating processes as shown in Figure 3.1 below.

**Figure 3.1: Resilience as a process and outcome.**



Ungar (2012:68) and van Breda (2018:18) seem to agree in suggesting the use of two different terminologies to help differentiate between process and outcome. They also suggest that the terms resilience and resilient be used as process and outcome definitions respectively. Therefore, it is conceivable to suggest that an individual or a system is resilient when it succeeds despite facing adversity. Besides that, one can suggest that a social system or person can only exhibit resilience where there is some form of support from relationships and optimism for the future.

An acceptable definition of resilience is therefore one which is inclusive of all three aspects with particular focus on mediating. Van Breda (2018:23) thereby proposed

that resilience be defined as multilevel processes by which systems or individuals operate to realize enhanced outcomes than previously probable in the face of challenges. The 'multilevel' aspect of the definition implies that the processes of resilience take place across different domains, environments, or levels of social ecology and not only at an individual level (Nemangembe, 2020:60). The term 'systems' is included in the definition so that it incorporates individuals, cells, communities, organisations, the climate, families, the economy and even non-human systems. Better outcomes than previously expected will be discussed in the next section. The phrase 'in the face of challenges' implies that difficulties are always continuous and resilient processes need to be at work while in the face of on-going adversity. Resilience also has to proceed even when adversity has passed, as an individual or a system is expected to recover from the impact of such adversity.

- **Adversity and outcomes**

With the definition of the term 'resilience' having been adequately discussed, it is imperative to equally discuss the terms adversity and outcomes. According to Bonanno and Diminich (2013:871), adversity, which comes in patterns, can be split into two groups, namely; chronic and acute. Chronic adversity is one which is prolonged over a significant period of time and may have a penetrating effect on the life of an individual (Rodrigo & Byrne, 2013:15). Van Breda (2018:23) further shares that chronic adversity is split into two sub-categories which are distal and proximal onset. As discussed by van Breda (2018:24) distal onset chronic hardship does not have an exact start point in the life of an individual (i.e. there is no distinct period before the difficulty) and it includes experiences of family violence and poverty tracing from an individual's birth up to adult life. In addition, proximal onset chronic adversity has an exact start date in which the individual began experiencing adversity, but it also continues for a period impacting on different facets of an individual's life and can also include natural disasters and war. It is significant to be able to identify these patterns because they highlight different resilience pathways which can be predominant in different circumstances (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013:869). With proximal and acute-onset chronic adversities it is conceivable to consider resilience as a process of bouncing back from difficulties and restoring one's life to a normalcy, however with

distal-onset chronic adversity, there is no bouncing back because there is no life before adversity.

### **3.2.2 Relevance of resilience theory for social work in South Africa**

It is imperative to analyse how applicable the resilience theory is for social work in South Africa. The resilience theory has been strongly criticised mainly because of its neoliberal roots. Thus, it is critical to analyse whether such a theory can impact towards social work exercise in South Africa and other developing countries. According to van Breda (2018:25), the resilience theory can very well contribute to social work and exercise in South African context for three reasons.

Firstly, the theory assists in formulating research questions for social work studies. Having resilience theory guide the formation of research questions helps to prevent the asking of pathogenic questions (van Breda, 2015:325). The social work discipline is essentially a change-oriented field as can be seen in the definition of social work which is an occupation that encourages revolution in society, development, freedom and enablement of people and social solidity (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014:3). Having a deeper understanding of vulnerability is important in the assessment phase of social work. A critical part of thorough assessment requires in-depth understanding of the difficulties faced by clients, a detailed history of those difficulties and the context of those difficult life experiences. Nonetheless, an individual is much more than the challenges he/she has faced in life, therefore an excellent assessment does not only solve the challenges but also the individual (Van Breda, 2015:72). It is individuals who are of concern to the social worker. An individual's assets, strengths and schemes to solve the problems he/she faces are critical to understand the person within his/her society. If it is to be adequately proven that social work prioritises human rights and dignity, then full attention should be given to the complete spectrum of an individual's life experiences, the negative, positive, strength and vulnerability.

In the same vein, the resilience theory is mainly concerned with mediating processes that enhance an individual or system's capacity to succeed when facing challenges. Adversity is key to the resilience theory when compared to the strength's perspective and solution-focused therapy. It is impossible to discuss the concept of resilience

without including adversity (van Breda, 2018:27). Nonetheless, a key constituent of the resilience theory is the process of mediating adversity and outcomes. Based on the above-mentioned practice approaches, having an in-depth consideration of the resilience processes places one in a good position to update policy and practices, rather than having to understand challenges only.

Secondly, the resilience theory promotes the growth of indigenous and local knowledge which contributes towards decolonising social work practice and theory (van Breda, 2018:27). Most resilience research is qualitative although some use quantitative research designs (an etic approach) (White, 2016:46). Qualitative designs possess the advantage that they allow participants to voice their concerns and experiences (an emic approach) (White, 2016:46). Through such methods, local information, and practice about what benefits people traverse rigid times have a good opportunity to develop.

The researcher chose the theory because over the past few years there has been an upsurge in resilience studies among social work researchers in South Africa (van Breda, 2018:16). Resilience research has been applied in a wide range of social work topics in South Africa which include HIV and poverty, care leavers, youth-headed households, drug abuse, adolescents, aging caregivers, and social workers. However, van Breda (2018:16) argues that notwithstanding the increasing interest in the subject, a lack of in-depth understanding of how the theory should inform research and frequently outdated versions of the theory are being used. The processes of resilience have evolved over the years. In the South African context, resilience theory is particularly important in the field of social work in view of aspects such as social development, decolonisation, and indigenous practice (van Breda, 2017:249).

The concept of social support has been widely studied, mostly in the disciplines of health and social welfare (Pelaez, et al., 2016:167). Past research on social support attempted to establish linkages between social support with adults, families (Markstromet, 2015:87) and adolescents (Rodrigo & Byrne, 2013:281). Nonetheless, there has been a scarcity of research dealing with the extent to which social support increases resilience in family groups within the social welfare system, like kinship foster care families. This area of social support has received less attention.



### **3.3 Social Support theory**

Lin and Ensel (2016:341), delineate social support as the methods in which resources are distributed through formal or informal networks to families, to satisfy their instrumental, family, and personal needs, under everyday normal circumstances as well as in times of crisis. Social support is closely tied to instrumental, informational, material, psychological, emotional, and physical help given by others as a way of maintaining the well-being of others or helping them adapt to challenging life situations (Dunst & Trivette, 2015:162). It is a combination of social resources accessed through formal or informal channels which assist families to survive on a daily basis or in times of crisis (Lin & Ensel, 2016:341). Hence, this helps in building sustainable livelihood in families and reduces elements of vulnerability.

Presently, the concept of resilience is based on an interactive and dynamic process that can only be enhanced by the availability of positive social support networks. Both informal and formal support networks are regarded as critical components that can impact on the resilience of a family (Licitra-Kleckler & Waas, 2014:367). Markstrom (2015:431) observes that coping is closely related to social support and the two are important aspects of resilience. Where there is adequate social support, people are able to safely navigate conflicts and life's stressful situations. When it comes to improving resilience, social support strengthens individual well-being because social relationships give positive evaluations and a set of identities. The effect of all these is that the individual's self-esteem is improved, leaving the individual with a sense of confidence in his/her ability to influence their surroundings (Metzger, 2018:323). Thus, support systems, either formal or informal are critical elements of family resilience (Walsh, 2012:654; Lietz, 2015:534; Lietz & Strength, 2011:287).

Studies conducted on family resilience have revealed that families are able to create positive relationships that are useful in optimising resources and possibilities, which is something that had been previously unknown (Walsh, 2012:532). Social support, communication, flexibility, the right attitude and the ability to successfully deal with the challenges they face, spirituality, willingness and making efforts to meet the needs of the family all contribute towards the process of resilience (Dunst & Trivette, 2015:581; Lietz, 2015:143; DeFrain & Asay, 2012:211). This will help to build the capacity to

adjust and adapt when faced with difficult challenges as a family within a set up in which challenges are dealt with collectively.

Social support is a protecting aspect for people who are in difficult social circumstances and for families involved in a kinship foster care arrangement. This is essential considering the fact that kinship foster care is one of the most commonly used methods of child protection in many countries including South Africa (Montserrat, 2014:97). According to Bernedo and Fuentes (2013:49), the amount of social support received by kinship foster care families, considering their social background is a critical determinant of their ability to successfully navigate the challenges associated with foster care. In addition, Farmer, Moyers and Lipscombe (2014:112), observe that the formal support that foster families receive greatly determines whether the fostering continues or not and helps prevent foster care failures.

Kinship foster families frequently face challenges as a result of the added parental role that they have to assume (Jiménez & Zabala, 2016:412). Foster parents normally report more incidences of stress as a result of looking after their grandchildren and when compared with other foster care arrangements, kinship foster care receives less support and attention (Pelaez, et al., 2016:167). As a consequence of this, formal channels of support and various types of support given to kinship foster care families are fewer than those given to other foster care arrangements (Palacios & Jiménez 2017:665; Pelaez, et al., 2016:167). Therefore, the researcher chose the social support theory in an effort to assess the available social support services given to youth who have exited foster care. These services are more important as they contribute to resiliency at a societal, family, and individual level.

### **3.6 summary of the chapter**

The chapter has provided a discussion on the theories related to the challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care. The chapter began with a discussion on theories associated to the benefits of kinship foster care. Kinship ties are seen as a supply of social capital. Social capital is related to psychological bonds, social relationships, and feelings of closeness and solidarity between foster care children and their kinship caregivers. Studies have shown that the inclusion and integration of children within the extended family set up such as kinship foster care,

provides them with the stability and networks they need for survival. The chapter then proceeded to discuss the resilience theory. Children who have been exposed to difficult life experiences have been known to exhibit great resilience. According to the resilience theory, being able to successfully deal with an adverse family past and accepting one's past mistakes, have been considered some of the greatest achievements by young people who were previously under foster care.

The next chapter focuses on the research methodology.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the research methodology used for the study. The research methodology is defined as the systematic process by which research tools are used to accomplish the goals of a study (Kramer-Kile, 2012:27). To be contained herein will be the research approach; research design, and research methods. Under the research methods there will be discussions on the population, sampling, and sampling techniques employed. After that there will be descriptions of the data collection process as well as the preparation for data collection and the data collection approach chosen. The chapter will further discuss the presentation of data and its analysis, the data verification process used, ethical considerations, limitations of the study and reflexivity of the study before concluding.

### 4.2 The research approach

In order to guarantee that the study questions are responded to, and the objectives met, a qualitative approach was used for this study. A qualitative research approach is important in that it creates a profound consideration of all aspects of reality, the relationship between different aspects of reality and generates a better understanding of life issues in a holistic manner (Padgett, 2015:233; Shaw & Gould, 2016:122). Conducting in-depth interviews is a good way of capturing participants' perspectives according to their own understanding and is a very common method used under qualitative approaches (Padgett, 2015:225). Below are the different characteristics of qualitative research and how they were applicable in the study.

- **Naturalistic** - Events were studied as they unfold within their natural real-life context. Events were neither controlled nor manipulated. The findings were not predetermined, and the researcher was open minded to receive whatever new information emerged from the enquiry (Krefting, 2014:88).
- **Emergent** - The researcher was adaptive as understanding develops during the process of enquiry. This eliminated rigid designs which do not allow modifications

when new avenues present themselves, requiring a researcher to follow a change of direction in search of new information (Merriam, 2009:229).

- **Data** - Data collected for the study produced thick detailed descriptions so as to reach to the understanding of phenomena. Interviews were used to collect such data. Direct quotes were captured through interviews from the interviewees' personal experiences and opinions and are also presented in the final report, a quality stated by Merriam, (2009:230).
- **Holistic perspective** - Data was analysed in a holistic manner. The topic under study was considered as a complex system and not a sum of individual parts. The complex system is seen as interlinked and cannot simply be elucidated in terms of cause and effect, discrete or linear variables. A quality of qualitative research identified by Krefting (2014:89).

#### **4.2.1 The basis for qualitative research approach**

Qualitative methods were critical for the determinations of this research. Making use of the qualitative approach, the complexities, and the context of various defies encountered by youth moving out of kinship foster care were explored and unravelled. The in-depth interviews captured these complexities and contextual factors by ensuring that the respondents narrated their stories and experiences in the way they deemed fit. The qualitative approach captured the full detail and deeper understanding of the youths' life experiences. In order for this to be achieved the interviews were designed to have greater flexibility and allow for more probing questions so as to illicit details about the participants' experiences.

#### **4.3 Research design**

A research design is a total plan for how the research will be piloted, designed to answer the research questions (Stebbins, 2019:67). The total plan for the proposed study incorporated aspects such as the research questions guiding the study, the type of data that will be mandatory, from whom it will be attained, and the best way of collecting the data. The study intended to investigate the challenges faced by youths

leaving kinship foster care in South Africa thus phenomenological, exploratory, descriptive and contextual designs were proposed for this study.

#### **4.2.1 Phenomenological design**

Phenomenological research seeks to describe phenomena in an accurate manner as possible without using a pre-existing framework but by staying true to the facts (Baxter & Eyles, 2017:312). As stated by Silverman (2010:91) phenomenological researchers attempt to understand psychological and social phenomena from the standpoints of the study accomplices. Any individual using a phenomenological research design centred on the 'lived experiences' of those involved. This was particularly useful for the current study as the study sought to explore and describe the challenges faced by youth leaving kinship foster care in South Africa. Phenomenological researchers often hesitate to prescribe specific steps that need to be undertaken when using this design as they argue that it would destroy the integrity of the phenomenon being studied (Li, 2014:58).

#### **4.2.2 Exploratory research design**

Exploration in social science is defined as the systematic, broad ranging, purposive, prearranged endeavour to embark on a path to discover generalisations of social and psychological life to better understand and discover them (Stebbins, 2019:67). In general terms exploratory research aims to examine, study, investigate or analyse something. The plan of this type of research was to discover new ideas and meanings using systematic methods to explore social groups, activities and processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2014:45). According to Padgett (2015:225), researchers explore in instances where they have less or no empirical knowledge about a process, group, situation, or activity that they intend to investigate but are nonetheless convinced that the item that they are studying is worth investigating. The same is applied for this study as not much is known in the plight of the youth who leave kinship foster care but the belief system guiding the proposed study is that there could be elements worth discovering from such a study. According to Glaser and Strauss (2017:451), for exploration to be done effectively it has to be approached with two mind sets, namely;

open-mindedness and flexibility. The objective of exploratory research is to search for meanings and deeper understandings wherever they can be found using ethical methods. Thus, the main objective of exploratory research is to produce inductive generalisations concerning a group, activity, situation, or a process that is being studied.

#### **4.2.3 Descriptive research design**

Descriptive research attempts to make provision of a comprehensive summary of individual or groups of people's life experiences (Korstjens & Moser, 2017:275). Qualitative approaches such as ethnography, phenomenology and grounded theory are also considered descriptive in nature, but they are not entirely in the descriptive category because they tend to also be explanatory in nature. A descriptive research design draws from a naturalistic inquiry which is a commitment to study a phenomenon in its natural environment.

While descriptive designs are in their own exclusive category, they however have links with other qualitative research designs, such as grounded theory, for instance both approaches adopt a constant comparative analysis when investigating data. Nonetheless, unlike grounded theory, a descriptive research design does not produce a theory after data analysis (Parveen & Showkat, 2017:73). The goal of a descriptive research design is to obtain detailed in-depth information until data is saturated. Data for a descriptive research design is presented in a logical and simple descriptive summary of the data contents. For this study the descriptive design was used to describe the youth who left kinship foster care and their life experiences after leaving foster care. The researcher sought the following descriptions from the participants, whether the psychological bonds, social relationships, feelings of closeness and solidarity that they had with their kinship caregivers have benefited them during independent living. They described the degree to which the extended family set up has been able to provide them with the stability and networks they need for survival. They also described how resilient they have been in life and the extent to which the protective and risk factors have affected their lives as independent adults.

#### **4.2.4 Contextual research design**

A contextual research design, in the same manner as the other research designs mentioned above, seeks to investigate a phenomenon in its natural setting. In a contextual research design, the researcher interviews the participants or observes events in their natural environment. This is critical for the dynamics of a research study as it provides the study with natural insights. Advocates of contextual research argue that the natural environment is something that cannot be easily recreated; therefore, there is a need to do more contextual research studies. Contextual research is also advantageous in that participants are more receptive and comfortable when approached in their natural setting (Knopp-Biklen & Casella, 2017:187). In this regard, the youth who participated in this study had to be interviewed in places where they lived. The context of the participants in relation with their social background, religious views and political views was also taken into deliberation during the data gathering procedure and the subsequent analyses as context extends beyond the natural environment (the physical factors) in which the participants live.

#### **4.3 Research methods**

Research methods are the instruments and tools used to fulfil the goals of a study (Kabir, 2016:30). Research methods consist of the techniques, processes and strategies used to collect data or evidence to unearth new information on a topic (Meriweather, 2016:143). These are also defined as the procedural steps for collecting and analysing data (Li, 2014:303). A research method consists of interviews, focus groups, observations, surveys or questionnaires, experiments and document analysis. The tools must be used efficiently so that they can achieve their intended purpose.

##### **4.3.1 Population**

According to Gonzalez (2015:117), a populace is well-defined as the whole number of all the cases that are eligible to take part in a study. It is an infinite or finite number of people that are relevant to a study (Shenton, 2015:211). In addition, population can be defined as an entire pool from which a sample is selected (Tobin & Begley, 2016:336). A population is the large group of individuals that are central to a study



(Koch, 2016:531). A population is therefore an aggregation of individuals, sharing common characteristics that are pertinent to a study.

The population of this study included all youths who had moved out of kinship foster care situated in Johannesburg and who were in the database of the DSD. These young people were between the ages of 19 - 26 years old because at this age they were more likely to have moved out to become independent young adults. The DSD database was critical as a source of locating the initial participants for the study. The participants came from Johannesburg as that is the geographical location for the study. The study was limited to Johannesburg in scope due to budgetary and time constraints.

#### **4.3.2 Sampling**

From an entire population eligible to take part in the study as defined above, a sample was chosen (Butler-Kisber, 2010:56). Sampling is a process, usually statistical, whereby a determined number of fundamentals are selected from the larger population (Koch, 2016:91). It is a statistical technique of selecting individual observations to make inferences concerning the population (Guest, et al, 2013:87). It is the act of taking a group of objects, items or people from the bigger population for measurement (Kramer-Kile, 2017:274). A sample ought to be truly representative of the population from which it was taken for the purpose of broadening understanding and depth of information. While statistical methods were not used in this study, the chosen sample was selected using substantive data, participants were chosen according to criteria that was pre-determined before data collection so that the researcher draws a sample that is homogenous in terms of age and their shared social experience - transitioning out of care from their kinship foster placements.

The sampling frame for the study conducted was youths aged between 19 and 26 years whose time had expired in kinship foster care and were now independent. The age limit for the study started at 19 despite some of the youths leaving kinship foster care at 18 because from 19 years onwards the anticipation was that these care leavers were most likely to provide rich data because of their memories of the experience when compared to those who have just moved out of care. The care leavers were required to have been out of kinship care for at least a year to be eligible to participate

in the study. Whilst the legal age for youth leaving care is 18 years when the youth has completed his or her studies, there was little point in including this age group in the study because they will not have lived independently for a year or longer. The time frame of living out of care for one year or more is based on the researcher's assumption that participants selected for the study need to have relevant knowledge and experiences of what it is like to live out of care so that they can provide the information that would help to answer the research question.

#### **4.3.2.1 Sampling techniques**

The DSD assisted in the recruitment of the foster youths in Johannesburg who had already exited kinship foster care. The DSD was thus critical for the study as it provided the resources necessary to undertake the study. The department provided a list of potential participants for the study.

The following inclusion criteria were applied in this study:

- Care leavers between the ages of 19 and 26 living in Johannesburg and under the DSD.
- All former kinship care leavers interested in the study and residing in Johannesburg.
- The care leavers must have lived under a formal kinship care arrangement when they were 16 years old.
- Willing to participate in the study

The following constituted the exclusion criteria for the study:

- Care leavers who have been out of care for less than a year.
- Youth who have transitioned from the residential care system, cluster foster care or any other alternative care which is not formal kinship care.
- Care leavers outside the Johannesburg area.

- Care leavers who have left care through absconding, criminal activities or without notice.

Sampling is defined as the selection of units from a specified population to come up with a sample to be studied (Glaser & Strauss, 2017:73). In many cases it is impossible for a researcher to collect data from all the elements of a population in a bid to address the research questions (Graneheim & Lundman, 2014:106). Sampling is generally classified into two categories namely; probability (random sampling) and non-probability (non-random sampling). For probability sampling every member in a population has an equal chance of being included in the final sample while in non-probability sampling some members of the population have no chance of being included (Akhtar, 2016:69). Non-probability sampling is a sampling technique in which a researcher uses their own personal judgment to select members of the sample, rather than selecting randomly (Charmaz, 2016:332). For non-probability sampling, not all elements of the defined population have an equal chance of being included in the final sample for a study. Types of probability sampling include random sampling, systematic random sampling, area sampling, multi-stage sampling and cluster sampling. There are a variety of non-probability sampling techniques that can be used, and these include judgmental or purposive sampling, accidental sampling, quota sampling, snowball sampling, modal instant sampling, and expert sampling.

For the purpose of this study, purposive sampling was employed in the initial phase of sampling to target the social workers with information regarding how to get in touch with former kinship foster care youths who may provide the necessary information for the study. Purposive sampling is a type of sampling in which a researcher uses their own discretion when selecting who is to participate in a study, it is also known as selective, subjective, or judgmental sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 2014:234). In judgmental sampling a researcher uses their own judgment or knowledge to choose members of the sample (Glaser & Strauss, 2017:73). It is a non-probability type of sampling whereby a researcher uses their own professional judgment to select units from the population for studying (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:316). The researcher purposively sampled care leavers living within Johannesburg, who have met the above inclusion criteria.

The sample size for the proposed study was achieved at the point of data saturation. Data saturation is a process of making sure that sufficient and quality data is gathered for a study (Cohen et al, 2016:167). Saturation is often reported for qualitative studies and is a standard requirement. Collected data is described as saturated when continued data collection no longer produces new elements to supplement that which has already been collected, thus data collection will no longer be necessary since it will no longer change the understanding of the researched topic (Charmaz, 2016:332). The data saturation criteria also assist in establishing validity of the collected data. According to (Allyn and Bacon 2012:254), saturation can be done by using semi-structured interviews containing open-ended questions in a sequential manner. In this regard, for the study the researcher identified the type of answers which emerged from the interview and took note of repeated responses. When there was no longer any new information or themes coming from the data, saturation was deemed to have been attained.

#### **4.4 Data collection**

##### **4.4.1 Preparation for data collection**

Preparation for data collection involves the setting up of protocols and guidelines for each component of collecting data in the field (Koch, 2016:515). These components include timelines, institutional review board approvals, and research instrument design, pilot testing, and transcribing of interviews. Preparation for data collection involves all aspects to do with the logistical arrangements for data collection, preparing the research instrument, selecting and training of field workers (where applicable), choosing and preparing the equipment, pilot testing, and hiring data processing personnel (Gonzalez, 2015:342). Preparation for data collection therefore involves making all the necessary preparations to ensure that the process of collecting data proceeds in a seamless manner. This means that the quality of the data that is collected is heavily dependent on good planning carried out prior to the process, which makes preparation essential.

The final proposal was submitted to the Scientific Review Committee (SRC) for approval early in 2021. Once it had been accepted by the SRC it was submitted to the College Research Ethics Committee (CREC) for review in order to grant ethical

clearance for the research undertaking. The objective was to ensure that the planned research was ethically sound, and all research activities were ethically accounted for and to engender confidence in the ethical character of the research undertaking. Once institutional approval had been secured, the researcher contacted the Director of the DSD in Gauteng via email and then physically followed up. A letter of permission was emailed to the Director of the DSD asking for permission to conduct the research (see Addendum B). The researcher then travelled to the DSD premises to follow up on the permission letter to explain the nature of the study and the reasons why DSD had been approached. Travelling to the DSD to meet the Director of the DSD was done after an appointment was made and in full compliance of all COVID 19 protocols. A meeting was then arranged with social workers from the JHB service office to explain the nature of the study and the selection criteria. They were asked to complete a form signed by potential participants giving permission to share their contact details with the researcher (see Addendum A).

Data preparation was guided by the steps recommended by Babbie (2013:36). The study investigated the challenges faced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa. The study's objectives were to explore the challenges faced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa, to describe the challenges faced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa, and to draw conclusions and make recommendations about the challenges faced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa.

It is imperative that all the necessary equipment and material to be used in the process of data collection be purchased in advance. In this regard the researcher purchased items such as an audio recorder, batteries, hand sanitisers and stationery in advance. Data for the study was recorded using an audio recorder, a lockable cabinet for the safe storage and security of the recorded material was acquired by the researcher prior to the start of data collection as a way of protecting the privacy and confidentiality of participants' records.

Logistical arrangements are critical before embarking on the research process. Logistical arrangements involve making transportation plans (Babbie, 2013:36). The researcher used her own private car to travel to the DSD and any other places related to the collection of data. The researcher ensured that all travel arrangements did not

conflict with their own work schedule and the vehicle was well maintained and serviced to be used effectively during the process of data collection. The costs for fuel to travel for data collection were calculated, set aside and included in the overall budget (in section B15) for the whole study. The travelling was done in and around Johannesburg.

Data was collected through face-to-face interviews. The study made use of an interview schedule to guide the researcher's line of questioning during the interviews. The proposed interview schedule used to guide the questioning is included under Addendum E. The schedule was subject to changes, where necessary.

The researcher was expected to commence the process of data collection at the beginning of May, until the end of July 2021. Each interview with a care leaver was expected to take approximately 45 minutes. Field notes were taken in case of unanticipated technical failures in recording equipment. All COVID-19 regulations were maintained throughout the research process. Participation was on a voluntary basis. All participants had to be willing to participate of their own accord with the express right to withdraw their participation at any point of the study. More conditions of participation such as informed consent and confidentiality are discussed in detail under ethical considerations (section B10).

#### **4.5 Data gathering**

Data gathering is the systematic gathering and measurement of information on a phenomenon of interest to answer research questions set at the commencement of a study (Charmaz, 2016:56). It is the standardised gathering of information of interest so to answer research questions, evaluate outcomes or test hypotheses (Chilisa & Preece, 2015:63). Knopp-Biklen and Casella (2017:23) define data collection as the accurate acquisition of research data to be used for analysis and credible answers to questions posed at the start of a study. From these definitions data collection can therefore be defined as the process of gathering information related to a topic of interest from participants, in a standardised and systematic manner which enables the researcher to answer research questions. The process of data collection started after approval for the research proposal was obtained.

The main instrument used to collect data was the semi-structured interview, also called an in-depth or open-ended interview conducted on the phone. Semi-structured interviews make use of open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are questions which do not have a fixed response and do not require a yes or no answer (Koch, 2016:515). Open-ended questions allow the interviewee to describe events and express their opinions in a manner they see fit (Gonzalez, 2015:342). Semi-structured interviews are interviews in which the interviewer does not follow a strict pattern using a list of definite questions (Daining & DePanfilis, 2017:1158). It is an interview in which the interviewer asks a few questions prepared in advance and the rest of the questions which follow are not pre-determined (Graneheim & Lundman, 2014:107). Semi-structured interviews are an amalgamation of both unstructured and structured interviewing styles which capitalise on the advantages of these two styles.

An interview schedule was prepared for the semi-structured interview. An interview schedule is a list of carefully drafted questions, designed to guide a researcher in gathering information about a particular topic (Bitsch, 2015:89). It is a paper containing standardised questions to be asked to each interviewee and the researcher is usually not allowed to deviate from this schedule except when seeking clarification or probing further (Graneheim & Lundman, 2014:267). It is a guide that an interviewer uses when carrying out a structured or semi-structured interview (Daining & DePanfilis, 2017:1158). The purpose of the interview schedule was to help maintain a higher level of consistency in all the interviews whilst also searching out the unique details of participants' experiences.

The interview schedule had two sections:

### **Biographical questions**

The biographical questions asked participants information about their:

- Age
- Gender
- Academic achievements
- Employment status
- The number of years since leaving kinship fosters care.

- Marital status

**The semi-structured interview guide included the following statements and/or questions:**

1. How long were you in kinship foster care before moving out?
2. Tell me about your experiences of kinship foster care?
3. What are the challenges you have faced since you have left kinship foster care?
4. Would you say being under kinship foster care has adequately prepared you to live an independent life? Explain your answer.
5. Describe your current living arrangement.
6. Are you living with peers, family, youth hostel, cohabitating or living alone in a rented accommodation?
7. What kind of support services do you think should be rendered to youth prior to leaving kinship foster care?
8. What kind of support services do you think need to be provided to the youth after leaving kinship foster care?

There are a variety of interview skills (attentiveness, active listening and warmth) which must be put into use in order for a research interview to achieve its objectives (Creswell, 2012:23). The researcher endeavoured to create a safe environment for the participants by applying social work values. Creating a safe environment is important for the participants to feel comfortable during the interview and the researcher tried to create that environment by being warm, polite and attentive to the participants. The researcher was attentive and fully engaged in conversation with participants while at the same time keeping track of the time and the questions that had to be asked.



## 4.6 Data management and analysis

According to Charmaz (2016:67), data analysis is well-defined as a systematic search for trends, patterns, and repeated behaviours in information. Data analysis comprises of all processes involved in receiving raw data, mining for new meanings, and drilling down information to change it to facts, metrics, and figures (Baker, 2014:23). Bitsch (2015:89) defines data analysis as the procedure of reducing data to a story and providing interpretations aimed at eliciting insights from it. The objective of analysis is to allow for the orderly interpretation of volumes of collected information (Chilisa & Preece, 2015:63).

Data that was collected qualitatively using interviews was analysed through a system of thematic coding. Padgett's five steps of thematic analysis were used to analyse the data (Padgett, 2015:83). These steps are as follows:

- Picking out unit meanings.
- Grouping similar meanings into the same categories and naming these categories.
- Coding each category.
- Re-organising and refining coding; and
- Conceptually classifying the themes and presenting them.

Thematic analysis allows for the development of themes that emerged from each and every interview conducted. Ideas and perspectives that are similar in meaning were categorised into themes that were created from the interview transcriptions. Essentially data was classified and grouped into categories in a systematic manner. The categorisation of data is an important tool for analysing information and picking out patterns that emerge and subsequently developing themes (Padgett, 2015:83).

The first phase of coding involved combining and identifying similar meanings, grouping them into categories and giving each category a code. As a requirement for most qualitative methods, coding must start when similarities and differences in data patterns and meanings have been identified. The transcript was repeatedly read

several times so that the researcher could disseminate herself with the data and to enable conceptual connections to be made so that it became easier to group similar patterns into categories. According to Padgett (2015:89), this technique is referred to as the constant comparison technique. In this method units of information containing similar attributes are picked out and put in one category and are assigned a code name. Where meanings and units which are different from each other are identified, they are placed in different categories and are assigned different code names.

The main objective of coding was to pick out and name the different categories of themes emerging, and this is done in two phases. Firstly, the units of meanings are identified and then format themes are later identified (abstractly) (Padgett, 2015:89). From then on, the process of coding proceeded into several stages at the different levels of analysis.

The second phase involves grouping meanings into the same themes and categories. Themes emerge due to their significance. Where the data set is smaller there may be an overlap between the coding stage and the stage of categorising data into similar themes. In the third phase each theme is coded. The codes should fit well into a defined theme (Padgett, 2015:91). At the fourth step the codes are organised into broader themes that seemed to say something specific about this research question. The majority of the themes in this research are descriptive in nature, describing the patterns found in the data relevant to the research questions. In the fifth and final stage of thematic analysis and the aim is to find out and present what each theme is about, whether there are subthemes, how they relate to each other and the main theme.

#### **4.7 Data verification/trustworthiness**

In order to evaluate the goodness of any measurement tool selected for study, reliability and validity are two important concepts that need to be ensured. The aim of validity is to find out what the research instrument was designed to measure and how well it performs this task (Taherdost, 2016:21). Reliability on the other hand is concerned with the amount of faith the researcher has in the information obtained from the use of such an instrument i.e. the extent to which the measurement instrument is free from random error (Singh, 2014:98). In the context of qualitative research, measures of validity and reliability improve transparency and reduce the chance of

researcher bias (Singh, 2014:98). In this regard, all methods used to gather secondary data should be subject to a thorough appraisal as a way of assessing their validity and reliability (Saunders Lewis & Thornhill, 2009:456).

Commonly, concepts such as validity, generalisability and reliability are applied in quantitative studies, however for qualitative research there is alternative terminology. The use of terms such as rigor, the integrity of the study and credibility of the results is common for qualitative research. Qualitative studies frequently face criticism because they are accused of lacking scientific rigor due to not amply justifying the methods used, lacking transparency in the exact methods of analysis used and the results are at times loosely considered a mere collection of subjective personal accounts. Thus, it can be difficult to prove validity and reliability in a qualitative study, but it is possible. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:26), there are methods of demonstrating research rigor for qualitative studies which were employed in the study. These are credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability.

#### **4.7.1 Credibility**

Credibility is assurance in the truthfulness of the study results (Holloway & Wheeler, 2015:432; Macnee & McCabe, 2018:144). Credibility endeavours to establish the plausibility of the information produced from a study, whether the findings are a true replication of the participants' initial views or if accurate interpretations of the respondents' original views were made (Graneheim & Lundman, 2014:267; Lincoln & Guba, 1985:145). In any qualitative research establishing research rigor is critical and strategies must be adopted to establish rigor. One of the ways by which credibility can be established is by prolonged engagement in the research field (Bitsch, 2015:234). For this study, the researcher immersed herself into the participants' world for an extended period to fully understand the contextual factors affecting the study. An extended period with the research participants built trust between the participants and the researcher (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2017:541). Once trust had improved. the participants were more comfortable and willing to share sensitive information that they may not have shared at the start of the research project.

The use of peer debriefing was also critical to ensure credibility. Peer debriefing helps researchers to gain more insight into a subject of interest and helps expose them to

discover new avenues of enquiry (Macnee & McCabe, 2018:234). The researcher sought support from other experts in the field of social work so that they could provide critical scholarly assistance whenever they were available to do so. The professionals that were targeted included the supervisor, members of the faculty, members of the academic staff, professors and post graduate committee members. During the research process the researcher consulted these professionals and gave them the research report for comments and feedback. Their feedback enhanced the quality of the study findings. As a way of ensuring more credibility the findings are based on extracts from interview transcriptions which ensures that participants recognise their “voices” and stories.

#### **4.7.2 Transferability**

This is the degree to which a qualitative study’s results can be conveyed to other locations with different participants (Bitsch, 2015:231; Tobin & Begley, 2016:432). Transferability is the same as generalisability for quantitative research. Bitsch (2015:231) notes that one of the ways which transferability can be ensured is by carrying out purposive sampling and providing detailed descriptions.

In order for a reader to be able to accurately predict if the research findings will fit into other contexts, detailed, extensive and rich data describing the context and the methodology used must be provided in the final research report (Li, 2014:165). In this regard the researcher will provide a detailed report outlining the study context, methodological steps employed, the data collection process up to the final research report. Detailed descriptions are of great assistance to researchers looking to carry out similar studies in different contexts. Shenton (2015:487) notes that where there are no detailed descriptions it is hard for a reader of the final report to judge whether the overall research results have truth value. Thus, in order to improve transferability of the research findings, thick detailed descriptions are available to allow for a comparison with other similar contexts and allow for judgments to be made about the extent to which the findings fit into other contexts.

Purposive sampling is also critical when it comes to determining transferability. It is the measured assortment of members of a population who could answer research questions are valuable research resources. (Teddlie & Yu, 2013:77). It assists a

researcher to concentrate on the respondents who possess the required knowledge concerning the topic to be investigated (Schutt, 2016:124). For this study, from all the youths who have left foster care, only those who were under kinship care were sampled. Purposive sampling is therefore conducted in order to gain in-depth information from a small group of participants but not for the purposes of generalising the findings.

### **4.7.3 Dependability**

Dependability is the how stable are the study results over time (Bitsch, 2015:86)? The credibility process is one in which participants evaluate the survey results, make subsequent interpretations, and all of these processes truly reflect the information received from the survey participants, including the resulting recommendations. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2016:543; Tobin & Begley, 2016:76). Common strategies used to establish credibility include audit trails, phased duplication, peer review, and code recording strategies (Chilisa & Preece, 2015:122; Krefting, 2014:231).

An audit trail involves examining the research process and results, to provide a measure of accountability concerning the decisions made by showing how the data was collected, captured, and analysed (Bowen, 2017:16). For the purposes of having an audit trail the researcher kept the following material for cross-examination purposes should it be required, interview transcripts and field notes. Apart from ensuring dependability, an audit trail also enhances confirmability of the research.

Peer reviews were also conducted to ensure reliability. Peer reviews are similar to member reviews and help improve the credibility of the study (Bitsch, 2015:153; Krefting, 2014:234). Member checks were also conducted for investigation to increase the reliability of the results. For peer review, researchers discussed their findings with colleagues who currently have a master's degree, or at least have similar experience in qualitative research. As Bitsch (2005: 183) and Krefting (2014: 237) point out, peer reviews of researchers' studies enhance the overall analysis of the results and the integrity of the researchers in reporting the results. Helps to improve peers also help identify and eliminate categories that are outside the scope of possible survey question parameters which may have been overlooked by the researcher.

#### **4.7.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability pertains to the volume to which the findings of studies have a look at may be corroborated or showed through fellow researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 2017:453). Confirmability seeks to establish if data and the interpretations which follow are not entirely a product of the researcher's imagination but do indeed come from the data (Tobin & Begley, 2016:392). According to the survey, for qualitative research, confirmation can be achieved through a retrospective journal, triangulation, or audit trail (Bowen, 2017:223; Koch, 2016:516; Lincoln & Guba). As stated above, an audit trail leaves a visible trail of evidence for the research process, specifying the pathway from the start of the research to the end as proof that the inquirer followed a specific path in order to arrive at the given conclusions (Bowen, 2009:307). Triangulation was not used in this study because the study did not use various methods to collect the data. In addition to the audit trail, confirmability was also achieved through the Reflection Journal.

Reflective journals are one way to achieve confirmability (Koch, 2016:515; Wallendorf & Belk, 2015:374). As explained by (Wallendorf and Belk 2015:374), the Reflective Journal is a set of documents that are securely kept by the interrogator to reflect the interpretation and data collection plan. Researcher reflexivity was used as a tool to address the researcher's personal and professional bias in terms of the research decisions taken as well as the interpretations and reporting of findings. For the proposed study the researcher kept a reflexive journal which contains a description of the events worth noting that took place in the field and personal reflections of other phenomenon of interest that may have emerged during the course of the inquiry. The services of an independent coder were also used to ensure confirmability of research findings. The researcher also kept the recorded interview materials and the field notes. These resources were safely kept in order to cross check the information and for the purposes of compiling the final report for this research.

#### **4.8 Ethical considerations**

Ethics are defined as the moral principles governing human behaviour when carrying out an activity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2014:431). Ethical considerations are a critical component of all social science research. As such approval to proceed with the study

has been sought from the relevant department at the University of South Africa (UNISA) (Wassenaar, 2016:123). As noted by (Horn et al., 2014:76) when carrying out research involving individuals from vulnerable groups like foster youth, there is a need for greater care to observe ethical considerations. The study observed the following ethical considerations;

#### **4.8.1 Harm to subjects**

Harm to the subjects can be physical, psychological or involve a violation of respect. There was no physical harm during the interviews which were conducted for the study. The interviews were done in the comfort of the interviewees' homes and involved no physical activity that could pose harm to them. Respect for the participants in the study was offered through guaranteeing confidentiality, privacy and autonomy throughout the stages of the study (Wilson & MacLean, 2011:89). For the third aspect of the potential for psychological or emotional harm, these were prevented through designing an appropriate format and suitable style of conducting the interviews. The tone of the interviews was shaped by the participants and the participants were made aware of their explicit right to end the interview at any point should they feel compelled to do so.

#### **4.8.2 Informed Consent**

The principle of informed consent states that study participants, after being fully informed of the characteristics, scope and implications of taking part in a study, give written consent to participate (Wilson & MacLean, 2011:97). Informed consent is permission given to the researcher by a participant with full knowledge of the possible advantages and disadvantages of participating (Wassenaar, 2016:123). It is a process by which a prospective participant is made to understand the aim, potential risk and benefits of participating in a study and then agrees to participate (Sharf & Kimonis, 2015:164). It should be proven that for any study, the researchers tried as far as practically possible to obtain voluntary informed consent from those who are scheduled to take part in the study (Wilson & MacLean, 2011:233). This means that a researcher has to explain in as much detail as possible and is appropriate, in a way that participants understand, the purpose and characteristics of a study, and who is

carrying out the research. The researcher must also explain the principal funders, its expected time frame, the reason why the study is being carried out, the possible results of the study, and the methods that are to be used to disseminate the results before asking for consent.

For informed consent to be obtained for this study, consent forms were handed to the youths to sign. The consent forms are outlined in Addendum D. Contained in the consent forms is all the information necessary for the participants to decide whether or not to take part in a study and also the potential benefits and harm that could befall those taking part in the study. Provisions were made for the contents in the consent form to be delivered orally to the participants for greater understanding and for clarity to be given where there might be a need to do so. The research did not proceed until the participants fully understood what they were participating in and until they were fully aware of their right to withdraw their participation in the study without any repercussions.

#### **4.8.3 Confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity**

For any study, it is always important to ensure that the identities of the participants who take part remain anonymous and that confidentiality is maintained.

Confidentiality is governed by the principle of having to respect individual autonomy when conducting research, which implies that any information that may lead to the identification of individuals who participated in a study, will be concealed unless permission has been granted to disclose it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2014:94). The principle of confidentiality is related to the concept of anonymity due to the fact that anonymity is a way of ensuring confidentiality (Wilson & MacLean, 2011:103). This does not however, mean that anonymity caters for all aspects of confidentiality as confidentiality also implies the non-disclosure of any information from a participant willingly or by accident, that might lead to the identification of the participant. The two concepts are connected but distinct as well. Confidentiality may be taken to mean 'spoken in confidence' or charging someone to keep secrets whilst anonymity simply means 'unknown name' (Wiles et al., 2006:12). When one has been assured of confidentiality, it simply means that the information that has shared will not be disclosed, at least without granted permission.



In order to ensure confidentiality, the interviews were conducted in private rooms, no names were used and any information which may reveal the identities of the participants was removed from the final report. Information from the interviews was safely kept in a computer protected by a password to limit access (Wassenaar, 2016:322).

For the proposed study confidentiality was attained by following the principles given by Wiles et al. (2006:14), which are:

- Ensuring that the records and the data are confidential, this was done by not attaching the individual names to data collected. Codes were instead assigned to secure data linking to identifiable individuals.
- Making sure that the individuals who have access to the data adhere to the principle of confidentiality as well. The independent coder signed a confidentiality form. The researcher did not discuss the contents of the interview with others in a way which may lead to the identification of the research participants. The researcher also did not discuss what the individual participants said during an interview.
- During the dissemination of data, individuals and the places where they came from were anonymised to protect their identities.

Anonymisation is a technique used by researchers to protect the study participants from any accidental breach of confidentiality (Wassenaar, 2016:322). One of the most widely encouraged ways of anonymising study participants is by using pseudonyms. Of late, a lot of attention has been given to research participants who may want to be identified and not anonymised particularly those studies dealing with children (Holloway & Wheeler, 2015:341). According to Dunst and Trivette (2015:53), in those instances' researchers need to be granted consent, expressed in written format, stating that the concerned individual has waived his/her right to confidentiality.

#### **4.8.4 Debriefing of participants**

The process of debriefing participants is whereby, upon concluding the study, a debriefer discusses the purpose of the study, the results, and the implications (Sharf & Kimonis, 2015:164). Debriefing is a complex process of communication involving several variables interacting with each other which include the debriefer, the study participant, the research itself and any other parties involved (Shenton, 2015:144). Debriefing is a process of ensuring transparency in the research process by explaining the methods used, the rationale behind the use of such methods and the results which emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 2017:75). Debriefing can thus be defined as the process whereby the participants are gathered to be explained a summary of the study, including its results, soon after its conclusion. This means that debriefing is critical to the participant in a number of ways, it educates the participant on the importance and logic behind the entire study, it tries to alleviate any effects of deception, it serves the important function of taking note of potential negative effects of the research, among others.

In this regard, the researcher acquired the services of a debriefer to provide debriefing services at the conclusion of each study. The debriefer was an external person who was available to offer services to any participants who experienced psychological distress as a result of participating. The debriefer's letter and CV is provided under Addendum H and I.

#### **4.8.5 Management of information**

The management of research information encompasses all processes to do with storing, curating, preserving, and providing continued access to digital research data (Cohen 2016:132). The management of research information is primarily the role of the institution of learning, particularly the university library (Shenton, 2015:144). In accordance with UNISA's practical guidelines for ethics in social work research all research information will be managed effectively in a manner which safeguards the confidentiality and anonymity of all research participants. Audio recordings, notes and transcripts of recordings have been safely locked in a cabinet accessed by the researcher only. After the completion of the study audio records and recordings are destroyed.

Upon the completion of the final research study the management of information for this study will be a task that will be handled by the university library as it is naturally in charge of providing access to published material which is an integral part of its knowledge base. Management of information can be regarded as an extension of a university library's role. In accordance with this point of view the information contained in the final research report for the study will be managed by the UNISA library. The final report will be retained by UNISA's library permanently in their database. However, (Li 2014:244) argues that due to the challenges such as unavailability of appropriate infrastructure, the culture and the necessary skills required for the management of data, a concerted effort from all concerned stakeholders is needed if data is to be properly managed.

The field of research data management is very much still developing. As volumes of research data being created by researchers are increasing exponentially and the utilisation of e-research tools are on the increase, many funders of research now require their researchers to deposit research into a database, for instance in the UK, there is the SHERPA Juliet database operated by the UK Open Access (Teddlie & Yu, 2013:233).

According to Lewis (2010:146), managing research information effectively is beneficial for the academic community. The following benefits of managing information were identified;

- Research information can be easily shared, thereby reducing the likelihood of repeating a study that is already available in the library.
- It protects research that has been conducted at great costs from being lost or destroyed.
- Co-analysis, comparison, and retrieval of data from several sources can lead to new discoveries and powerful insights.
- It addresses concerns relating to the verification, repeating, and cross-checking of findings which are critical in light of the growing local and global concern for research integrity.
- There can be discoveries of new themes of research or even cross-disciplinary themes as a result of reanalysis of previous research and comparisons done

with the latest research. Previous research data can become the focal point for new topics for research.

#### **4.9 Limitations of the study**

The nature of the study was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in various aspects. Data collection was limited to telephone interviews instead of the normal face-to-face interviews. This was done in relation to observing the various COVID-19 protocols aimed at reducing the spread of the virus by reducing face-to-face interaction. The COVID-19 pandemic also meant that the researcher was restricted in terms of travelling to minimise the possible spread of or contracting the virus between the researcher and participants. This meant that the researcher could no longer travel to the participant's places to collect data as previously planned. However, despite the limitations brought about by this global pandemic, the researcher ensured that all the relevant questions which needed to be asked of the participants were asked during the telephone interviews despite the lack of physical presence with the participants. The telephone interviews were exhaustive as the researcher still managed to stick to the interview schedule and probe for more information where there was a need to do so. The study was also limited by time constraints as the approval process for the proposal stretched a bit longer than anticipated as the university was also adjusting its operations to the global pandemic. That meant that deadlines previously set for the pilot study, preparation for data collection, data collection, and coding had to be pushed forward. Nonetheless the researcher worked tirelessly with the help of the supervisor to make sure all the important milestones were still attained within the limited time available without compromising the quality of the study.

#### **4.10 Reflexivity of the study**

Reflexivity is concerned with the attention given to the researcher's influence in a qualitative study (Palaganas et al., 2017:427). Reflexivity can be viewed as a process. (Lambert et al., 2010:325) describe reflexivity as self-awareness whereby a researcher acknowledges his/her own active involvement in the research process. It is about recognising that researchers cannot be separated from the social world that they study

(Ackerly & True, 2010:35). From these definitions reflexivity can therefore be defined as the process of acknowledging the role of a researcher in a qualitative study.

The findings of this study reflect the researcher's own interpretation. Reflexive research acknowledges that a researcher cannot be totally detached from the research process and researchers should be aware that their actions and behaviors have an effect on the research findings (van der Riet, 2012:31). In this regard the researcher acknowledges their own contribution to the creation of meanings and the interpretation of lived experiences in the study. The researcher's reflexive journal contains notes on how exploration was done and how the researcher's involvement influenced and informed the study. This was done to ensure a commitment towards reflexivity which is a fundamental aspect of social science research.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

The chapter has discussed the research methodology used for the research. The research approach, research design and research methods selected for use were discussed and the rationale behind the selected methods was explained. The chapter went on to define and explain the population of the study, as well as the sample and sampling techniques that were used. Descriptions of the data collection process were also given as well as the preparation for data collection and the data collection approach chosen. The latter parts of the chapter discussed data management and analysis, data verification processes used, ethical considerations, reflexivity of the study and the limitations of the study. Data analysis outlined the processes used to analyse the data gathered from the interviews. Data verification discussed how research rigor was demonstrated. Aspects such as credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability were used to demonstrate research rigor for the study. The ethical considerations which were observed include informed consent, prevention of harm to subjects, ensuring confidentiality, privacy and anonymity, debriefing of participants, and management of information. The limitations of the study outlined the constraints faced during the study and how they were dealt with. The next chapter presents and analyses the results of the study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter focused on the research methodology, how the sampling size was determined, the study's data collection procedure, and the instrument used. This chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis and discussion of the primary research findings. The aim of the study was to investigate the challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa. Data was collected by making use of telephonic and zoom individual interviews with young people who had moved out of kinship foster care situated in Johannesburg and who were in the database of the DSD. Therefore, this chapter seeks to present, analyse and discuss the research findings from the collected data according to the research goals of the research.

#### **5.2 Demographic data of the participants**

This section focuses on the demographic data of participants. Demographic data plays a significant role in research is utilised in conjunction with behavioral data. In addition, it can contribute new dimensions to analysis initiatives and therefore provide value. The former foster youths those who participated in the study were asked to indicate their age and gender, academic achievements, employment status, number of years placed in kinship foster care, number of years since leaving kinship foster care and marital status. Data was collected from a total of 23 former foster care youths living in Johannesburg within the age group ranging from 19 to 26 years old. All the former those who participated in the study were asked to indicate their age and gender are black or African townships.

### 5.2.1 Age of participants

Table 5.1 Age of participants

AGE RANGE	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
19-21	11	47.8%
22-23	7	30.4%
23-26	5	21.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100%</b>

One of the interview guide questions required participants to state their age. Age is important as it shapes the perception of demographic trends. In terms of age, there were 23 valid responses. Out of 23 participants, 11 (47.8%) were between the ages of 19 to 21 years old. In addition, 7 (30.4%) of the participants were aged 22 to 23 years and 5 (21.8%) of the participants were between 24 and 26 years old. According to the above findings, most of the participants were between the age ranges of 19 to 21 years.

### 5.2.2 Gender of the participants

Apart from the interview, questions required participants to state their gender. Gender roles, gender identity, gender relationships, and institutionalized gender are how implementation strategies work, for whom, under what circumstances, and why (Tannebaum, Greaves & Graham, 2016:2). The gender of the participants was important hence the participants were requested to state it in their responses. According to the research findings, 9 (39.13%) of the participants out of the total of 23 were males, while 14 (60.87%) were females. Therefore, it can be concluded that the highest responses were from female participants. This is also corresponding with the Statistics South Africa (2011:4), which reported that more than 50% are females.

### **5.2.3 Academic achievements**

Academic achievements of research participants were also one of the questions on the interview guide. According to the research findings, 11 (47.8%) of the research participants out of a total of 23 shared that they had managed to attend school up to grade 9. While 9 (39.13%) of the participants indicated that they had managed to study up to grade 12. Only 3 (13.04%) participants managed to attain a bachelor's degree. Therefore, according to the findings, most of the participants dropped out in grade 9. According to the literature, previously fostered youths usually have lower educational qualifications, lower salaries and are unemployed when compared to their peers (Boyle, 2017:125). Therefore, academic qualifications of former foster youths were important so as to unveil the level of education the foster youths had attained.

### **5.2.4 Employment status**

One of the questions in the interview guide required research participants to state their employment status. (Stam 2016:3.) highlights that, employment status has an impact on the status, well-being and esteem of an individual. Hence, employment status was an important aspect of the research conducted. According to the research findings, only 7 (30%) out of a total of 23 participants shared that they were employed. Therefore, seventy percent of the participants depict that most of the youths who left kinship foster care were unemployed or without a formal job. According to Statistics South Africa's (2021), data revealed that approximately 3.4 million (33.5%) out of the 10.2 million young people between the ages of 15-24 years were unemployed (NEET).

### **5.2.5 Marital status**

The other question required the research participants to state their marital statuses. According to the research findings from the interviews conducted, only 3 (13%) of the participants out of 23 shared that they were married. In contrast, twenty (67%) of the participants shared that they were not married.



### 5.2.6 Number of years since care leavers left kinship foster care

The interview guide required participants to state the number of years after they had left the foster care system. The findings are presented in the table below:

**Table 5.2 PERIOD AFTER LEAVING KINSHIP FOSTER CARE**

<b>Total number of participants</b>	<b>Number of years since the care leavers left kinship foster care</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>

According to the findings, 6 (26%) of the participants stated that they left foster care two years ago, 5 (22%) shared they left the foster care system three years ago, while 4 (17%) shared that they left four years ago. In addition, 3 (13%) of the participants shared that they left the foster care system five years ago and 5 (22%) participants shared that they left seven years ago. The findings show that the majority of the participants left kinship foster care two years ago and this means that their experiences of kinship foster care are still fresh in their minds.

### 5.2.7 Number of years placed in kinship foster care

The table below presents the number of years that care leavers spent in kinship foster care.

**Table 5.3 PERIOD IN KINSHIP FOSTER CARE**

<b>Total</b>	<b>Number of years placed in kinship foster care</b>
5	11-12
2	13-14
2	15-16
14	17-18

According to the findings presented in the above table, 5 (21.7%) participants stated that they were placed in foster care for a period ranging between 11 to 12 years. The other 2 (8.7%) participants shared that they were placed in kinship foster care between 13 and 14 years, while another 2 (8.7%) spent between 15 to 16 years in kinship foster care. Lastly, 14 (60.9%) of the participants shared that they were placed under kinship foster care for a period ranging from 17 to 18 years. The findings indicate that the majority of the participants spent between 17 and 18 years in kinship foster care.

### **5.3 Key themes**

In this section, the main themes and sub-themes that emerge from the collected data are listed below. The results are supported by direct citations from participants. The table below outlines the themes and sub-themes that have emerged during the process of data collection.

**Table 5.4 Themes and sub-themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
Theme 1: Experiences under kinship foster care	1.1 Access to education 1.2 Security and parental care 1.3 Social workers' support
Theme 2: Challenges faced by young people exiting kinship foster care	2.1 Job security 2.2 Stigma after leaving kinship foster care 2.3 High risk of poverty leading to vulnerability 2.4 Social challenges 2.5 Psychological challenges
Theme 3: Social support services required for young people exiting foster care in South Africa	3.1 Access to positive networks 3.1 Educational support 3.2 Financial support
Theme 4: Suggestions for social workers to assist youth leaving kinship foster care in South Africa	4.1 Educational support from social workers 4.2 Empowerment through skills provision 4.3 Mentorship programmes to develop level of resiliency 4.4 Social workers as advocates on formulation of policies 4.5 Provision of living arrangements after leaving foster care

### 5.3.1 Theme 1: Experiences under kinship foster care.

A number of interviews conducted with care leavers provided the researcher with information on the experiences that youth leaving kinship foster care faced before their placement into foster care, during their foster care placement and after leaving the foster care system. The participants shared various views on their experiences of leaving kinship foster care. Looking at the various views which are presented in the sub-themes below, it can be concluded that youth leaving kinship foster care were able to access education, although other participants reported that they could not complete their secondary education. In addition, the participants shared that foster care provided them with security, parental care and support from social workers. The opinions of the participants on their experiences are presented in the responses below:

#### 5.3.1.1 Access to education

Children are entrusted to foster parents to protect and ensure their well-being. Section 28 of the Constitution of South Africa's Bill of Rights states that, "All children have the right to basic food, shelter, medical care and social services, and the right to protection from abuse, neglect, or deterioration." (South Africa, 1996:32-33). In addition, Article 29 of the Constitution of South Africa clearly **states:**". One of the questions in the interview guide requested research participants to describe their experiences under kinship foster care. According to the research findings, one of the major experiences of the participants was lack of access to basic needs under kinship foster care. The research participants provided various responses depending on their individual experiences. Most of the participants shared that;

*"Everything was good during foster care placement. At least I got a chance to complete grade 12 that is matric level, although to get another chance to rewrite my matric in order to improve my levels was a challenge". (Participant 1, 24 years old).*

*"I had a chance to learn although I did not complete my studies". (Participant 3, 19 years old).*

*“It was nice, and everything was being provided, this includes food, educational equipment, and money among others”. (Participant 4 and 6, 21 and 20 years old respectively).*

*“I enjoyed every moment, and everything was simple since I was getting everything I need”. (Participant 5, 20 years old).*

Therefore, it is worth noting that kinship foster care does not only offer temporary care for the children or youth leaving care, but they also have access to basic education which in return gives them a foundation for a better future as well as to build their esteem. However, it must be noted that, some of the participants highlighted their failure to complete their studies even though they went to school. One of the respondents shared as follows;

*“I had a chance to learn although I did not accomplish my studies”. (Participant 1, 24 years old).*

The age limit according to the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 averts many youths who are under foster care from completing their secondary education and training as required. Most of the care leavers continue with secondary education beyond the age of twenty-one, while the insufficient support structures and lack of intermediate preliminary programmes for youth who are moving out of foster care have a tremendous effect on their journey of leaving care, as they are left to face adversity on their own. Section 176 (2) of the 2005 Child Welfare Act states that the mayor of the Department of Social Development may extend foster care for a person who is receiving alternative care as a child to allow that person to end the year a person who has reached the age of 21 to continue in the care (South Africa, 2006:174). This means that young people in foster care will be exempt from the provisions of the 2005 Child Welfare Act 38 when they reach the age of 21 in terms of Section 175.

### 5.3.1.2 Security and parental care

Foster care was introduced as a short-term solution for children or youths found to be in the necessity of care, through the provision of temporary places for children to stay with the intention to reunite them with their families later. According to the findings, children under foster care receive security and security from all forms of abuse and have the privilege of receiving parental care even from individuals who are not their biological parents. A kinship foster care arrangement is whereby a child's relative(s) who can be his/her grandparents, cousins, aunts or uncles take the responsibility of providing a safe living environment for the child (Hawley, 2017:492). (Vacca 2018:27) notes that the intention of placing children under foster care is to protect them. In addition, to ensure their safety and that they receive their social needs and love as other children. Hence referring to their experiences, the participants shared as follows;

*“Everything we benefited from the foster care was good and I really appreciate it”. (Participant 13, 23 years old).*

*“I did not feel like I had no parents because everything I needed was being provided. For example, I was given food, new clothes and a school fee was not a problem among others. Thus, whatever I needed my foster parent was always there for me and supported me like his own child”. (Participant 15, 19 years old).*

*“Not all foster parents are good enough to take care of a foster child, thanks to kinship foster care for giving me a sweet and loving parent”. (Participant 21, 20 years old).*

*“I was previously being abused and under kinship foster care I received protection as a girl child and gained a sense of belonging”. (Participant 18, 19 years old).*

*“I was free and had no stress about anything as compared to staying with my biological mother”. (Participants 14, 17, 20 and 19 years old).*

The findings are in line with (Hegar, 2012:16.) who expressed that those strongly in favour of kinship foster care believe that it is beneficial to children as it reduces the

pain of not having biological parents present by providing them with social relationships from the extended family. Hence this enables social continuity.

Nevertheless, some of the research participants pointed out that, even if kinship foster care had a lot to offer, it had some disadvantages, such as failure to associate with other youths, a feeling of being insecure such they had that feeling not belonging to any social group. Some of the participants also mentioned that due to dependency on only foster care, it made them feel insecure. The responses from participants are captured in the following quotes:

*“However, I have experienced that feeling of being insecure. That is, I felt I was not belonging to a certain group like other children”. (Participant, 11, 26 years old).*

*“However, I had no freedom as my life was circulating and depending upon the benefits of the kinship foster care”. (Participant 16, 22 years old).*

*“Although I had everything I need, sometimes I could feel inferior and could feel that I do not belong to a certain group”. (Participant 19, 26 years old).*

Therefore, according to the research participants` responses, one could note that, most of the experiences of youths under kinship foster care are that children and youths under foster care or kinship foster care are granted basic life support even though they do not receive all that they need. The foster care system in South Africa currently suffers from funding constraints and inadequate resources, with statistics indicating that from the total number of children who need foster care only a third of them are currently receiving it (Hall, 2017:432; Jamieson, 2015:102). Hence, most of the children and youths are affected through receiving insufficient aid. Thus, the offer of support strengthens individual well-being because social relationships give positive evaluations and a set of identities.

### **5.3.1.3 Social workers' support**

According to the research findings, social workers supervising youths under kinship foster care play an important role towards ensuring a better experience of the foster

care children and youths. Social workers are professionals a person who is or is considered to be a social worker under the South African Social Welfare Professionals Act 110 (South Africa, 2006:3) of 1978. While in the International Federation of Social Workers, social work is defined as a profession that promotes social change, people's development, liberation, empowerment, and social cohesion (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014:3). Legal social workers are responsible for developing care plans to ensure and support the well-being of children and adolescents who are found to be in need of care and protection (Sotshononda, 2020:35). In addition, they are well cared for, carefully nurtured, have good medical care, and maintain proper contact with their families (Sotshononda, 2020:36). In a nutshell, statutory social workers prioritise human rights, liberation, dignity, and freedom.

In addition, social workers, and specifically statutory social workers it plays an important role in the context of research. The job of a caring social worker is to help foster parents in their job of caring for foster children with the aim of improving the well-being of their children and promoting opportunities for independent living (Knowsley, 2020:2). The research participants having been asked to explain their experiences under foster care, shared as follows;

*“On the other hand, the regular visits of social workers helped me in healing emotionally as they took proper care of me through counselling sessions”. (Participant 11, 26 years old).*

*“The love from the statutory social workers supervising children and youths placed in kinship foster care, made me feel like a normal person and they made sure they check up on me all the time, thus providing all my basic needs. However, on the other side it was a sorrowful experience growing without the motherly and fatherly love”. (Participant 20, 19 years old).*

*“In addition, whenever I felt lonely or have things on my heart, I had people from the social work department and friends from foster care to share my problems with and we were ready to come with a solution”. (Participant 16, 22 years old).*

Therefore, with reference to the above-mentioned findings, it is worth noting that, social workers or statutory social workers play a crucial role in ensuring the security



and well-being of youths under foster care. The social workers also provide counselling and support services to the child in preparation for the foster care placement, compiling of the report to the children's court, presenting the report at the children's court as well as facilitating the application for the foster child grant at the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). In addition, statutory social workers also provide supervision, reunification and after care services to foster children. This is in line with (Tshongwana & Tanga, 2018:16) who note that the foster care system today includes thousands of dedicated and dedicated adoptive parents who devote their lives to the notorious work of serving adopted children. This shows the commitment of social workers towards advocating for the safety of foster children.

### **5.3.2 Theme 2: Challenges faced by youths leaving kinship foster care**

In South Africa, it is clear that young people leaving foster care need strong positive outcomes and achievements to overcome the challenge of leaving foster care. (Olofsen & Van Breda, 2015: 2018: 15). Research shows young people who are financially stable, have stable family relationships, and have a stable job. Achievement of Success in Life Young people who leave care seem to struggle to succeed because they are not prepared for the challenges, they face life after foster care. (Mamelani 2013:25.) was of the notion that youth transitioning out of care have difficulties being optimistic about their future, due to lack of strategic programmes and a shortage of innovations. Therefore, this section shall discuss the various challenges faced by adolescents leaving foster care in relation to survey results.

#### **5.3.2.1 Job security**

Employment security was one of the challenges that seemed to worry young people who took care of them because of lack of financial support. According to World Bank (2018:15.), 53.6% of unemployment rests on youths especially those coming from foster care. The period of transitioning for young foster youths to young adults is one that can be described as high-risk as there is a greater risk of problems such as unemployment, imprisonment, mental health problems, homelessness, and drug abuse (Keller et al., 2016:242). Lack of job security leads the care leavers to have too

much free time that leads to boredom, emptiness, and laziness. This may be one of the reasons why young people leaving foster parents cannot find employment opportunities due to their lack of experience and skills in the labour market. Some of the research participant's shared as follows;

*“Financial challenge is the greatest challenge among other challenges since it turned my whole life upside down. This is because when I was under foster care, I was receiving foster child grant every month and I would plan my budget and do the savings”. (Participant 3, 20 years old).*

*“I started seeing things differently since I was no longer receiving foster child grant and care. We struggled to put food on the table since my foster parent's foster care grant has also been stopped”. (Participant 15, 19 years old).*

*“Financial situation is in a dire state since my mother I am staying with is not working. Starvation is the other thing since we do not have enough money to buy food”. (Participant 5, 20 years old).*

According to the research findings, it is evident that, most of the youths who leave kinship foster care tend to struggle financially due to lack of jobs. The reason for unemployment is the result of the failure to complete their studies and lack of relevant skills. (Van Breda and Frimpong-Manso 2020:4) suggest that youths should be supported by essential life skills that enhance their employability through the acquisition of practical entrepreneurial or professional skills to help them address some of their challenges. It is clear that transitional programmes designed to help prepare young people whilst they are in kinship foster care and also supporting them after they leave care are essential for successful independent living.

### **5.3.2.2 Stigma after leaving foster care**

The stigma is a social phenomenon that is said to affect foster children negatively. It has been found that stigma commonly affects the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Denzel and MacDonald, 2014, Sotshononda, 2020: 83). Many young people in foster care and those who have left foster care experience difficulty dealing

with the stigma and discrimination that they face. The participants shared as follows in response to the question regarding the challenges they face after leaving foster care;

*“My experience is not good because sometimes you really feel you are an outsider, and you lose a sense of belonging since you have been under foster care for a long time. I’m always reminded that I was a foster child”. (Participant 10, 23 years old).*

*“I lack confidence in everything I do, this is because I was used to being spoiled by the foster care and social workers and also being dependent on the foster child grant made me not to think outside the box”. (Participant 2, 19 years old).*

*“Lack of adequate skills makes me feel uncomfortable amongst others, I feel I can never make it in life since and I always view those who grew up in normal families with all their parents available as better than me”. (Participant 7, 21 years old).*

*“I’m an introvert. I don’t like to be with other people and sometimes I can’t mingle with my peers because they always talk about their mothers. So, the thought that I don’t have a mother hurt. When you try to access important services like the clinic facility, they will question you about your family and that will hurt you. Therefore, I feel like I am not welcomed or taken seriously. I feel like a burden and rejected everywhere I go”. (Participant 20, 19 years old).*

According to the findings, it is challenging for the young people leaving the foster parent system to adjust and to be accepted back into society. Denzel and MacDonald 2014 (in Sotshononda, 2020:83) suggest that efforts must be made to reduce both the stigma associated with foster care and the negative effects of leaving foster care. There is consensus in the literature that foster children and adolescents are stigmatized and discriminated against because they are children in need of care and protection.

### 5.3.2.3 High risk of poverty leading to vulnerability

Youths who have been discharged from the care of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 are at risk of experiencing outcomes such as poverty, ill-health, and poor educational achievements. According to the research findings, most of the youths leaving the foster care system are vulnerable to poverty (StatisticsSA, 2017:16). This is as a result of the failure to complete their studies, as well as to acquire necessary life skills to cope with life after foster care. According to StatisticsSA (2017:16), there are high levels of lack of education and employment for youths who have aged out of foster care and as a result, it is not surprising that most of them suffer from socio-economic instability. In addition, generally high levels of poverty among South African children and young people prevent them from reaching their full potential as young adults. The participants during interviews mentioned poverty as one of the prevalent challenges they have faced after exiting the foster care system. This was supported by the following responses;

*“Financial situation since my mother I am staying with is not working. Starvation is the other thing since we do not have enough money to buy food. The fact that I am pregnant I cannot go to work, thus worsening the situation at home. Therefore, I am always stressed and depressed because I do not know what my life is going to be like tomorrow after I give birth”. (Participant 15, 19 years old).*

*“I am struggling to survive on my own since I did not complete my education”. (Participant 10, 23 years old).*

*“Things were now different since I was no longer receiving foster child grant and care. At home we struggled to put food on the table since my foster parent and his child were unemployed. Thus, I had to look for a job so that I will be able to take care of the family”. (Participant 13, 23 years old).*

*“There is also lack of access to health care since I am no longer receiving the grant money and benefits”. (Participant 14, 25 years old).*

The findings reveal that the participants generally experienced economic and other financially related challenges exiting foster care system. However, most of them relied

on their strengths and innovations to tap into their environment and take advantage of the available resources and networks that would contribute to their survival and adaptation in the community. Research has proven that many youths who are out of the foster care system are doing so with little or no financial assistance and suffer greater poverty in addition, generally high levels of poverty among South African children and adolescents prevent them from reaching their full potential as young adults because of global economic instability (Getz, 2012:12). Therefore, it is impossible to expect youths who have exited the foster care system to be fully empowered for life after care at the age of 18.

#### **5.3.2.4 Social challenges**

Many youths who are out of foster care have lived most of their lives in a protected environment, some in the hands of strangers, such as officials of the courts and social welfare services, and some with families who are not blood relatives. During their time in the foster care system, all their needs and functions were regulated and protected through legislation and policies (Marumo, 2018 in Mogale, 2019: 78.). After leaving the foster care system, young people who have had traumatic experiences due to orphan hood, abuse and neglect are expected to fit into an often alien and harsh reality in which they may already be at a disadvantage. Youths who have exited from kinship foster care are exposed to social challenges. The research participants shared their experiences as follows;

*“It is now difficult for me to mix and mingle with my peers because all I think of is what I should do to make my life better. Sometimes I associate with anyone not by choice but because of who has accepted me even if they look dangerous”. (Participant 17, 19 years old).*

*“I’m always in the streets to try to make a living. I now survive through carrying people’s groceries because I no longer receive the foster child grant and I have to make a plan. The streets are too dangerous for me, but I have no choice”. (Participant 21, 20 years old).*

*“With me it is not easy. I do feel lonely a lot because most of the guys around here are into drugs, so I don’t hang around with them. I am scared of losing myself”. (Participant 11, 26 years old).*

Referencing to the research responses gathered from all the respondents it is apparent that the young people who have left the foster care system have difficulties in navigating through the societal networks that are available for them in the community. Instead, they prefer to face the turmoil of exiting care on their own (Atkinson, 2008:183). Young people’s readiness to exit the foster care system includes the capacity to care for themselves and make sound decisions.

### **5.3.2.5 Psychological challenges**

Studies confirm that maltreatment in the earlier the stages of life can be a risk factor for mood disorders, anxiety disorders, personality disorders, and severe depression. (Gonzalez, 2015:52). Research participants strongly felt that they had experienced a major behavioral and psychological challenge in the form of depression since they had exited the foster care system. The participants stated that they had undergone other behavioral and psycho-social challenges, such as loneliness, sadness, and lack of trust from other people, which is evident in the following responses;

*“I always have a feeling that everybody around me doesn’t like me, worse I got pregnant, and I feel unacceptable in my own community”. (Participant 7, 21 years old).*

*“I’ve gotten to a point where I gave up hope. I was just sitting at home not doing anything as I felt I can’t be able to do anything in life. I felt so rejected, I have tried applying for scholarships, but I have been unsuccessful. (Participant 5, 20 years old)”.*

*“People I am living with have created an unpleasant environment for me and they make life difficult for me to an extent that I feel like living in the streets. I feel so rejected because there is nothing that I am offering in the house”. (Participant 10, 23 years old).*

According to the findings, it is evident from the responses that participants experienced a lot of psychological and emotional turmoil after leaving the foster care system. During the transition from youth to adulthood, they are more likely than their peers in the general population to face significant challenges related to severe mental and emotional disorders. (Cunningham & Diversi, 2012:589). Most health challenges are as a result of depression and the inability to adjust to the new life after care. (Zinn and Courtney 2017:187.) argue that the challenges youths encounter causes psychological conditions such as anxiety, depression and drug abuse in an effort to self-medicate. Therefore, as a result of limited support, youths end up becoming or joining groups that demonstrate deviant behaviour. It is therefore important that all these challenges are noted so that strategies can be crafted to overcome these problems.

### **5.3.3 Theme 3: Social support services required for youth leaving kinship foster care in South Africa**

The high unemployment rate is causing problems for young South Africans, who find it difficult to make ends meet. The findings of a systematic review of the South African context highlighted the challenges faced by youths who leave care and various factors that affect their transition to young adulthood. South Africa has the highest youth unemployment rate globally. Most of the unemployed youths have not completed secondary school education, and those who have finished secondary school education are most likely to be employed in low-skilled vacancies and earn low salaries (StatsSA, 2017:5). Therefore, as part of the research interview questions derived from the research objectives, the researcher sought to find out from the research participants about the social support services available to youths in order to prepare them when they are about to exit the foster care system. According to the research findings, in response to the above question, the participants' shared as follows;

*“Not really, I am suffering from dependency syndrome. This is because I was used to getting money from them every month and now because they stopped supporting me with the money, I cannot do things on my own. Also, I am not independent since I am looking for someone to support me financially so as to*

*continue with my education since jobs are scarce for undergraduates like me". (Participant 1, 24 years old).*

### **5.3.3.1 Educational support**

It should be noted that some of the youths showed appreciation for the support they received under foster care especially access to education. A majority of the participants stressed the importance of educational support should be provided by the State as well as by official social workers. In accordance with article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996:1233-57), everyone has the right to basic education, including basic adult education, and further education, which the State must progressively ensure, through reasonable measures, and accessibility to education. The responses of the participants are captured in the below quotes;

*"No. I am still a child in need of educational support and need to be taught about life since I am still young". (Participant 12, 20 years old)*

*"This is because of the inability to complete independence. Lack of educational qualifications does not allow us to have high paying jobs of our own. Instead it makes us to have a dependency syndrome. This is because we do not have the adequate resources to be independent even though we wish to. (Participant 20, 19 years old).*

*"Kinship foster care has given me a chance to learn in school and where I stay, I have learnt to cook thus the cooking skill is the one I am applying in the canteen I am currently working at". (Participant 7, 21 years old).*

*"I appreciate that I at least went to school, but I am struggling to survive on my own since I did not complete my education". (Participant 19, 26 years old).*

*"Kinship foster care has given me a chance to learn in school and some of the things I have learnt I am applying them now in life. I can say the chance of going to school made me a somebody in life because I am on a better stage of education than others. I managed to get my bachelor's degree". (Participant 22, 24 years old).*



*“I can be a man of myself, and I am able to defend and protect myself from the surrounding pressure and focus on my life. Also, I learnt and developed a passion for cooking all thanks to the foster care”. (Participant 13, 23 years old).*

Deriving from the presented responses, one could note that access to education was one of the greatest benefits given to youths under foster care. Through education, some youths felt prepared and ready to be independent, while others felt agitated by the fact that they did not manage to reach the desired levels. This could be one of the reasons why they face challenges in an effort to secure because they lack the necessary experience and skills for the labour market. Dickens and Marx (2020:13) suggest the need for an assessment of whether youths prior to leaving the foster care system, are working, working full time, working part time, studying, studying full time, studying part time, desire to work, went for a job interview, and applied for a course. This is helpful as it establishes where there is a need for intervention.

### **5.3.3.2 Financial support**

Financial support is a grant that was designed to help children who were taken from their homes and placed in foster care to protect them from abuse or neglect (Hall et al., 2012:89). The main purpose of the foster care system is to provide financial assistance to a family member who is looking after orphans (Hall et al., 2012:89). The following two participants emphasised the importance of financial support needed by the youths leaving kinship foster care;

*“I lack confidence in everything I do. This is because I was used to being spoiled by the foster care social workers. The other issue is being dependent from the foster child grant made me not to think outside the box”. (Participant 4, 21 years old).*

*“This is because I do not have confidence in myself. This is because I was used to get free things every month from the foster care and now, I cannot do things on my own. Thus, I am not independent as I am surviving on hand outs from generous people”. (Participant 6, 20 years old).*

The presented findings show that there is not much that is done to prepare youths prior to leaving the foster care system. As they get ready to leave the foster care system, youths in foster care need to be linked with relevant resources that will assist them to be able to be financially stable. There is a need to equip them with life skills that are beyond education itself so that they are fully prepared for adulthood and real-life experiences without support from foster parents. Most of the responses indicate a challenge with dependency syndrome and failure to adjust to a life without free benefits. During the period when they are due to exit the foster care system, they become indecisive.

#### **5.3.4 Theme 4: Suggestions for social workers to assist youth leaving kinship foster care in South Africa**

The research interview guide consisted of a question that required youths to make suggestions on how social workers can assist to prepare youths exiting foster care. Youths exiting care system need a lot of care and support and the form of preparation received will determine the level of success in their adult life. Shaw, Steyn and Simeon (2020:1) emphasise that the procedure of transitioning into adulthood remains an apprehension that has impacted researchers in the field of emerging adulthood to highlight that young people “all unprepared for life upon exiting care”. Having faced a lot of challenges after exiting foster care the participants, in showing their concerns, said the following;

*“The social workers should at least make an effort to prepare projects for us so that when we leave foster care, we will be having somewhere to start”. (Participant 5, 20 years old).*

*“They should pay us a visit so as to see how we are surviving in this wicked world”. (Participant 7, 21 years old).*

*“Scholarships must be made available, so that those who will leave kinship foster care are able to continue with their education. This helps foster children not to be limited in education due to financial challenges faced in their families and circumstances surrounding them. Thus, if we get a chance in continuing*

*with education and get the required qualifications one day we will contribute a hand in supporting the foster care units in our community". (Participant 10, 23 years old).*

According to the responses, the youths suggested that there should be a continuous relationship between social workers and the youths who have left the foster care system. There's a need for continuous monitoring to check whether they are in safe hands. Foster children are already at a disadvantage in terms of developing supportive relationships because they are in the system as a result of abuse or neglect, or the loss of a parental relationship (Bossett, 2016:7). In order to be ready to take on adult responsibilities, many young people transitioning out of foster care require extensive guidance from a variety of sources. As a result, social workers should take them through their journey into young adulthood. As a result, social workers should play a critical role in ensuring that adolescents move smoothly from foster care to young adulthood. The following are some of the suggestions proffered by the participants.

#### **5.3.4.1 Educational support from social workers**

According to the findings of the study, preparatory programmes should be implemented before youths exit the foster care system, so that they can establish themselves and become accustomed to the new systems. Most youths are forced to leave foster care before they are ready to live independently (Goyette, 2019:235). They are abruptly forced to survive without the social, emotional, and financial assistance they formerly had since they are now legally deemed adults capable of fending for themselves. According to research, the level of support for youth educational programmes can be utilised to urge young people to make positive choices in their lives. The primary findings unveiled that most youths exit foster care system before they complete their studies, and some are challenged to the extent of not being able to further their studies. Therefore, the research participants gave propositions on how the services can be improved as follows;

*"I really do appreciate the effort by social workers in helping me to understand the importance of education. I think that she was in a way trying to prepare me*

*for my ultimate independence. Unfortunately, due to some uncertainties, I did not manage to complete my studies as a result of lack of funding". (Participant 21, 20 years old)*

*"To make sure that the foster child leaves the care when he or she is done with matric that is grade 12. Also help them with money to do projects so as to earn a living without depending on anyone". (Participant 15, 19 years old).*

*"They (social workers) should help us with jobs according to the educational level we reached so that we do not struggle when we are out of foster care. Also training which will enable us to use the little resources we have to do our own projects like farming". (Participant 12, 20 years old).*

*"Scholarships should be provided for care leavers to further our education". (Participant 3, 17, 9, 20, 19 and 22 years old).*

*"Life skills must be provided, so that we will be able to survive in the community. Also, we need support for higher education so that we are able to possess the skills required for highly paying jobs". (Participant 22, 24 years old).*

The responses of the participants show that they were also grateful for the support that social workers provided to them during their studies, which enabled them to complete matric regardless of the difficulties they experienced while they were in foster care. Educational achievements of youths in foster care are highly influenced by the level and quality of support they receive from their caregivers. In order for the youths to become fully self-sufficient, they required financial aid for further education and skills training, as well as help when looking for jobs (Deborah, 2012:17).

#### **5.3.4.2 Empowerment through skills provision**

Skills consists of "Basic life skills that can help young people cope with "negative consequences of stigma, discrimination and lack of social support" (Van Breda & Frimpong-Manso, 2020:4.). According to the reviewed literature, in reality, many foster youths reach the age of 18 without the skills necessary to survive on their own, as they are typically unprepared to confront life's problems (Courtney, 2019:76; Havlicek et

al., 2016:8). Social workers should use existing guidelines on the delivery of services to ensure the empowerment of foster care youths and reduce their vulnerability. This can be enhanced by providing practical skills such as plumbing, electrician, motor maintenance, and building, the organization can help its employees to be more employable. Such activities increase the resilience of young people, as they will be able to experience a sense of involvement and avoid involvement in criminal activities.

To ensure the empowerment of foster care youths and lessen their vulnerability, social workers should follow existing rules for service delivery. Youths should be given access to useful skills such as "plumbing, electricity, motor maintenance, and building" to improve their employability. Young people's resilience improves as a result of these activities, since they gain a sense of belonging and are less likely to engage in criminal activity. Regarding the empowerment through skills provision, the participants expressed their views as follows;

*"I am jobless, and the reason is I failed my grade 9 and for my survival mostly relying on friends in the community and those who understand my situation, but their help can only be of a short time". (Participant 1, 24 years old).*

*"Life skills are important as they will enable us to deal with situations we will face in life. Also, life skills which will help us on how to move on. Counselling is also needed to help us survive the emotional problems we are facing, and we will face in the future". (Participant 3, 20 years old).*

*"Scholarships should be made available, so that prior leaving kinship foster care we are able to continue with education. Making sure that we have a steady home or place to stay, just because after leaving the foster care since some start to experience abuse". (Participant 6, 20 years old).*

*"They should support and take into consideration those who have passed matric so that they can further their studies. Linking foster children with adults or people who can train them and teach them about life so that when they leave the care they will be well equipped for any circumstance and also help them with money to start small businesses". (Participant 9, 22 years old).*

The responses suggest that, when youths leave foster care, they need support with skills so that they are not only limited to looking for employment, but they can start small businesses depending on the skills they have. Basic life skills and practical skills can help young people gain access to the information needed to achieve their goals and enhance their self-confidence in the face of any challenges that come their way. Mogale (2018:28), on the other hand, cautions against focus only on traditional career advances (i.e. from school to university to employment) and instead encourage young people to be exposed to a variety of opportunities and opportunities in professional training. These strategies reduce the risks of youth engaging in criminal activities and risk behaviors.

#### **5.3.4.3 Mentorship programmes to develop level of resiliency**

Mogale (2018:50) concludes that children and young people who are best equipped to overcome adversities will have a strong social support network. (Adler 2014:56) defines resilience as the ability of an individual to revert to earlier patterns of competence and adaptation that characterised them prior to encountering stressing and depressing times. This can be successful with the provision of a dedicated mentor or person from outside the family, a series of extracurricular activities that promote the learning of skills and emotional maturity. These give the ability to reshape the disadvantages so that both the positive and the harmful effects can be realised. There is a greater chance of care leavers succeeding if they are surrounded by protective factors and the conditions that minimise risks. Apprenticeships, mentorship programmes and training should be arranged for the care leavers by the social workers working in conjunction with the community to facilitate skills development and also to encourage networking among care leavers. On mentorship programmes, the participants suggested the following;

*“I personally needed to be educated about life itself. I realised I was dependent and relaxed when I was receiving all those benefits under foster care that took off my focus from planning for the future. I feel social workers need to share with us the reality about life beyond social grants and other benefits”.*  
*(Participant 21, 20 years old).*

*“I had a privilege of interacting with a social worker who taught me life skills, such as coping with pressure, especially from friends. Though my life is not where I want it to be, I’m glad I was able to resist the pressure that comes with my peers and remain focussed on my life”. (Participant 14, 25 years old).*

*“I was previously in an abusive family, and I felt I needed more support to develop self-confidence and begin to see good in myself. Social workers should teach us to be confident in life so that we become competent also when we are looking for jobs”. (Participant 18, 19 years old).*

According to the findings, mentorship programmes play a significant role in preparing youths for the future after foster care. (Frimpong-Manso 2015:73) viewed resilience as the ability of the youth exiting foster care to adapt and cope with the challenges of after care. In preparation to leave the foster care system, youths can be assisted to develop their levels of resiliency through cultivating a spirit of positivity in them, working on enhancing their self-esteem, encouraging them to set goals in life and to be brave enough not to view life’s challenges as obstacles. Through this, youths can attain their independence, freedom and develop the capability to make self-informed and relevant decisions.

In addition, some respondents indicated the need for youths to be equipped with entrepreneurial skills and the ability to be involved in income generating projects and small businesses. One of the participants recommended as follows;

*“We needed to be equipped with skills on how to save money and to get a small income generating businesses. This could have helped me rather than being under pressure to look for a job. I could survive through buying and selling”. (Participant 23, 21 years old).*

Another respondent suggested as follows;

*“Training is needed and is important to us as youths, sometimes to realise your talent beyond education helps so much because there are some people who are not educated enough but they make it in business. The training should also*

*be given or conducted by those who have already passed those difficult stages in life that is former foster care members". (Participant 11, 26 years old).*

The findings show the relevancy of mentorship because some youths fail because of lack of knowledge yet some challenges can be overcome through the ability to create solutions to every problem rather than being dependent and blame others for failures. Resilience is an important concept when studying the strategies young people use to overcome challenges.

#### **5.3.4.4 Social workers as advocates on formulation of policies**

Bond (2018:32) notes that the international policies and legislations that guide the transitioning process for care leavers seem to be blurry, which affects the young people towards emerging adulthood. Thus, there is a need for social workers to stand as advocates in the formulation and implementation of policies that support care leavers. The care leavers who are ill-equipped to transition to emerging adulthood struggle with unresolved educational needs, accommodation, job security, financial security, well-being, and engagement in criminal activities and abuse of substance. These need to be addressed by the Department of Social Development and social workers to be able to help the youths during their process of leaving care. On this concern, the participant's views and suggestions are supported by the following quotes;

*"Now because the foster child grant was stopped there is no stable income coming in the family. The government needs to change their laws and extend the years of us receiving foster child grant so that it helps us at the moment we will be trying to settle". (Participant 1, 24 years old).*

*"The social workers should help us by making sure that the foster child leaves the care when he or she is done with matric that is grade 12. In addition, help them with money to do projects so to earn a living without depending on anyone. The government should set aside money to help us start projects of our own and social workers should offer us training on how to manage our projects". (Participant 2, 19 years old).*



*“The government should build foster universities to continue with our education although we will no longer be under foster care”. (Participant 14, 25 years old).*

According to the research findings, one can note necessity for the establishment and application of strategies that support the youths exiting the foster care system. The policies should be meant to ensure that the youths are established though they shouldn't support dependency syndrome. The issue of South African policies and legislations that support youths leaving care have been acknowledged as stimulating to the success of social welfare services (Bond, 2015 in Mogale, 2018:52). Some of countries like the USA, UK, and Australia, appear to have solid policies that might be adopted and altered to help during the preparation of young people leaving care (Bond, 2015 in Mogale, 2018:52). Researchers have suggested the adoption of such policies in order to prepare and support the youths. The lack of legislation and policies leaves the young people at risk of criminal activities, which can lead to serious consequences.

Developing more understanding of the problems experienced by youths moving into young adulthood will lead to developing programmes which will support them to become productive adults and ways in which the foster care system can improve their services and programmes to ease their transitioning to young adulthood. Social support offered to care leavers could prevent them from maltreatment which will in turn protect them from adverse outcomes when they transition into adulthood.

#### **5.3.4.5 Provision of living arrangements after leaving foster care**

Access to shelter is one of the most crucial needs of every human being and therefore, the research sought to find out from the participants where they had been staying since they exited the foster care system. Regarding their experiences, the participants shared as follows;

*“I am living with my family members, but the challenge is that I have become a burden since I do not have any source of income”. (Participant 1, 24 years old).*

*“I am renting a back room in the township”. (Participant 2, 20 years old).*

*“I am currently staying with my friend’s family. I was helped by my friend with whom I attended grade 12 together”. (Participant 15, 19 years old).*

According to the findings, it is evident that having access to a decent place to stay for youth leaving care is a crucial challenge. Atkinson (2008:188) confirms the stability of housing presents a significant barrier to emancipated foster care youths' successful reintegration into society. transitioning to adulthood. Most of the youths who exited foster cares do not have resources that allow them to afford safe housing and this exposes them to be at a risk of being homeless. One of the respondents shared as follows;

*“Since I got impregnated, no one wants to take responsibility of supporting me. I have faced rejection from my family members and have been moving from place to place looking for where I can be accommodated. Getting a job in such a condition has also been tough for me”. (Participant 7, 21 years old).*

Another participant suggested that the government should also make provision of affordable housing that can accommodate youths who have just exited the foster care system. The participant recommended as follows;

*“The government should provide hostels and food for those who are struggling out there. This helps to reduce depression rate of foster children who are not able to withstand the pressure from the surroundings”. (Participant 7, 21 years old).*

It is therefore suggested that the government work together with social workers to ensure that accommodation is available for former foster care youths in an effort to curb risks in their lives and prevent the challenge of homelessness.

The research findings were provided in this chapter, and they decisively showed that many youths leaving foster care are improvised for their exit out of foster care and becoming independent young adults. Furthermore, the study revealed that youth leaving care are not being prepared for life after foster care through any structured

programme that provides them with the essential skills and assistance. This has left them exposed to various social challenges. In addition, they are compelled to face several challenges, some of which put their lives in jeopardy. It was also discovered that the difficulties faced by the care leavers are significant and obstruct their successful transitioning into young adulthood.

Participants agreed that the age restriction for young people leaving care should be raised to a point at which they are self-sufficient and have finished their secondary education and training. Furthermore, the possibility to belong to a family was mentioned as one of the benefits of living in foster care by the participants. Foster care, according to the study, is a temporary and frequently uncertain alternative for young people who are leaving care. In many cases, the predicament of care leavers persists long after they have entered society. The next chapter will focus on the conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

South Africa is one of the countries in the world that has the highest number of vulnerable youth populations (Statistics South Africa, 2018:2). According to Statistics South Africa, the country's youth unemployment rate for people aged 15-24 was 33.5%. and 10.2%for those aged 25–34 years at the end of 2018 (Statistics South Africa, 2018:2). Since there is nothing explicit in the child protection legislation and policy that addresses the provision of transitional services for youths who are leaving alternative care, it is obvious that individuals leaving foster care are included in this vulnerable population (Van Breda, 2018:513).

This study explored the challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa. This chapter will focus on the degree to which the goals and the objectives of the study have been achieved. The major research of the study will be presented, followed by conclusions drawn from the study. The limitations surrounding the study will also be presented. Finally, the chapter will end with the suggested recommendations based on the findings.

#### 6.2 Research Summary

##### 6.2.1 Goal of the study

The goal of the study was to investigate the challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa. In order to achieve the above stated goal of the study, objectives needed to be set. Research objectives are statements which explain what the research project seeks to achieve (Parveen & Showkat, 2017:431). They seek to describe what a particular study seeks to achieve in a concise manner (Kabir, 2016:25). Research objectives can also be defined as a summary of the accomplishments that a researcher wants to achieve through the study and these direct the study (Guest et al., 2013:67). The goal of the study was accomplished by reaching the following objectives:

### **6.3 Summary based on the objectives of the study**

#### **6.3.1 Objective 1: To explore the experiences of youths under kinship foster care in South Africa.**

##### **6.3.1.1 Conceptualisation of foster care**

In order to understand this objective, there was a need for the conceptualisation of foster care and the services offered in South Africa. This objective was achieved in the discussion in Chapter Two (sections 2.2 to 2.4), which summarised and analysed the forms of foster care and services in the South African context. The empirical findings demonstrated that every child in foster care is placed through a court order and that the Children's Act 38 of 2005 regulates the period of maturity at which the child should be discharged from care. Moreover, foster care entails the placement of a child under 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 or a transfer in terms of section 171 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006:93).

Foster care was defined as a worldwide practice of alternative care for children who require care and protection, according to existing literature. Foster care has the goal of protecting and nurturing children, promoting permanency planning, and respecting the individual and family by displaying respect for cultural, ethnic, and community diversity (Republic of South Africa, 2006:96). Foster care, as is widely accepted, plays an important role in the provision of social support services to children and youths who have been found to be in need of care and protection. Despite the availability of resources, there are still considerable gaps in the legislation and policy when it comes to addressing and understanding children's future requirements as they mature and go through their vital growth period. The empirical data revealed that many foster youths are compelled by law to leave care when they are often unprepared to confront adult life. This is enforced through the application of section 175 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2006:90). Foster care, on the other hand, is widely regarded as the best option to institutional care, kinship and cluster foster care (Schiller, 2015:51).

### **6.3.1.2 The experiences of youths under foster care**

The research sought to unveil the experiences of youths under foster care, that is to explore either positive or negative experiences which will help in also unveiling the services offered to them. From the reviewed literature, it was discovered that children in foster care had various experiences depending on the interactions they had within their foster homes. According to research, most children in foster care are not receiving the same treatment as those who live with their biological family, but they do receive protection and a comfortable living environment (Kheswa, 2017:2). Foster care not only provides temporary care for children, but it also provides them with access to basic education, laying the groundwork for a brighter future and increasing their self-esteem. The level of support for youth educational programmes can be utilised to urge young people to focus positively in life, according to the literature (Dworsky, 2017:1). Knowledge was a highly important service that children in foster care received because in order to attain a desirable job these days, more education and training is required. As a result, education was a very important service that youths in foster care received.

Children in foster care also received security and safety from all sorts of abuse, according to the findings, and were also able to receive parental care. The goal of placing children in foster care, according to Vacca (2018:27.), is to safeguard them and assure their safety, as well as to ensure that they receive the same social needs and love as other children. Organisations such as child and youth care centres (CYCC) or any other organisation acting in that capacity, according to the literature, have a critical role to play in the protection of children's rights at the local level and are thus regarded as essential for the employment of the UNCRC guidelines. Therefore, foster care provides the children and youths with the needed protection against abuse and other risks they could have face if they remained in vulnerable places.

In addition to the literature, the results of this research demonstrated that despite the difficult experiences of children in foster care; most of the participants appreciated their foster families for providing them with housing, food, and an opportunity to achieve their educational goals. Most of the children that enter the foster care system do so with a lot of emotional baggage from their previous situations, which then affects their adjustment in a new environment. Thus, the provision of support strengthens individual

well-being because social relationships give positive evaluations and a set of identities.

According to the research findings, the other experience was having support from social workers. Social workers under kinship foster care play an important role towards ensuring a better experience of the foster care children. Social work is an occupation that deals with the promotion of societal change, development, freedom, empowering people, and social cohesion (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014:3). With reference to the findings, it is worth noting that, social workers play a vital duty in guaranteeing security and well-being of youths under foster care. This is in line with (Rymph, 2017:252) who notes that thousands of sincerely kind and dedicated foster parents and social workers serve in the foster care system today, dedicating their lives to the low-status profession of helping foster children.

### **6.3.2. Objective 2: To explore challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa**

According to the available literature, research has indicated that youths raised in foster care are among the most susceptible groups of people. Usually, children are placed in foster care because of abandonment or abuse and the intention of putting them into foster care is to guard them and to safeguard their well-being (Vacca, 2018:27). Unfortunately, their placement in foster care may carry with it a sense of unease and an unwelcome change. Even though, foster children vary in personality and how they respond to problems, the older juveniles who are placed in foster care often face greater obstacles (Berkman & Syme, 2011:134). Children who leave foster care frequently encounter comparable issues, such as behavioral and financial difficulties.

The research findings revealed that most youths exiting foster care face economic challenges such as failure to secure jobs. Due to a lack of employment stability, young people are “left with a lot of free time,” which leads to boredom, emptiness, and laziness. As per the research results of the literature, young people in foster care confront obstacles like those faced by other adolescents their age, such as obtaining work, managing tight finances, facing new experiences, and seeking higher learning opportunities (Children's Bureau, 2018:7). This puts them in a financial bind. Youth

should be helped with basic living skills, enhancing their employability through acquisition of practical entrepreneurial or occupational skills (Van Breda et al, 2020:4).

Furthermore, one of the issues that is regarded to be a major societal phenomenon that affects children in foster care is stigma. Youth in foster care, as well as those who leave care, find it challenging to deal with concerns of stigma and discrimination. According to the findings, it is difficult for youths who are out of foster care to adjust and reintegrate into society. As a result, the majority of them fail to cope with the pressures and make unsafe decisions that may jeopardise their future.

One of the difficulties identified by the research as affecting youths exiting foster care is a high risk of poverty leading to vulnerability. It's hardly surprising that the majority of youths leaving the foster care system suffer from socio-economic instability, according to Statistics SA (2018:2). Children and youths in South Africa are generally poor, which limits their capacity to attain their full potential as young people. Most of them, on the other hand, use their skills and inventions to tap into their surroundings and take advantage of the available resources and networks that would help them survive and adapt to their new surroundings.

According to research, many juveniles who leave the foster care system do so with little or no financial support, putting them in a worse financial position than their counterparts in the general population who are still financially supported by their parents. When compared to their peers growing up in stable families, youths are vulnerable and at risk of undergoing consequences such as poverty, ill-health, poor educational achievement, incarceration, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, interpersonal and societal issues, unemployment, and suicide, according to available literature (Deborah, 2012:17). Therefore, they need to be exposed to protective factors which are essential for children still under foster care and those moving out of foster care include, the ability to manage own behaviour and control emotions (self-regulation skills), the ability to nurture and develop positive relationships (relational skills), growing in a positive school environment, and acquiring skills academically.

Many former foster youths have spent the majority of their life in a safe environment with strangers, such as court officials, social welfare service professionals, and non-blood relatives. All of their needs and functions were regulated and protected during their stay under care by legislation and policies (Marumo, 2018 in Mogale, 2019:23).



According to the comments from all of the participants, it is clear that youths who have left the foster care system struggle to navigate the societal networks that are available to them in the community. Therefore, the African Youth Charter (AYC) advocates for young people's rights to participate in all societal activities and countries to have measures in place which promote the active participation of the youth in communities (Reynaert et al., 2014:19).

### **6.3.3 Objective 3: To explore social support services that are needed for youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa**

According to the existing literature, preparing youths leaving the foster care system for independent living is critical in setting the groundwork for a successful transitioning from care to young adulthood (Böning & Ferreira, 2013:359). As a result, social workers should play a critical role in conducting periodic functional evaluations of a child's well-being, using standardised, valid, and reliable measurement tools like the care plan and permanency plan, which should give all foster children over the age of 15 the opportunity to participate in an independent living program (Department of Social Development, 2009:64). While the Children's Act 38 of 2005 indicates that adolescents should be prepared and supported when they leave care, it does not specify what kind of after-care services should be provided once they are released from the foster care system.

Furthermore, it is assumed that the successful transitioning of youths from the foster care system to young adulthood is dependent on the availability of a tailored foster care plan for each foster child, which should include specific objectives linked to identified needs, a structured time schedule for achieving objectives, and a designated person to carry out the plan (Böning & Ferreira, 2013:3). This is in accordance with section 157 (1) (a) (iii) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, which requires a social worker to create an individual care plan for each child in alternative care to ensure that their developmental requirements are satisfied (Republic of South Africa, 2006:178). According to the literature, youths leaving the foster care system need to be prepared, and transitional programmes should be provided during this vital period. Counselling, which may include family therapy, parenting, mediation, mentorship, a nutritional programme, physical and sexual and reproductive health care, vocational training, and

literacy should all be included in these after care programmes for a healthy shift to maturity (Department of Social Development, 2009:64).

However, the empirical data revealed that the majority of the participants had had no preparation prior to leaving care and were unaware of any services provided to young people leaving care. The empirical data showed that no planned services were provided to participants in order to prepare them for their exit from the foster care system, and that social workers were only providing educational support and life plans during foster care placements in other cases. The data also demonstrated that, while the social workers had minimal engagement with the participants, they had more interaction with the foster parents or care-givers.

#### **6.3.4 Suggestions that can be made for social workers to assist youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa**

Independent living skills are very important for youths coming from alternative care, in order for them to be able to thrive as adults. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 recognises independent living programmes. The project Lungisela (2010-2011), according to the available literature, was one of the programmes launched in South Africa to build independent living skills for the country's youth (Tanur, 2012:326). According to the project's findings, many youths who have been discharged from the provisions of the Children's Act of 2005 in the country face difficulties in achieving complete freedom (Tanur, 2012:326). There should be a focus on going beyond skills to connecting youths on a network of support and to places where they can access support to meet their different needs.

According to the data collected, the participants believe that social workers and care leavers should maintain a relationship. Continuous monitoring is required to ensure that they are in good hands. Foster children are already at a disadvantage in terms of supporting relationships because they are in the arrangement as a result of abuse or neglect as a result of the loss of a parental relationship (Bossett, 2016:7). As a result, social workers should play a key role in guaranteeing that youths leaving care successfully transition into young adulthood.

One of the proposals provided for social workers to assist and support care leavers for their future through educational support. According to the conclusions of the study, preparation techniques should be implemented sooner rather than later, before teenagers leave the foster care system, so that they can establish themselves and become accustomed to the system. According to research, the level of support for youth educational programmes may be utilised to push young people to make positive choices in their lives (Dworsky, 2017:1). The support that youths receive from their caregivers has a significant impact on their accomplishments.

Additionally, empowerment through skills is one of the suggestions discovered from the available literature and the research primary findings. According to the existing literature, many of these foster youths reach the age of 18 without the skills necessary to survive on their own, as they are typically unprepared to handle life's obstacles (Courtney, 2019:76; Havlicek et al., 2016:8). According to a study on the youths leaving care, about 30% of them were unable to settle in one location after leaving care, and many were in desperate need of social assistance (Keller et al., 2016:241). In addition, a quarter of them became parents, and nearly half of them suffered from health issues such as depression after leaving care (Keller et al., 2016:241). The availability of Some basic living skills and practical skills can help care leavers with the information they need to meet their goals and build confidence when facing challenges.

Social workers must act as champions for foster care leavers in the formulation and application of strategies that support them. As a result, care leavers who are ill-prepared for emergent young adulthood suffer with unmet academic needs, housing, job stability, financial safety, well-being, and involvement in illegal activities and substance misuse (Van Breda, 2018:16). Policies to support youths leaving the foster care system must be established and implemented. Policies should be designed to ensure that youths are established and should not encourage dependency. The issue of South African policies and legislations that support youth leaving care have been identified as a challenging one for social welfare services (Bond, 2018:32). Developing a better knowledge of the issues faced by young adults will lead to the development of programmes that will assist them in becoming productive adults, as well as ways in which the foster care system may improve its services and programmes to make the transition easier.

Despite the odds stacked against them, some of the foster children are able to escape the system and go on to have prosperous and independent lives. Along the process, these youths would have developed considerable resiliency, which is the ability to deal with and overcome life's tough challenges (Frazier & Richman, 2014:133). Children and young people who are mostly able to withstand adversity, will have a strong social support network. Mentorship programmes serve as an important role in preparing foster children for life once they leave the foster care system (Lindquist & Santavirta, 2014:75). Van Breda and Frimpong-Manso (2020:4) define resilience as a young person's ability to adapt and cope after leaving foster care. In preparation to leave the foster care system, youths can be assisted to develop their levels of resiliency through cultivating a spirit of positivity in them, working on enhancing their self-esteem, encouraging them to set goals in life and to be brave enough not to view life challenges as obstacles.

#### **6.3.5 Objective 4: To suggest recommendations on how to assist youths leaving kingship foster care early**

This objective was achieved by the recommendations based on the conclusions of the study as follows

##### **6.3.5.1 Key Findings**

**The key findings of the study are as follows:**

Policies and legislations that decide and govern the time frame in alternative care have a negative impact on them. According to the findings, every child was placed in care as a consequent of losing their parents, abused, neglected and abandoned. These children need of care and safety by the Commissioner of the Children`s Court inquiry and a court order was issued. When the children turned 18, the court's control over them ended and the Head of the Department of Social Development then extends the foster care placement of the foster child, based on the recommendations of the case manager or field social worker. This is done through section 176 of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2006:174), which states that, a person can remain under care up to when he/she reaches the age of 18 or it can be extended to

21 years on condition that the alternative caregiver is willing to take care of that person or if the person is willing to complete their studies.

The mainstream of the youths who participated in the study showed a great deal of resilience and a desire to carry on with their lives after leaving the foster care system, despite their difficulties. The findings found that the foster care age limit impeded many youths leaving care from completing their secondary education and training as required, as most of them persisted with secondary school beyond the age of 21 as a result of the different problems they had faced while in care. They continued with their secondary education without any support or financial support from the state. However, it must be noted that, many of the participants in the study shared that, they left the foster care system abruptly, without the financial or adult support or any other form of help they needed to effectively transition to young adulthood.

In addition, regardless of the difficulties they endured while living with their foster care family, the participants valued the opportunity that belonging to the family afforded them. The findings demonstrated that a sense of belonging to a family played crucial role in the lives of the foster children. As a result, even if their lives were not as perfect as they might have desired the majority of them shared that they felt safe and cared for by the foster care system.

Most participants in the study struggle to attain stable housing, which left them at a heightened risk of homelessness. It was found that, the majority of them did not own a home, as they were still living with other people, such as friends, the foster care family, renting rooms or were even homeless. The main reason for these challenges was the fact that they transitioned into adulthood with limited support, which hindered their successful transitioning to young adulthood. Many youths leaving the foster care system needed not only family support, but any sort of help, whether financial, educational, health care, or guidance, as they attempted to navigate the path to adulthood effectively, conferring to the study.

After leaving the foster care system, youths in the City of Johannesburg, Gauteng Province faced major obstacles as a result of financial and economic instability, which resulted in linked issues such as unemployment and homelessness. Furthermore, once they turned 18, their formal support system was terminated, and they lost access to statutory protection or services, the foster child grant, free health care, and

education. Individual experiences of getting out of foster care were, admittedly, either pleasant or negative, depending on how these adolescents viewed them.

## **6.4 Conclusions**

Foster care services are designed to safeguard and care for children and teens that have been exposed to trauma, have been orphaned, or have been subjected to any type of abuse (Atkinson, 2011:191). The existing South African foster care system, however, is not designed to promote the effective and successful transition of youths in foster care to adulthood, according to this study.

The crucial developmental requirements of adolescents/youths as they progress through a vital growth period are not adequately addressed by current policies and legislations that guide foster care services. It may be inferred that many young people leaving the foster care system are not receiving any kind of preparation service that would provide them with the skills and information needed to operate independently after they leave the foster care system. It can be inferred that designated social workers and foster children have insufficient interaction. As they grow up, most foster children become more stressed and depressed and are unable to share their experiences with their social workers, as they feel that their social workers interact more with their foster parents than with them.

Most youths leaving the foster care system face a variety of issues, including unemployment and homelessness, because they lack financial security and are thus prone to poverty. Inadequate social work support services and a lack of after-care programmes for youths leaving the foster care system, have a significant impact on the young person's transition to young adulthood. It may be concluded that, while youths leaving the foster care system have a variety of life experiences, the whole of their difficulties has not been exhaustively studied.

In conclusion, the absence of preparatory programmes for youths who are leaving the foster care system hampers their effective transition from foster care to young adulthood, as many of these youths exit foster care placement with few or no skills, little training and limited knowledge with which to support themselves during this critical growth period.

## **6.5 Recommendations**

In addressing the experiences of youths leaving the foster care system in the City of Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations can be made:

### **6.5.1 Implementation of preparatory and after-care programmes for youths leaving care**

Based on the various challenges that youth leaving the foster care system face, the Department of Social Development should encourage all child welfare organisations and social workers working within government and non-profit organisations to implement preparatory programmes to guaranteeing that care leavers are well ready for the process of leaving care and life after the foster care system.

To effectively respond to the needs of care leavers, social workers in various child welfare organisations, including government departments must enable transitional services and collaborate with other various stakeholders such as Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), Institutions of Higher Learning, Research Institutions, Civil Society and Private Sector. Mentorship, occupational training and skills, nutritional support, and reproductive and health care should all be included in the transition programmes (Department of Social Development, 2009:20).

### **6.5.2 Implementation of independent living services**

Youths who have reached the age of maturity but are not yet self-sufficient should have access to specific after care or transitional independent living services or programmes. Housing arrangements, financial assistance, and family networks should all be included in such services. Independent living plans should be included as one of the child protection benefits available to children in alternative care. Independent living programmes are typically offered to young people who are transitioning from adolescence to adulthood before turning eighteen. The goal of independent living programmes for foster children is to provide them with the opportunity to learn skills that will help them make a smooth transition from foster care to young adulthood

(Department of Social Development, 2009:26). This should be made easier by addressing developmental needs in the care and permanency plans, giving all foster children over the age of 15 the chance to engage in an independent living programme.

### **6.5.3 Provision of after-care and supervision services by social workers**

Following the foster care placement, these services are designed to provide supportive and therapeutic interventions to foster children and foster care families (Department of Social Development, 2012:38). These services include providing supervision through an intervention plan, monitoring foster care placements through activities like support visits to foster homes, and maintaining continual contact with foster children (Martin, 2015:22). These services are not being provided in a satisfactory manner, according to the findings.

The data demonstrated that social workers had little contact with the youths who were about to leave the foster care system. It was obvious that, due to their heavy caseloads and administrative constraints, social workers find it difficult to provide efficient after care and supervision services. This study suggests that the government, child welfare organisations and all other relevant stakeholders work together to build an enabling child welfare system that can deal with the rising number of foster care cases. The steady rise in foster care cases makes it difficult for social workers to provide adequate monitoring and follow-up for young people who are at vital stages of development.

The government should work to address the challenges that social workers face, such as high caseloads and inadequate working tools, and develop effective strategies that will transform the social welfare sector to be able to deal with low morale and high staff turnover, which result in social workers' inability to provide support services to children. This has also been recommended by Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017:177) when they investigated the challenges faced by foster care services are linked to socioeconomic programs by statutory social workers.

### **6.5.4 Future research**

Future studies are also a necessity in order to investigate the experiences of youths leaving non-kinship foster care; further research has to be done on a larger scale. Furthermore, research can be conducted by listening to stories of youths who have



positively or unsuccessfully exited the foster care system to examine the positive and negative (Tanur, 2012:326) outcomes of the foster care system. More research can also be done to investigate if the foster child grant is effective in fulfilling all the needs of children in foster care. (Dhludhlu and Lombard 2017:166) noted that, the majority of foster parents are jobless, and they are dependent on a small foster child grant and its termination plunges the youth and their families back into a cycle of dire poverty. This shows that, even though the foster child grant is available, without other sustainable empowerment benefits to the youths, the grant cannot be a sustainable means out of poverty.

## **6.6 Limitations**

Every research study has its own set of limitations that can influence the study's outcome. These are the flaws that impeded the research project. The limitations to the study were:

- The study only used a qualitative research design to acquire data from the 23 participants hence the findings cannot be extended to a larger population, but they can serve as a starting point for further investigation.
- This study only looked at the obstacles faced by youths leaving care, not the positive results they had after leaving the system.
- Telephone interviews had their own hindrances of not giving room for observations and non-verbal communication of respondents.
- Language barrier during interviews was a challenge on its own since the researcher is a non-South African.
- Poor network connection was also another limitation that contributed to some delays during data collection process.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

The researcher was able to provide answers to the study's research question after achieving the study's aims and objectives. The empirical findings revealed information

about youth's experiences while living in kinship foster care and after they had left the foster care system. Poverty, rejection, homelessness, financial instability, social issues, and unemployment were among the challenges that the youths experienced after leaving the foster care system, according to the research. The empirical data also revealed that most youths who leave the foster care system are forced to do so by the age of maturity, and that the majority of them suffer through this important era without being well-prepared or empowered to face life outside of foster care system. However, the majority of the youths who took part in the study showed willingness to carry on with their lives despite their difficulties.

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## **ADDENDA**

### **ADDENDUM A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET- CARE LEAVERS**

Ethics clearance reference number: 48112542\_CREC\_2021

Research permission reference number (if applicable):

Date:

**Dear Participant**

#### **SUBJECT: THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY YOUTH LEAVING KINSHIP FOSTER CARE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

My name is Catherine Zimudzi, a Master of Social Work Student with UNISA. I am inviting you to participate in a study entitled **THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY YOUTH LEAVING KINSHIP FOSTER CARE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

#### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the challenges experienced by youth leaving kinship foster care in South Africa.

#### **WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?**

As a youth leaving kinship foster care where you had care, support and protection from foster parents, you are adjusting to taking responsibility for yourself; there are some life challenges that may affect your adjustment and the adjustment of other young adults like you. While a lot of literature is known about the challenges experienced by youth exiting unrelated foster care and other forms of alternative care, like Child and Youth Care Centres, there is very little, if any information on the challenges experienced by youth who are leaving kinship foster care. I therefore, kindly request you to participate in this research which aims to fill the literature gap in this area. This may enable you to influence future decisions to be made for the better support and adjustment of youth leaving kinship foster care. Please kindly participate in this research.

#### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

This research entails responding to questions which Mrs Catherine Zimudzi will ask which are related to the challenges that you are experiencing as you try to adjust after



leaving kinship foster care. The information may not be used against you or your former foster parents, it is purely for academic purposes. You are requested to respond freely without compulsion, you are free to refuse to answer certain questions which you may feel are uncomfortable to answer. All this information shall be kept anonymous and confidential.

### **CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?**

Yes, you are welcome to withdraw from participating in this research at any stage of the process.

### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

By participating in the study, you will, you will contribute to the gathering of important information which may be used to influence decisions and policy on the plight of future youths exiting kinship foster care. You are also contributing to literature within this field which will be used by future generations to lobby for better services for the youth to adjust better after exiting kinship foster care.

### **ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?**

There will be no negative consequences as a result of your participation in this research. You will remain anonymous throughout the research process. In the event that you may need debriefing services after your participation, the service will be available for free.

### **WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

All the information that you provide to the researcher shall remain confidential. It may not be shared in any way that may lead to your identification as the source of the information. The transcriber and editor who shall be used in preparing the data have no access to your biographical information.

### **HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?**

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a locked safe at her house. Electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. After the five-year period hard copies will be shredded and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of a relevant software programme.

**WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

You shall not receive any payment directly or indirectly for your participation in this research. Your participation is purely voluntary.

**HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?**

The study being undertaken has received the necessary clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work (SRC), the College Research and Ethics Committee (CREC). Approval letters may be made available upon your request.

**HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?**

If you wish to be informed of the final research findings or contact the researcher about any aspect of the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work (SRC) relating to this study, please contact, Catherine Zimudzi on [chzimudzi@gmail.com](mailto:chzimudzi@gmail.com) or 084 224 0200

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact the chairperson of the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work (SRC), Dr M Mathebane at 012 429 3854/ [mathems@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mathems@unisa.ac.za).

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

---

Catherine Zimudzi

**ADDENDUM B: CONSENT FORM**

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name and surname), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without being penalised in any way (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal, publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

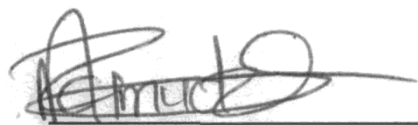
I agree to the recording of the semi-structured interviews.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (Please print)

Participant's Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname.....(please print)



Researcher's signature.....Date.....

## **ADDENDUM C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

Please provide the following details about yourself:

1. Researcher notes participant's gender
2. May you please state your age?
3. What is your highest academic qualification?
4. How long have you been living out of kinship foster care?
5. Are you currently employed?
6. Would you like to share with me about your marital status?

### **SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Tell me about your experiences of kinship foster care?
2. What are the challenges you have faced since you have left kinship foster care?
3. Would you say being under kinship foster care has adequately prepared you to live an independent life?
  - Explain your answer.
4. What kind of support services do you think should be rendered to youth prior leaving kinship foster care?
5. What kind of support services do you think needs to be provided to the youth after leaving kinship foster care?

## **ADDENDUM D: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

This agreement is between: Catherine Zimudzi and the research participant for the research project entitled: **Investigating the challenges faced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa.**

I, Catherine Zimudzi, agree to:

1. Keep all the information from interviews private and confidential. I will not discuss the research information with any other individual.
2. Safely keep all the information collected in this study in my possession.
3. Destroy all the information from the study that may reveal the identities of those who took part in the study.
4. Adhere to all the requirements relating to the safe storage and keeping of records both physically or electronically which include, but are not limited to, file encryption, password protection or secure electronic transfers.
5. Not allow any other individual access to raw research information under any circumstances.

Researcher:

Catherine Zimudzi

Signature:

Date:

**Research participant:**

(Print Name)

Signature:

Date:

## ADDENDUM E: ETHICS REVIEW LETTER



### COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

23 February 2021

Dear Ms C ZIMUDZI

NHREC Registration # :  
Rec-240816-052  
CREC Reference # :  
48112542\_CREC\_CHS\_2021

**Decision:**  
Ethics Approval from 23 February  
2021 to 23 February 2024

Principal Researcher: Ms C ZIMUDZI ([48112542@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:48112542@mylife.unisa.ac.za))

Supervisor: Mr S Dhludhlu ([dhludsl@unisa.ac.za](mailto:dhludsl@unisa.ac.za))

**Title: *The challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care in South Africa***

**Degree Purpose: Masters**

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The *Low risk application* was reviewed by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, on 23 February 2021 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the



University of South Africa  
Pretter Street, Maudensiek Rivier, City of Tshwane  
PO Box 392 UNISA, 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

**ADDENDUM F: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH TO DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY- DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ethics clearance reference number: 48112542\_CREC\_2021

12 Crozier Street

Townsvlew

05 April 2021

The Provincial Head  
Department of Social Development  
Johannesburg

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: REQUEST TO CONTACT RESEARCH ON FORMER KINSHIP FOSTER CARE YOUTH UNDER YOUR DATABASE.**

I hereby request your permission to have access to the names and contact details of former kinship foster care youth under your database with the intention of interviewing them for a research study. I am conducting a study on the topic, **Challenges experienced by youth leaving kinship foster care in South Africa**, with the University Of South Africa (UNISA). I am currently a registered social worker working in Johannesburg. The information for the research will be used for purely academic purposes and all ethical considerations will be observed during the study.

Yours faithfully

Catherine Zimudzi  
Researcher

## ADDENDUM G: DSD PERMISSION LETTER



Enquiries: Dr. Sello Mokoena  
Tel: 082 331 0786  
File no.: 03/04/21

Dear C Zimudzi

**RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Thank you for your application to conduct research within the Gauteng Department of Social Development.


Your application to conduct research on **“The Challenges Experienced by Youths Leaving Foster Care in South Africa”** [University of South Africa] has been considered and approved for support by the Department as it was found to be beneficial to the Department’s vision and mission. The approval is subject to the Department’s terms and conditions as stated on the GDSD application form.

You have permission to interview officials and beneficiaries within facilities regulated by the department, conduct observations and access relevant documents where necessary.

May I take this opportunity to wish you well on the journey you are about to embark on.

We look forward to a value adding research and a fruitful co-operation.

With thanks

  
**Dr. Sello Mokoena**  
Director: Research and Policy Coordination  
Date: 06/05/2021



## ADDENDUM H: RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL

### RISK ASSESSMENT

Complete the Research Ethics Risk Assessment by answering each question below. If you answer “YES” to any of the items, the outcome of the risk assessment is considered to vary from a low to high-risk level. The UNISA research ethics review system is based on the UNISA Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Research Ethics Risk Assessment. If you are an external applicant, a copy of this document can be requested from [urerc@unisa.ac.za](mailto:urerc@unisa.ac.za); internal applicants can click on this [link](#) to obtain the document. If you are unsure about the meaning of any of these concepts, please consult your supervisor or project leader.

1	Does your research include the direct involvement of any of the following groups of participants ( <i>Refer to Section 4 in the SOP</i> )	YES	NO
<i>Place an 'x' in box [if yes, provide details in the space allocated for comments]</i>			
	a) Children or young people under the age of 18 Include the parental consent letter and explain how assent will be obtained in section 6.1 of the application form.		x
	b) Persons living with disabilities ( <i>physical, mental and/or sensory</i> ) <sup>1</sup>		x
	c) Persons that might be considered vulnerable, thus finding it difficult to make independent and/or informed decisions for socio, economic, cultural, political and/or medical reasons ( <i>such as the elderly, the dying, unconscious patients, prisoners, those in dependant relationships, women considered to be vulnerable due to pregnancy, victimisation, etc.</i> )		x
	d) Communities that might be considered vulnerable, thus finding it difficult to make independent and informed decisions for socio, economic, cultural, political and/or medical reasons		x
	e) UNISA employees, students or alumni Indicate that you will apply for permission at the UNISA Research Permission Subcommittee (RPCS) in section 3.1 of the application form to involve any of these participant groups in the proposed research.		x
	f) Persons whose native language differs from the language used for the research Attach the translated data collection instrument(s), interview guide(s), participant information sheet and consent form in the participants' first language, as well as a letter from the language practitioner certifying the credibility of the translated material. The services of an interpreter may need to be secured for fieldwork activities.		x
	g) There is likelihood that a person or definable group will be identified during the research process and it is likely to be of concern.		x
	h) Other <sup>2</sup> . Please describe.		

Comments: If you selected any option above, please describe it in detail here.

2	Does your research involve any of the following types of activity that could potentially place the participants at risk of harm?	YES	NO
<i>Place an 'x' in the box provided [if yes, provide details in the space allocated for comments]</i>			
	a) Collection, use or disclosure of personal, identifiable information <u>without</u> the consent of the individual or institution that is in possession of the required information (with the exception of aggregated data or data from official databases in the public domain)		x
	b) Collection, use or disclosure of personal, identifiable information <u>directly from participants with consent</u>		x
	c) Personal, identifiable information to be collected about individuals from available records (e.g. employee records, student records, medical records, etc.) and/or archives		x
	b) Participants being exposed to questions which may be experienced as stressful or upsetting, or to procedures which may have unpleasant or harmful side effects		x
	e) Participants being required to commit an act which might diminish self-respect or cause them to experience shame, embarrassment, or regret		x
	f) Any form of deception of participants, concealment or covert observation		x
	d) Examining potentially sensitive or contentious issues that could cause harm to the participants		x
	g) Research which may be prejudicial to participants		x
	f) Research which may intrude on the rights of third parties or people not directly involved		x
	f) Audio-visual recordings of participants which may be of a sensitive or compromising nature (with or without consent)		x
	g) Disclosure of the findings of the research could place participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, professional or personal relationships		x
	h) Any form of physically invasive diagnostic, therapeutic or medical procedure such as blood collection, an exercise regime, body measurements or physical examination		x
	k)*Psychological inventories / scales / tests		x
	q) Other. Please describe		
Comments: The respondents are youth adult exiting kinship foster care. They are legally able to make informed decision without compulsion			

*\*Please add details on copyright issues related to standardised psychometric tests and registration at the HPSCA of test administrator if test administration*

is in South Africa or of an equivalent board if administration is non-South African.

<b>3</b>	Does your research involve any activity that could potentially place the researcher(s) at risk of harm?	YES	x NO
	a) There is a possible risk of physical threat, abuse or psychological trauma as a result of actual or threatened violence or the nature of what is disclosed during the interaction		x
	b) There is a possible risk of being in a compromising situation, in which there might be accusations of improper behaviour		x
	c) There is an increased exposure to risks in everyday life and social interactions, such as working with hazardous materials or sensitive information		x
Comments:	The participants shall be interviewed by the researcher at their work places which are safe places where children stay.		

<b>4</b>	Does any of the following apply to your research project?	YES	NO
<i>Place an 'x' in the box provided [if yes, provide details in the space allocated for comments]</i>			
	a) Participants will be offered inducements or incentives to encourage their involvement in the research		x
	b) Participants will incur financial obligations as a result of their participation in the research		x
	c) The researcher(s) can anticipate financial gains from involvement in the research (i.e. contract research)		x
	d) Any other potential conflict of interests, real or perceived, that could be seen as compromising the researcher(s) professional judgement in carrying out or reporting on the research		x
	e) Research will make use of Unisa laboratories		x
	f) Research will be funded by UNISA or by an external funding body that could compromise the integrity of the research project		x
Comments: If you selected any option above, please describe it in detail here.			

<b>5</b>	Guided by the information above, classify your research project based on the anticipated degree of risk. <i>[The researcher completes this section. The ERC critically evaluates this benefit-risk analysis to protect participants' rights]</i> <i>Place an 'x' in the box provided</i>			
Category 1 Negligible No to indirect human participant involvement. If you choose this option, stop completing this form and contact URERC@unisa.ac.za	Category 2 Low risk Direct human participant involvement. The only foreseeable risk of harm is the potential for minor	x	Category 3 Medium risk Direct human participant involvement. Research that poses a risk above the everyday norm, including	Category 4 High risk Direct human participant involvement. A real or foreseeable risk of harm including physical,

		discomfort or inconvenience, thus research that would not pose a risk above the everyday norm.	physical, psychological and social risks. Steps can be taken to minimise the likelihood of the event occurring.	psychological and social risk which may lead to a serious adverse event if not managed responsibly.	
<p><b>(a) Briefly justify your choice/classification</b>  The research is targeting young adults above the legal age of majority, 18 years and above who are able to accept or refuse to participate.</p>					
<p><b>(b) In medium and high-risk research, <u>indicate the potential benefits</u> of the study for the research participants and/or other entities.</b></p>					
<p><b>(c) In medium and high-risk research, <u>indicate how the potential risks of harm will be mitigated</u> by explaining the steps that will be taken to minimise the likelihood of the event occurring (e.g. referral for counselling, debriefing, etc.).</b></p>					

## **ADDENDUM I: RESEARCHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM**

### **RESEARCHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**Research title: THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY YOUTHS LEAVING KINSHIP FOSTER CARE IN SOUTH AFRICA.**

**Researcher:** Catherine Zimudzi

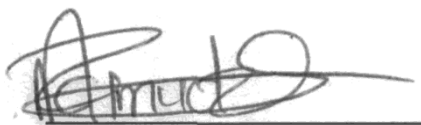
**Student number:** 48112542

Hereby, I, Catherine Zimudzi, passport number; CN909313, as a master's student in the Department of Social Work, acknowledge that I am aware of and familiar with the stipulations and contents of the:

- Unisa Research Policy
- Unisa Ethics Policy
- Unisa IP Policy

and that I shall conform to and abide by these policy requirements.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine Zimudzi', written over a horizontal line.

Date:

**ADDENDUM J: DEBRIEFING LETTER**

15 Enkeldoring Street  
Brackendowns  
Alberton  
1448

22 September 2020

The Supervisor  
Unisa

Dear Sir

**RE: PROFESSIONAL DEBRIFING FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS DEALING WITH CATHERINE ZIMUDZI FOR THE TOPIC THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY YOUTHS LEAVING KINSHIP FOSTER CARE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

This serves to confirm that I am a qualified and registered Social Worker with the South African Council for Social Service Professions. I have five years post graduate social work experience specialising in counselling. I have an agreement with Mrs Catherine Zimudzi to render debriefing services to her research participants for the topic, **THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY YOUTHS LEAVING KINSHIP FOSTER CARE IN SOUTH AFRICA**. I am therefore both willing and able to render the debriefing services for the research participants. Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned for any further information related to this matter.

Yours faithfully

Jones Majoni  
10-43501  
0840846369

## **ADDENDUM K: DEBRIEFER'S CV**

### **CURRICULUM VITAE FOR JONES MAJONI**

15 Enkeldoring Street, Brackendowns, Alberton, 2190

Mobile Number: 084 084 6369

[majonijones@yahoo.com](mailto:majonijones@yahoo.com)

#### **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Surname	Majoni
Forename	Jones
Date of Birth	23 November 1984
Gender	Male
Marital Status	Married
Languages	English, IsiZulu and Shona
SACSSP registration number	10-43501
Passport number	BN981078 <b>(with valid work permit)</b>
Driver's License	Code 10

#### **SUMMARY OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

1. Bachelor of Social Work Honours degree	UNISA	2016
2. General Certificate of Education – Advanced Level		2005
3. General Certificate of Education- Ordinary level		2002

#### **Summary of profile**

I am a qualified and registered Senior Social worker with passion and vast experience in child protection and community development. I have two years post graduate work experience in the NGO sector, as a Social Worker focusing on Child Protection. I am registered with South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) and. I have a valid South African driver's license and work permit.

## PROFESSIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE

1. Organisation : Gauteng Provincial Association for Persons with Disabilities

Positions : Social Worker

Period : January 2019 to date

Duties

- Community awareness and empowerment on the needs of children with disabilities
- Identifying children with disability who are at risk and making referrals for preventative services
- Advocating for the rights of children with disabilities for resource allocation and **access** to suitable services
- Compiling reports to Children's Courts for cases of child abuse related to children with disabilities making recommendations in the best interests of those children
- Running support groups for parents of children with disabilities
- Referrals of children with disabilities to other service providers and assisting them with enrolment in the correct schools
- Chairing of multi-disciplinary case conferences for cases of children with abilities facing abuse
- Supervision of social work and social auxiliary work students on practical placements
- Counselling of children in distress
- Counselling of family members and extended families with psycho-social challenges

2. Organisation : Johannesburg Child Welfare Society

Position : Social Worker

Period : January 2017 to December 2018

Duties

- Child Protection through early intervention and family support to avoid removals of children from families
- Assessment of reported child abuse cases, and intervention through removals to places of safety when necessary
- Home visits and assessment of suitability for placement of children for place of safety and foster care



- Compilation of statutory reports to the Children's Courts and attending court proceedings leading evidence at Children's Courts.
- Compiling statutory reports to the canalisation section of the Department of Social Development
- Assessment of the developmental and therapeutic needs of children and drawing individual Development Plans (IDPs).
- Individual therapy/Counselling of children and their families as well as making necessary referrals to places further therapy and family reconstruction services
- Group and family therapy with children and their families
- Developing a sustainable exit plan for all children in residential and foster care to ensure re-integration into the main stream society.
- Monitoring the progress of children at school and closely liaising with schools for the proper enrolment of every child in an appropriate school and planning for psychologist assessments when necessary.
- Family reunification services to families and children placed in alternative care
- Advocacy for children's rights and child protection through managing campaigns in community against child abuse.
- Supervision of social work and social auxiliary work students on practical placements
- Participating in multi-disciplinary case conferences

3. Organisation : Boksburg Child Welfare Society

Position : Student Social Worker

Period : January 2016 to October 2016

Duties

- Assisting with intakes and opening of files for new cases of child abuse, neglect and abandonment
- Assisting with conducting home visits to assess children's living circumstances for reported cases
- Assisting the Social Worker with compiling reports to the children's court
- Attending Children's Court proceedings with the social worker
- Individual counselling and support to children in distress
- Group work for support purposes for neglected and children at risk
- Community awareness campaigns on child abuse, neglect and abandonment
- Any other duties delegated by the Social Worker

-Participating in multi-disciplinary case conferences

4. Organisation : St Mary's Children's Home  
Position : Student Social Worker  
Period : January 2015 to October 2015

#### Duties

- Individual assessment and counselling of children
- Group work with children in residential care
- Empowering children and staff members on child abuse
- Attending parents' meetings at school representing the children
- Assisting with compiling progress reports for children
- Assisting with the compiling of developmental plans for children.
- Clients intakes, assessment and referrals
- Participating in multi-disciplinary case conferences
- Any other duties delegated by the social worker



**ADDENDUM L: LANGUAGE EDITOR LETTER**  
**Kim N Smit Editorial Services**

**Declaration of Professional Editing**

19 April 2022

This letter serves to confirm that Catherine Zimudzi submitted a dissertation to myself for editing.

The dissertation is entitled, **'THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY YOUTHS LEAVING KINSHIP FOSTER CARE IN SOUTH AFRICA'**.

The following aspects were edited:

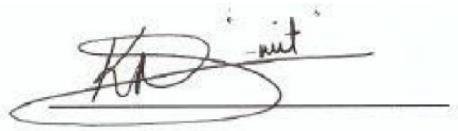
- Spelling
- Grammar
- Consistency of layout
- Sentence structure
- Logical sequencing
- References (Reference checking involves proofreading and perhaps some editing with regards to the simple formatting of the references into the referencing style required i.e. changing the order of the elements - author, date, title, series, place, publisher, journal, volume, issue, pagination etc.)

My involvement was restricted to language use and spelling, completeness and consistency, referencing style (in-text), and formatting of headings and captions. I did no structural re-writing of the content and did not influence the academic content in any way.

The content and formatting of the final document submitted for examination remains the responsibility of the student.

Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Smit', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

Kim Smit

**Tel: +27 (0)78 493 6554**

**Email: [kimnsmit@gmail.com](mailto:kimnsmit@gmail.com)**

**Member of the Freelance panel for the University of South Africa**

**Member of the Freelance panel for the University of Pretoria**

## ADDENDUM M: TURNITIN REPORT

