

The challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to  
undocumented children

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

at the

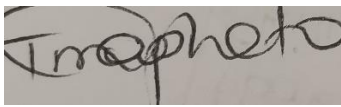
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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## Declaration

I **Mabolotse Thabang Mapheto** declare that the research report titled “**THE CHALLENGES FACED BY STATUTORY SOCIAL WORKERS IN RENDERING FOSTER CARE SERVICES TO UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN**” is my own work. In addition; I acknowledge that all the sources that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted before for a degree at any other institution.

A rectangular image showing a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature appears to be 'Mapheto' written in a cursive style.

Signed

Date: 11 September 2023

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all who contributed to and supported me towards the successful completion of this study.

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## **ABSTRACT**

An increase of undocumented children remains a major challenge worldwide. In South Africa, there are several undocumented children who are found to be in need of care and protection. Therefore, South Africa designed the Children's Act no 38 of 2005 which seeks to ensure that the basic and the financial needs of all children are met. A foster care service is designed to provide an alternative care for children who have been found to be in need of care and protection as prescribed in Section 150 (1) of the Children's Act no 38 of 2005. The aim of this study was to investigate the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. The study was qualitative led by exploratory, descriptive, and contextual designs. The sample was drawn using a non-probability sampling technique. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule which was facilitated by an in-depth interview.

The target population for the study was all the statutory social workers who were employed at Ekurhuleni Region, Gauteng Department of Social Development. The target population included all statutory social workers who were currently rendering or had previously rendered foster care services to undocumented children. The sample of the study was the statutory social workers who had a minimum of two years' working experiences in rendering foster care services to undocumented children and working for the Ekurhuleni Region, Gauteng Department of Social Development. For data analysis, the researcher followed Tesch's eight steps. To ensure that data is verified trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability were used as described by Lincoln and Guba. Ethical considerations were adhered to, in order to prevent any form of harm on the well-being of the participants.

The findings of the study revealed that statutory social workers through statutory services should be able to link foster children with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. In addition, the findings further revealed that statutory social workers should also be able to link foster children and their foster parents to SASSA. Furthermore, the findings of the study confirmed that there are current services that are sought by the foster parents or caregivers of the undocumented children. Finally, the study established that there are challenges experienced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

**Keywords: Challenges, social workers, statutory social workers, foster care services, and undocumented children.**

## ACRONYMS

ACRONYM	DESCRIPTION
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
BSW	Bachelor of Social Work
CYCC	Child and Youth Care Centres
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DSD	Department of Social Development
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
NDP	National Development Plan
NPO	Non-profit Organisation
SACSSP	South African Council for Social Service Professions
SAPS	South African Police Services
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America

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## **1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an overview on the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children in Ekurhuleni District Municipality, South Africa. In addition, the chapter discusses the background and context, problem statement, rationale and significance, goal, objectives, research questions for the study. The chapter also provides the assumptions that the researcher had before conducting the study, clarifications of key concepts and structure of the dissertation.

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

Globally, the lack of documentation of individuals remains a big challenge (International Organization for Migration, 2019:21). Although there are other factors that contribute to this challenge, immigration is one of the reasons that lead people to being undocumented (International Organization for Migration, 2019:21). There are positive and negative factors of migration as alluded by the Department of Social Development (DSD) (2021:4). It is further stated that migration related factors may cause adult and child foreign nationals to relocate to other countries in search of a better life for themselves. The United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017:1) claims that the push and the pull socioeconomic factors contribute to migration. However, although it is known that children form part of the migration population, authorities globally, tend to neglect their best interests. Often migrant children move to other countries without relevant legal documentation.

According to Platform for International cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (2015:7), there are no reliable statistical records for documented or undocumented child migrants in the European Union. The report highlights that data on undocumented migrants is limited and methods of data collection on irregular and migration needs to be developed and implemented on the European Union. The report also explains that the figures for undocumented migrants are not captured in the socioeconomic and administrative statistics or in a way that will ensure their country of origin is identified. Undocumented migrants' data is usually collected by some academics and Non-profit Organisations (NPO).

The International Organisation for Migration (2019:231) further explains that, children are also affected by migration due to various socio-economic and political reasons. In the past decades, South Africa has been the main destination for many migrants from neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Botswana. Some of these migrants enter South Africa without valid legal documents, hence the number of undocumented migrants in the country is unknown. There are several organisations whose primary goal is to assist undocumented migrants, namely, Kopanang Africa against Xenophobia, Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, and Kids Haven.

Gaun (2019:2) and Educator for Fair Consideration (EFC) define the term “undocumented children” in the South African and American context. Smith (2021:3) also identified undocumented children within the context of the European Union. In the South African context, it is confirmed that the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) is mandated to implement the Immigration Act No 13 of 2002 for foreign nationals who enter the borders of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) (Gaun, 2019:2). It is further argued that the ability to register the birth of a child is dependent on their parents’ legal or documentation status (Gaun, 2019:2). The challenges experienced by undocumented children, relate to unclear legal frameworks and logistics in obtaining documentation to legalise their stay in South Africa. The researcher is therefore of the opinion that the American and South African definitions of “undocumented children” are similar because they both stem from the Immigration Act and the Birth and Death Acts of both countries.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa highlights that “every child has the right to a name and a nationality from birth” (Republic of South Africa, 1996:11). This is in line with various international policies/legislations, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). These international policies/ legislations imply that the most important basic right is the child’s right to a name and nationality is the most important basic right that should be afforded to every child globally (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, 2015:8). In South Africa, this is regulated by the Children’s Act no 38 of 2005, which identifies a child as someone who is below the age of 18 years (Republic of South Africa, 2006:12). International Organization for Migration

(2019:231) considers a child as someone who is below the age of 18 years unless under certain special circumstances, per country.

The Births and Deaths Registration Act 51 of 1992 states that, every birth and death that occurs within South Africa should be reported to the DHA (Republic of South Africa, 1992:6). World Health Organisation (WHO) also suggests that the DHA must be stationed at public hospitals to assist biological parents to register the birth of their new-born babies before the babies are discharged from hospital (Statistics South Africa StatsSA, 2018:18). Failure to report such an event is regarded as a criminal offence.

According to Gaun (2019:1), despite that the recording of the births and deaths must be done immediately to the DHA, the reality is that there are many foreign nationals who fails to report such events and they are often found without valid and relevant identity documents. Owing to some migrants' failure to register the births and deaths within the country, there is no accurate statistics of undocumented people in South Africa (Gaun, 2019:1). Since being undocumented is a criminal offence, most undocumented foreign nationals do not contact local authorities because they fear being discriminated against and may be subjected to many other negative consequences for being in the country illegally.

However, several amendments were made to the Birth and Deaths Registration Act 51 of 1992 to ensure that majority of the population in South Africa is documented. According to the Republic of South Africa (2010:8), notice of birth of abandoned children who have not been registered at the DHA shall be given at the Department. This must be done by a social works or any authorities after an enquiry in terms of the Children's Act no 38 of 2005. The Birth and Deaths Registration Act no 51 of 1992 also stipulates that provided that the parents of the child are traced after registration of birth, the particulars of the child should be correctly reflected to include their biological parents. It further states that the notice of birth of an orphaned child does not list any persons contemplated in terms of Section 9(1) of the Act and it shall be given by a social worker after an enquiry in terms of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 is completed.

The Grahamstown High court has declared unconstitutional, section 10 of the Act insofar as it does not allow unmarried fathers to register the birth of their children

(Centre for child law and others vs the Director General of the Department of Home Affairs, Minister of Department of Home Affairs, Minzile Lawrence Naki and Dimitrila Marie Ndoya other unreported case 319/2018, 19 May 2019). It is highlighted that the difficulties in obtaining documentation by migrants including undocumented and unaccompanied children, make it difficult for them to be integrated into the South African society (UN Refugee Agency, 2021:190). In addition, it might be difficult for authorities to assist children who documentation.

The (eNews Channel Africa, 2020) Lunchtime television news programme reported that the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2020, South African Police Service (SAPS) captured and arrested a group of 16 undocumented Mozambican minors (under the age of 16 years). The 16 were arrested in Tshwane District Municipality during the police operation “O kae molao”, translated as “Where is the Law”. It was further reported that, these minors were referred to the DHA for processing and to be deported back to Mozambique by the members of the South African Police Services (SAPS). However, the researcher believes that these children should have been regarded to need care and protection in terms of Section 150 of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005. The matter of these undocumented minors should have been brought to the children’s court that falls within the jurisdiction of the minors in question as stipulated in Section 14 of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2006:26).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the Children’s Act highlight that it is always vital to consider the best interest of the child in matters regarding children (Republic of South Africa, 1996:12; Republic of South Africa, 2006:20). This is affirmed by South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, which states that undocumented children should not be discriminated because they do not have birth certificates (Republic of South Africa, 1996:44). The DSD’s 2009 guidelines on separated and unaccompanied children outside their country of origin which complement the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 by highlighting that, social workers who are employed by DSD should presume that “undocumented children” are children in need of care and protection, as stipulated by the Children’s Act no 38 of 2005 (DSD, 2009:87).

In addition, a judgement in the Centre for Child Law, the school governing body of Phakamisa high school and 37 children vs the Minister of the Department of Basic Education, Member of Executive Committee (MEC) of the Department of Basic

Education, Superintendent General of the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education, Minister of the Department of Home Affairs and the Director General of the Department of Home Affairs and, the Eastern Cape High Court on case no 2840/2017, ordered that all children within the Republic of South Africa are entitled to have basic education regardless of their legal status in South Africa (Centre for Child Law and others v Minister of Basic Education and other unreported case 2840/2019, 12 December 2019).

The researcher can conclude that, the judgment of the above court case created a precedent in which the Department of Basic Education (DBE) can no longer exclude undocumented children from being admitted into the schooling system. The case has further affected over a million of the undocumented children who were awaiting admission into public schools, since excluded because they were undocumented (Centre for child law and others vs the Minister of basic Education and other unreported case 2840/2019, 12 December 2019). The researcher argues that the judgement of this court case complements section seven (7) of the Children's Act no 38 of 2005 and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa which highlights that the best interest of children should be always regarded as paramount in matters concerning children within South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 2006:20; Republic of South Africa, 1996:12)

Noteworthy, many countries in the world including South Africa utilise foster care as one form of temporary alternative care, to assist children found to be in need of care and protection (Manukuza, 2013:1). According to Van der Walt (2018:615), foster care like other forms of alternative care, is used when the child must be removed from the care of a biological parent and placed in a suitable prospective foster parent.

The Department of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (2018:16) highlighted that foster care is important because it ensures that children grow up in a stable, safe, and caring family environment. According to Department of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (2018:15), in the context of Ghana, affirms the definition of foster care composed of the following concepts:

- Foster care is formal,
- Foster care is planned,

- Foster care is time limited,
- The most important resource is the screened foster parents and their families.

According to Section 180 (1) (a) (b) of the Children's Act no 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2006:91-92), "a child is placed in foster care if he/she is placed in the care of a person who is not the parent or guardian of the child because of-

- a. An order from court; or
- b. The transfer in terms of Section 171 of the Children's Act no 38 of 2005.

In subsection (2) (a) (b) foster care exclude the placement of a child in-

- a. Temporary care; or
- b. In the care of a Child and Youth Care Centre

Subsection (3) (a) (b) (c) indicates that children's court may place a child in foster care-

- a. With the person who is not a family member of a child
- b. With a person who is not a parent or a guardian of a child
- c. In registered cluster foster care scheme"

In the South African context, foster care services are usually offered by statutory social workers employed by DSD and Non-Profit Organisations (NPO) under the programme intake and field (Public Service Vacancy Circular 11, 2020:31). According to the Department of Social Development (2013a:29), services are rendered at different level of intervention which are preventive, early intervention and after care services to improve the social functioning and quality of life of the beneficiaries. Screening, intake, assessment, intervention, planning and contracting, actual intervention, evaluation and termination is the generic service delivery model and generic intervention process (Department of Social Development, 2013a:39).

Foster Care Progress report (2017:4) report that, by October 2017 there were 478158 children in South Africa that were receiving foster care services. As stated earlier in this section undocumented children are presumed to be children in need of care and protection hence, they are entitled to be offered foster care services by the statutory social worker. However, the researcher argues that it is difficult to accept that there is an exact known number of undocumented children receiving foster care services.



According to the National Child Care and Protection Policy (2019:56), the objective of foster care is to “...minimise the impact of the harm experienced by the child which led to the finding of the child being in need of care and protection, to ensure the ongoing development of the child to his or her full potential by strengthening the child’s capacities and resilience, and to restore the child to a permanent, nurturing and responsive parental or family-based care environment”. As alluded by the Department of Social Welfare the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (2018:17), the goal of foster care is to provide a child with temporary and stable foster care family until they move to a permanent home. The report further highlights that the functions of foster care services are as follows:

- Recruit and develop database of foster care services.
- Identify, access and place children who need care and protection.
- Provide an ongoing supervision and support services to foster families.
- Facilitate reunification of foster children with their biological families or another permanency placement that include adoption.
- Monitor the effective implementation of foster care services.

As highlighted in Section 181(a) (b) (c) of the Children’s Act no 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2006:92), “the purpose of foster is as follows:

- a. To protect and nurture children by providing a safe, healthy environment with positive support.
- b. Promote goals of permanency planning, first towards family reunification, or by connecting children to other safer nurturing family relationships intended to last a lifetime.
- c. Respect the individual and family by demonstrating a respect of cultural, ethnic and community diversity”.

According to the Department of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (2018:18), the guiding principles of foster care are:

- The best interest of the child.
- Preference for the child to be kept with the parent or guardian or relatives.
- Planned approaches to foster care.
- Placement of the child in foster care.

- Preservation of family ties.
- Non-discrimination.
- Duration of foster care placement.
- Number of children per foster care family.
- Rights and responsibilities of the child in foster care.

Foster care services should be offered after the statutory social worker has conducted their investigation guided by the Children`s Act no 38 of 2005. The current study is based on the premises that statutory social workers also need to ensure that undocumented children are also protected like any other child as stipulated in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the Children`s Act.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Creswell (2016:94) highlights that, research cannot be conducted haphazardly, it requires careful planning. Creswell further states that formulating the research problem is the first step when planning to conduct a research project. A problem statement can be formulated in a form of a statement or an open-ended question (Moule & Goodman, 2014:127; Schmidt & Brown, 2015:78). In addition, a problem statement provides an overview of how social research would add value to the overall discipline of social science (Moule & Goodman, 2014:127; Schmidt & Brown, 2015:78).

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015:47), some of the general factors that need to be considered when designing the problem statement are, clearly and completely stating the problem, thinking about the feasibility of the project, stating the problem in a way that reflects open mindedness. Creswell (2013:68) also argues that, where the problem formulation is concerned, researchers should be specific in stating what the problem is and clearly specifying the questions they would like answered.

Therefore, problem statement for the current study arises from that there is limited research that is conducted on the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Previous studies have focussed on the experiences of undocumented migrant children who find it difficult to be integrated on the European and American societies (Immigration and Child Welfare, 2015:1; Platforms for international cooperation on undocumented migrants,

2018:1), The researcher further noticed that in South Africa, researchers such as Mathe (2018:12), Mfubu and Willie (2016:542) focussed their research on the experiences and challenges faced by unaccompanied and separated foreign minor children.

In addition, there is also guide four of the Legal Resource Centre (2015) that concentrated on the guidelines of how social workers employed by DSD, other governments departments and South African Police Service (SAPS) should offer services to undocumented, unaccompanied, and separated foreign children. Studies from Agere (2014:5), Malatji and Dube (2015:109) focused on the experiences of unaccompanied and separated children placed at Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCC), hence the researcher observed that there are gaps in these studies. These gaps motivated the research to conduct the current study. The authors concluded that without documentation, the undocumented children become the vulnerable members of society.

The study from Dhludhlu (2021:13) is focused on the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa. While Muchanyerei (2015:6) focused on the challenges experienced by social workers in placing children living with HIV in foster care in Johannesburg. The researcher is of the opinion that although Dhludhlu (2021:13) and Muchanyerei (2015:6) suggested that foster care services are a solution for children and youth's needs, the gap in these studies is that they did not discuss how the lack of documentation would affect immigrant children and youths in receiving foster care services.

In South Africa, there is limited research that has focused on the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. As a result, statutory social workers are faced with challenges in assisting or rendering services to undocumented children. Therefore, the research problem for this study was *“the absence of scientific information on the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care service to undocumented children, as noticed by the researcher since she has been practicing as a statutory social worker from 2014 until 2022”*. As such, the researcher argued that there are little support systems that can help for statutory social workers to effectively render foster care services to

undocumented children. Below the researcher has discussed the rationale and significance of the study.

### **1.3 Rationale and significance of the study**

The rationale of the study is understood to be a purpose or aim of the study (Creswell: 2016:301). Maxwell (2013:24) states that there are factors that the researcher needs to consider when making choices on conducting social research. Factors that motivate the researcher to conduct the study are interests of the researcher, needs of the community or wider society, and the needs to update previous research (Maxwell, 2013:24).

The overall interest to conduct a study should come from the researcher`s interaction with the community and the personal interest of the researcher (Maree 2016:30; Creswell & Poth, 2018:131). This was shown in Mbedzi (2018:11) when the researcher was interested to study the policy and practice guidelines for social work to divorced persons: social workers and service users experience based perspective: while he worked for seven years at the DSD Limpopo where he interacted with divorced community members and he realised that there was limited policies and guidelines relating to social work services to divorced people and he was motivated to explore the nature of social work services to divorced persons and if such services address the needs of divorced person.

Previously researchers such as Mathe (2018), Mfubu and Willie (2016) focussed their research on the experiences and challenges faced by unaccompanied and separated foreign minor children. In addition, there is also guide four of the Legal Resource Centre (2015) that concentrated on the guidelines of how social workers employed by DSD, other governments departments and South African Police Service (SAPS) should offer services to undocumented, unaccompanied, and separated foreign children. Studies from Agere (2014), Malatji and Dube (2015) focused on the experiences of unaccompanied and separated children placed at Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCC), as the result of this, shortfalls were identified in a sense that there was no exploration of how the authorities will render services to the undocumented children. Being aware of these shortfalls, the researcher was motivated to explore the challenges experienced by statutory social workers when rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

The researcher's motive on the current study was also based on her experience employed as a statutory social worker at Midrand Child and Family Care Association from the period 2014 to 2022. During her employment, the researcher dealt with several cases that were related undocumented and unaccompanied children and their parents and/or caregivers. The current requirement for the application of foster care placement does not cater for these children. This increases challenges for social workers when rendering foster care services to undocumented and unaccompanied children. It must be noted that, according to the South African Social Security Act 13 of 2004, the prospective foster parents are required to have legal documents of the child in question when applying for the foster care placement for an undocumented child (Republic of South Africa, 2004:10).

Therefore, the current qualitative study explored the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Understanding the challenges faced of statutory social workers will assist child protection organisations, social workers, and other role players to provide suitable support services that fit the needs of undocumented children. The findings of the current study contribute to policy development and offer recommendations for social work practice. It is also important for social workers to develop an insight on their role to promote the inclusion of undocumented children in their services.

#### **1.4 Goal and objectives**

A goal of the study is required to be clearly stated. According to Moule and Goodman (2014:80), a research goal outlines the overall outcomes of the study. Furthermore, Maxwell (2013:23) concurred that the goal of a study clearly highlights what the researcher wishes to accomplish with the research. Creswell (2016:94) argues that the essence of the study is conveyed by the goal of the research. These authors implied that the goal of the research should be designed around what the researcher was investigating and not in terms of the whole problem or issue under investigation. Therefore, the researcher would probably describe what she has found or describe specifics relating to their research. The main goal for the study was as follows.

- **“To develop an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children”.**

- *Research objectives*

Creswell (2014:127) explained that, although the research is not necessarily mutually inclusive, research objective contributes to achieving the overall research goal. According to Grove and Gary (2013:708), research objectives aim to provide declarative statements that give direction to the study. According to Moule and Goodman (2014:80), the concept objective is defined as a real, accessible, and quicker way that the researcher uses to achieve their set goal. The researcher can conclude that the objectives of the study are used to describe the study in detailed. The objectives of this study were as follows:

- To explore and describe the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children.
- To examine the current services rendered to undocumented children.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations about the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

### **1.5 Research question**

After the problem has been formulated, it is important that the research question is used to ensure that the topic is clarified the objectives are achieved. According to Punch (2016:51), a research question is asked by the researcher to find resolutions to the main research issue or problem. Creswell (2016:96) affirms the above opinion by stating that research tries to find answers to this question because the researcher believes that the answers to this question will help the researcher to solve the research question. Creswell (2014:139) further mentions that this question is used when the researcher is unfamiliar with the extent of the nature of the problem, when the objective is mainly exploratory and descriptive, when the primary information is to be collected and the research is qualitative. This question is open ended in which no specific variable is investigated, which indicates that the researcher is unsure and wants to explore possible experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2014:139; Johnson & Christensen, 2012:76). Singh (2015:67) indicated that a good question can be found on qualitative research. The researcher believes that the research question was more

preferred instead of the hypothesis because the research approach adopted, is a qualitative research approach.

Since the research project is on the following topic: “The challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children”. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the research question has been set as follows.

- What are the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children?

The following are the sub-questions identified that will require investigation with the statutory social workers:

- What are the current services rendered to undocumented children?
- What are the services that statutory social workers would like to render to undocumented children to ensure that they are cared and protected?
- How can the statutory social workers address the challenges they face in rendering foster care services to undocumented children?

## **1.6 Assumptions**

Houston (2013:1) defines assumptions as beliefs regarding present and upcoming conditions that are presumed to be factual when there are no facts and there are limitations in our knowledge. Waite (2015:48) also describe assumptions as a way of accepting that something is valid without having proof of its true existence or nature. The researcher believes that assumptions are made in qualitative research while the quantitative research uses the hypothesis to propose an explanation of something that is observed. In this study, the researcher came up with the following assumptions.

- There are no clear policies that guide statutory social workers when they are rendering foster care services to undocumented children.
- There is lack of training of officials on the immigration legislations in other departments, and as a result, this makes it difficult for the statutory social workers to assist the undocumented children in accessing the required services.

- There is lack of support and training of statutory social workers on the relevant legislations regarding undocumented children and this makes it difficult to render effective services to the undocumented children.
- The views of the statutory social workers will be heard and considered when developing policies.
- The statutory social workers will be provided with proper guidance on how to appropriately render foster care services to undocumented children. In addition, this will assist them to overcome challenges they may face when rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

### **1.7 Clarification of key concepts**

In this section the following key concepts namely challenges, social workers, statutory social workers, foster care services and undocumented children were clarified.

- *Challenges*

Challenges is a phrase used to reflect weaknesses and threats that will hinder individuals to achieve their desired goals (Jackson, 2014:2). According to Waite (2015:142), challenges can be defined as a difficult task. Challenges are regarded as risks that will deter the goal of the study (Turner & Rowe, 2013:7). According to the researcher's understanding, challenges are the things that can be barriers which prevents a person to reach his or her goal. The researcher proposes to acquire knowledge of the challenges that are experienced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

- *Social Worker*

A social worker refers to a person who practices social work as “a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promote social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people” (International Federation of Social Workers, 2015). Social workers are welfare service providers employed in various settings such as Non-profit organisations, private companies, and government departments to provide social services to the entire population (Engelbrecht, 2014:148). In the South African context, a person is a social worker after completing a degree of Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) or a qualification equivalent to



Bachelor of Social Work at a university or registered as a social worker in terms of Social Service Professions Act no 110 of 1978 of the South African Council for Social Service Profession (SACSSP) (Republic of South Africa, 1978:15). According to Public Service Vacancy Circular 11 (2020:31), the national Department of Social Development and other government departments will appoint any person as a social worker who meet the following requirements.

- A person needs to have completed a BSW Degree or equivalent degree as recognised by SAQA.
- Registered as a social worker with the South African Social Service Professions.
- The person needs to be in possession of a drivers` license.
- The person needs to have certain theoretical and legislative knowledge.
- Lastly, the person needs to have certain professional and personal skills.

In the context of this study, a social worker is an employee in the Department of Social Development, Ekurhuleni Region and obtained a BSW degree, registered with the SACSSP, and who has the responsibility to render foster care services.

- *Statutory social worker*

Statutory social workers are social workers who are registered with the SACSSP and are rendering services to children who are described as children who need care and protection in terms of Section 150 of the Children's Act no 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2006:72). According to Waite (2015:854), statutory social workers are individuals or people trained to improve the conditions of vulnerable individual as required or permitted by law. The New Dictionary of Social Work (Terminology Committee for Social Work, 1995:62) defines a statutory social worker as follows; a specialised social worker whose goal is to improve the social functioning of individuals, families, and communities by applying administrative procedures prescribed by a written law of a legislative body.

The researcher is of the opinion that a statutory social worker is person designated by the Children's Act 38 of 2005 to investigate matters relating to children to ensure that the best interest of the children is taken into consideration in all matters concerning children in the study conducted, to undocumented children.

- *Foster care service*

Foster care service is defined as a “situation where children are placed by a competent authority for the purpose of alternative care in the domestic environment of a family other than the children’s own family that has been selected, qualified, approved and supervised for providing such care” (Family for every child, 2015:8). According to the DSD, foster care services is a free service provided to any suitable person who has been found to be a suitable care giver of a child who is found to need care and protection according to the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (Breen, 2015:1). Prospective foster parents are *allowed* to visit any nearest office of the DSD to apply for permission to be regarded as legal caregivers of the children in question. It is vital to highlight that after the successful application of foster care placement, foster parents will become important role players in the foster care service as they take up the parenting role in the life of the child (Roux, Bungane & Strydom, 2014:44).

Within the context of the study, foster care service is the alternative care service where undocumented children that are found to be in need to care and protected are placed in a care of a suitable person with a court order.

- *Undocumented children*

According to Educator for Fair Consideration (EFC), undocumented children are defined in the context of the United States of America as the following:

- “Children who entered the United States of America without inspection or with fraudulent documents.
- Children who entered the United States of America legally but violated the terms of his/her status and remained in the United State without authorisation”.

According to Smith (2021:3), undocumented children are defined in the European Union context as the following.

- Unaccompanied, separated or children in families.
- Children that came undocumented because their parents lost their residence status.

Gaun (2019:2) define the term “undocumented children” in the South African context as including the following categories of children.

- “South African children whose birth has not been, or is unable to be, registered in terms of the Births and Deaths Registration Act 51 of 1992 in South Africa,
- stateless children, and
- Undocumented migrant children”.

According to Waite (2015:150&989), undocumented children are any persons below the age of 18 years, whose births are not legally recorded or documented. The researcher is of the understanding or view that most undocumented children are illegal in the republic of South Africa.

### **1.8 Structure of the dissertation**

The structure of this dissertation consists of six (6) chapters. Chapter One included the background and context of the study, problem statement, goal and objectives, research questions, clarification of key concepts, assumptions, and structure of the dissertation.

The focus of Chapter Two was on literature review. Chapter Three focused on the theoretical framework of the study. While Chapter Four focused on the research methodology. The chapter included a discussion on the research approach, research paradigm, research design, research methods, data collection approach, data management and analysis, data verification/trustworthiness, ethical considerations, potential limitations of the study, and reflexivity.

Chapter Five focused on the presentation of findings and discussion of findings, including integration of literature. Finally, Chapter Six include conclusions drawn from the findings and recommendations derived from the study.

### **1.9 Conclusion of the chapter**

The chapter above highlighted the introduction of the study. In addition, the chapter enclosed the background and the context of the study. The chapter further enclosed the problem statement, the rationale of the study, goal and objectives, research questions, assumptions, clarifications of key concepts and the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter two below, the researcher has included literature review which confirms the study. This included literature on the undocumented children globally, regionally and

in South Africa, followed by factors contributing to children being undocumented in South Africa and strategies used to overcome factors contributing to being undocumented of children, a discussion of foster care as an alternative option for undocumented children found to be in need of care and protection, a brief discussion on the policies regarding foster care services to undocumented children in South Africa was provided, the legislative framework was discussed as well as the role of statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

## **2. CHAPTER TWO: THE CHALLENGES FACED BY STATUTORY SOCIAL WORKERS IN RENDERING FOSTER CARE SERVICES TO UNDOCUMENTED**

### **2.1 Introduction**

According to Ndille (2020:1), literature review is defined as a concise survey of the literature related to the researched topic. The Ndillie (2020:1) further stated that a literature review was a way of searching for information from other scholars using abstracts, table of contents, introduction and summary related to a particular study. Therefore, literature review can be defined as an overview of present knowledge, that permits the researcher to point out relevant theories, methods, and gaps identified in the current research. Turner, Baker, and Keller (2018:35) argued that it is important for the researcher to understand what has been done before by other researchers in relation to their research and to cite it in order to provide evidence.

The study focused on the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Therefore, literature review begins with a discussion of the undocumented children globally, regionally, and locally, focusing on South Africa. The review then discussed factor contributing to children in South Africa being undocumented. The review further discussed *strategies used* to overcome factors contributing to being undocumented children. In addition, the discussion of foster care as an alternative option for undocumented children found to need care and protection. A brief discussion on the policies regarding foster care services to undocumented children in South Africa was followed. Lastly, the legislative framework was discussed, as well as the role of statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

### **2.2 Undocumented children globally, regionally, and locally**

Organisation Migration (2022:10) shared that, as the result the globalisation, many people around the world move from one country to another. The report further stated that this resulted in an increase in immigration globally. It is estimated that there were 281 million migrants worldwide in 2022 (International Organisation Migrant, 2022:10). The report further state that there are 14.6% of children migrants. It is further

highlighted that the number of global illegal immigrant population was unknown, but the International Organisation for Migration in Geneva estimated the number to be 15% and 20% more than the previous decade.

Beck, Le, Henry-Okafor and Shah (2019:33) pointed out that those undocumented migrants are a growing concern internationally or nationally. The authors further pointed out that in the context of the United States of America “undocumented immigrants” can be defined as people who enter the country without having the authority to do so. It was also stated that the number of undocumented immigrants is also unknown in the USA, but it was estimated that this population make up to 4% of the population in America.

The International Organisation for Migration (2019:231) reported that, Africa like any other region is also affected by the challenge of migration, which is mostly the adult undocumented foreign nationals. The International Organisation for Migration (2019:231) further reported that, children are also affected by migration due to various reasons; namely, war in their country of origin, they are in search of a better life, to join family or to study and other children are following their families to other country. In addition, it is important to note the other following reasons for migration, namely, other people migrate to escape conflict from their country of origin, persecution, terrorism, and any form of human rights violation. Furthermore, others migrate to other countries due to adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters, or any other environmental factors.

In the South African context, the number of undocumented migrants is unknown, and this is caused by the systematic challenges in state administration within the Department of Home Affairs (Owusu-Sekyere & Willis, 2022 in a Daily Maverick website). They also reported that children born of undocumented foreign nationals will not be issued with legal identifying documents by the Department of Home Affairs. They further reported that the problem is not unique to only children of migrant parents, there are also stateless children of South African parents as a result of the dysfunctionality of the Department of Home Affairs. This may in turn create a negative consequence on the undocumented children in South Africa. There is also a general feeling that people move to the Republic of South Africa since the cost of living in the

country is much less. In addition, for those who love fine dining and wines, often move to South Africa since the country is amongst the top producers of wines.

### **2.3. Factors contributing to children being undocumented in South Africa**

There are two main factors contributing to children being undocumented in South Africa, namely, children abandoned by their biological parents without registering their birth at DHA and illegal migrant children.

#### **2.3.1 Children abandoned by their biological parents without registering their birth at DHA.**

According to Section 9 of the Birth and Death Registration Act no 51 of 1992, the notice of the birth of the child should be given to the department by any of his/her biological parents or anyone who oversees the said child within seven days of birth (Republic of South Africa, 1992:7). As stated in chapter one above, despite this being stated in the Act, the reality is that there are people who fail to report such events to the DHA, and they are often found without the relevant and proper identity documents. Abandoned children referred to as children who have been deserted by their biological parents or caregiver or had no contact with them for more than three months without any valid reason (Republic of South Africa,2006:10).

As a social worker employed by Midrand Child and Family Care Association the researcher has investigated many cases of children who were abandoned by their biological parents and these children are often found without visible means of support, for example, in one of her cases, a social worker from Tembisa hospital referred a case of the child whose biological mother has left her at the hospital. In addition, she left false identifying details of herself which made it difficult to trace the extended family of the child. Through investigation the child was found to need care and protection in terms of section 150(1) and the notice of birth at DHA was done by the researcher.

#### **2.3.2 illegal migrant children**

According to Educator for Fair Consideration ({{sa}}), undocumented children are defined in the context of the United States of America as the following Children who entered the United States of America without inspection or with fraudulent documents". Mathe (2018:205) found that it is impossible for illegal migrant children to obtain documentation even after being referred by a social worker. In her study, Mathe

(2018:205) also found that the lack of documentation of these makes it difficult for them to be integrated within the South African society. The researcher is of the opinion that the presence of these children in the host country is a criminal offence.

#### **2.4 Strategies to overcome factors contributing to being undocumented children.**

There are different strategies to overcome factors contributing to being undocumented children which are presented as follows;

- Notice of birth of abandoned children found to need care and protection should be given to the DHA by a statutory social worker (Republic of South Africa, 1992:10).
- The Grahamstown High court, “has declared unconstitutional, in terms of section 10 of the Birth and Death Registration Act no 51 of 1992 insofar as it does not allow unmarried fathers to register the birth of their children” (Centre for child law and others vs the Director General of the Department of Home Affairs, Minister of Department of Home Affairs, Minzile Lawrence Naki and Dimitrila Marie Ndoya other unreported case 319/2018, 19 May 2019).

#### **2.5 Foster care as an alternative option for undocumented children found to need care and protection.**

Foster care is one of the primary forms of alternative care that is used by many countries in the world including South Africa, to assist children found to need care and protection (Manukuza, 2013:1). Manukuza (2013:19) further shared that, children are then placed in related and unrelated foster care to ensure that they are cared for within a family environment. As stated earlier in this document, the children are found to need care and protection by the children’s court after the statutory social worker has investigated the matter, opened, and finalised the children’s court inquiry. Children’s Bureau (2021:1) reported that by September 2019 there was an estimated 423,997 children in foster care, 32% of these children were placed in related foster care while 46% of the children were placed in unrelated foster care. Based on the above report



the researcher can conclude that the number of undocumented children in foster care is unknown. In addition, there are different types of foster care placements in the South Africa, which are related (kinship care) and unrelated foster care (residential care and cluster foster care).

Mosimege (2017:41) and Harris and White (2013:278) pointed out that related foster care, also known as kinship care, is the type of foster care where foster children are placed with members of their extended family members, for example children are placed with grandparents, maternal or paternal aunts and uncles. This type of placement ensures that, stronger bonds are created between the foster children and the foster parents. Manukuza (2013:19) is of the opinion that unrelated foster care is when children are placed with individuals who are not part of their bloodline. Some of the unrelated foster care placements include cluster foster care and residential care. According to United Nations Children's Funds (2022:5), from an Eastern and Southern African context residential care is described as the care that is provided to children outside a family setting.

The report further differentiates between two types of residential care namely institutional care and small group care. While in South African in terms of Section 158 of the Children's Act no 38 of 2005 residential care are centres which are used to place children who are found to be in need of care and protection and the Act further explains that all centres which place children should be registered with DSD in terms of the Act and they should provide relevant programmes that addresses the need of children found to be in need of care and protection (Republic of South Africa, 2006:96). The researcher is of the opinion that New Jerusalem Children's Home, Botshabelo's Children's Home and Rhema Children's Home are examples of the registered residential facilities that are used by statutory social workers to place children found to be in need of care and protection in the Department of Social Development in in the Johannesburg Region.

Another form of unrelated foster care is called cluster foster care. In terms of Section 183 of the children's Act no 38 of 2005, cluster foster care is a form of foster care placement which is managed by NPOs and should be registered at the provincial head of DSD and in order for this form of foster care to be in line with the legislature only six foster children can be placed in the care of one foster parent (Republic of South Africa,

2006:15). The study by Du Toit (2013:39) suggested that different NPOs uses different methods of managing this form of the foster care system. The researcher is of the opinion that it would be easier to form support groups for foster parents and foster children where they share their experiences or challenges.

## **2.6. Policies regarding foster care services to undocumented children.**

According to literature review regarding policies of foster care services to undocumented children in South Africa, it can be concluded that there is no specific policy/or policies regarding foster care services to undocumented children because according to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the Children's Act 38 of 2005, there is no section that protects or related to the undocumented children, rather both legislations highlights that the best interests of the children is important at all times in matters concerning children (Republic of South Africa, 1996:12; Republic of South Africa, 2006:20). In other words, it is presumed that undocumented children found to need care and protection are also treated the same as South African children (Department of Social Development, 2009:87).

## **2.7. Legislative frameworks**

According to Van Dyk (2012:357), the United Nation has developed a legal document that provide minimal acceptable standards for the wellbeing of all children globally. The said document is called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of children. In 1995, South Africa was admitted as a member in the United Nation hence they committed themselves to abiding to the principles that are set in the document. It was further stated that in the African context, the member states of the African Union have also developed an Africa Charter on the Right and Welfare of children. This was in line with the United Nations Convention on the rights of children.

The author further pointed out that, it is important to acknowledge the basic human rights of every child. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) both states that the child's right to a name and nationality is the most important basic right that should be afforded to every child globally (Palmary, 2009:7). The Constitution of

the Republic of South Africa Act no 108 of 1996 and section seven (7) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 both highlights that it is vital to always consider the best interest of the child in matters regarding children (Republic of South Africa, 1996:12; Republic of South Africa, 2006:20). In principle, this includes undocumented children. It is also important to note that the rights of these children should never be infringed. The placement of children in need of care and protection in foster care is meant to ensure that their rights are not infringed (Van Dyk, 2012:365).

There seems to be a gap in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa since there is no section in this legislation where it protects the rights of undocumented children. In South Africa, foster care is one of the most important alternative care (Johannesburg Child Welfare, 2013). The researcher is of the opinion that there are gaps in the policies and legislation in addressing the difficulties experienced by undocumented children in receiving foster care services in South Africa

## **2.8. The role of statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children.**

Statutory social workers are social workers who are registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions and are rendering services to children who are described as children who need care and protection in terms of Section 150 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2006:72). The goal of social work is to promote the social change, problem solving in relationships and the empowerment of enhancing the wellbeing of people (IFSW, 2012:1). The statutory social worker plays an important role when rendering foster care services to all the children found to need care and protection (Roux, Bungane & Strydom, 2010: 47). It is presumed that undocumented children are also found to need care and protection and therefore are accessing social work or foster care services from social workers (Department of Social Development, 2009:87).

According to Brown (2014:1), rendering foster care services is the challenging aspect of the practice of social work as difficult decisions in fast moving and complex matter, while the relevant policies and legislations are effectively implemented by the statutory social worker. The role of the social worker as stated under Section 186(3) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, is to ensure that the appropriate social services are provided

for foster parents and the children according to the needs of the child, to ensure that the best interest of the children are protected and to render foster care supervision in order to link the foster parents and the children to available resources and to monitor the placement where necessary. While social workers are performing their task building relationships with their clients becomes an important skill which needs to acquire (Hepworth, Rooney & Storm-Gotfried, 2013:7).

## **2.9. Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed literature on the undocumented children globally, regionally and in South Africa. Followed by factors contributing to children being undocumented in South Africa and strategies to overcome factors contributing to being undocumented of children. It further continued with the discussion of foster care as an alternative option for undocumented children found to be in need of care and protection. A brief discussion on the policies regarding foster care services of undocumented children in South Africa was provided. Lastly, in this chapter, the legislative framework was also discussed as well as the role of statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

### **3. CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

According to Adom, Agyem and Husssien (2018:438), the theoretical framework is defined as a “blueprint or guide of research”. This means that the researcher utilises this blueprint or guideline to develop their research. It is further stated that a theoretical framework can be regarded as a map of the research project (Adom et al, 2018:438). The following are the characteristics of a theoretical framework as outlined by Adom et al. (2018:438);

- “It provides a general or boarder set of ideas within which the study belongs.
- It is based on existing theory/theories in literature, which has been tested and validated by other scholars.
- It is in the form of a model that pivots a study, with its exponents and the results of their studies.
- It is well developed/ designed and accepted.
- It offers a focal point of approaching the unknown research in a specific field of inquiry.
- It consists of theories that seem interrelated with their propositions deduced.
- It is used to test theories, to predict and control the situations within the context of the research inquiry”.

Grant and Osando (2014:12) affirm these authors because they are of the opinion that theoretical framework provides vibrant mechanisms which the researcher will use to understand their research problem. Merriam and Tidssell (2014:86) are of the opinion that the theoretical framework consists of notions that will guide the study. Therefore, the researcher can then conclude that the theoretical framework provides the study conducted with direction. The theoretical framework that the researcher utilised in this study is a social inclusion theory.

#### **3.1 Social inclusion theory**

Social inclusion theory was first developed in France in the 1970s by Rene Lenoir with the aim of addressing the economical exclusion of the disadvantaged individuals in the society (United Nations Populations Division, 2016:18). According to World Bank (2013:9), there are three spheres that represent the advantages and disadvantages of social inclusion theory which are the market, service, and space. The report further

explained that the three spheres each has sub-division that assist in driving the concept of social inclusion forward.

- Four major markets in which people engage in society in their day-to-day interaction have been identified as follows: land, housing, labour, and credit.
- Access to the following services namely social protection, information, electricity, transport, education, health, and water is important because it promotes social inclusion of vulnerable group of people.
- Physical space is divided into the political, physical, social, and cultural space.

Bestowing to World Bank (2013:13) enhancing social inclusion improve the ability, opportunity, and dignity. Silver (2015:1) highlights that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) give direction on how social inclusion is to be achieved. Furthermore, to explain what it is in practice, the author also distinguishes between contextualising the meaning of social inclusion, national conceptions of social inclusion and national contextual effects on social inclusion. Silver (2015:13) also shared four dimensions of social inclusion theory namely, social, political, cultural, and economic dimensions like the above report. Silver (2015:13) also discussed the contextual effects and mechanisms of segregation of these dimensions which are as follows.

**Table 3.1. Contextual effects and mechanisms of segregation**

<b>DIMENSION</b>	<b>SEGREGATION</b>	<b>MECHANISMS</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
Economic	Concentrated poverty; slums; gated communities	Distance from jobs; no or low-quality education, public services, housing; environmental degradation; non-working role models	Employment; schooling; health; intergenerational mobility
Social/cultural			

	Racial/ethnic segregation or diversity	Peers; family structure; social networks; risky behaviours; stores, churches, institutions	Intergroup relations; trust, cohesion, efficacy; isolation, disorder, crime
political	Restricted public space; safety/protection; rights	Interaction with strangers; trust; protection or exposure to violence; policing; rule of law; civil rights to speech, association, etc.	Voting; civic and political participation

Social inclusion is defined process ensuring that all people within the society are actively participating in the community regardless of their disadvantage on the basis of their age, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status through improving advantages, strength and opportunities in the community (United Nation Population Division, 2016:18). The definition above is consistent with Silver (2015:2) who stated that, as part of the DSD, the World Bank has developed social inclusion, which seeks to reduce poverty, promote equality and sustainable development. It is further pointed out that the World Bank is also mandated to develop a practical framework that will assist in sharing of information that promotes social inclusion. The World Bank defines social inclusion, as a “process which ensures that those at risk of being left out gain opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life and enjoy a standard of well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live” (Silver, 2015:2). It ensures that they have a voice in the decisions which affect their lives and access to the market, public services, and their fundamental rights (Silver, 2015:2). The definition of social inclusion is said to be unclear hence synonyms such as integration, cohesion,

solidarity, belonging, social capital, and participation are used to describe the term social inclusion. According to Silver (2015:4) the following are identified as the characteristics of social inclusion:

- Multi-dimensional, multi-scalar
- Dynamic process
- Relational
- Active participation
- Contextual

From the perspective of Sociology, social inclusion should be considered based on how social integration maintains and manages how people in the society move through their socially stratified world (Allman, 2013:1). The author further stated that from the above-mentioned perspective to social inclusion, the following key concepts are important namely, social stratification, social inequality, and social class. According to Cardo (2014:9), in South Africa the policy framework that promote social inclusion is the National Development Plan (NDP). Cardo (2014:9) further explained that this policy emphasises capabilities approach to development and active and participation of the members of the society to the economic, civic, social norm and integrated society which are the vital to the concept of social inclusion. He also stated that the policy emphasises the need to redress measure of inclusive, non-racial society in terms of Section 9 of the Constitution by improving opportunities and pursuing substantive equality.

Based on the discussion above, social inclusion provides big emphasis on concepts that include multi-dimensional, multi-scalar, dynamic process, relational, active participation and contextual. It further explains how community members should actively participate in the life of the community. In other words, social inclusion theory believes that undocumented children need to be integrated within the South African societies and systems. Furthermore, to ensure that they participate in the programmes and services offered by the state within the community.



## **3.2 Conclusion**

The chapter provided a brief definition and discussion of the theoretical framework. The chapter further presented brief theoretical review on the social inclusion theory and the reasons the researcher adopted social inclusion theory. In the Chapter below, a research methodology pertinent to this study is discussed below.

## **4. CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the research methodology which has been used to conduct the study to achieve the objectives of exploring and describing the challenges faced by statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Research methodology refers to the proposal and procedures that are followed by the study conducted (Mason, 2018:15). It denotes to approaches used in the process of implementing the research design or research proposal (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016:100). The research methodology deals with the technique that the researcher will follow to describing, explaining, and predicting research (De-xin, 2018:197). The research approach, paradigm and design that were utilised in this research study are presented below.

### **4.2 The research approach**

The commonly used research approaches to conduct the research study are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. In the current study, the researcher employed the qualitative research approach to provide an in depth understanding of the challenges faced by statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children. According to Creswell (2014:4) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016:15), qualitative research approach conducts studies in the natural context of the participants being studied. In addition, qualitative research approach is opposed to the explanation of human experiences, but it is rather concerned with the meaning and symbols underlying human experiences (Angelopulo & Backer, 2013:410).

Yin (2016:9) seem to concur with the above definitions because according to him qualitative approach implies that the study is conducted within the real-life contextual conditions. In this study, the challenges of statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children were studied in real world contextual conditions. Mills and Gay (2016:25) define a qualitative research approach as “the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (i.e., non-numerical) data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest”.

The current study is sought to establish the challenges of statutory social workers rendering foster services to undocumented children and to collate strategies that the

statutory social workers could utilise when rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Efforts to understand the statutory social workers perceptions regarding rendering foster care services to undocumented children was made by entering the research participants' setting by interviewing them, studying documents, and giving meaning to their experiences. Creswell (2014:234) and Creswell and Poth (2018:9-21) highlighted the following characteristics of the qualitative research approach.

- Both authors agreed that qualitative research is more flexible than quantitative approach. For example, it may start with exploratory objective where the researcher explores limited information about a social issue but through the questioning process the objective may change to descriptive because the researcher may want to describe the things that he/she has discovered when he/she was exploring. There are no fixed steps to be followed and the research cannot be exactly replicated (Creswell, 2014:234; Creswell & Poth, 2018:9-21). From this, the researcher can conclude that adaptation is important to the research project.
- The method of reasoning in qualitative research is inductive, which means that, it is based on specific assumptions the researcher would base the description of the responses being received (Creswell, 2014:234; Creswell & Poth, 2018:9-21).
- The focus of qualitative research is on insider perception rather than outsider perception where the researcher attempts to understand the participants in terms of their own definition of the world (Creswell, 2014:234; Creswell & Poth, 2018:9-21).
- The main tool of research is the researcher who would like to obtain participants' perception of the social issues which are researched, for example the researcher gathered information by talking straightforward to participants and seeing them act and act within their setting (Creswell, 2014:234; Creswell & Poth, 2018:9-21). They often design open-ended questions as an instrument to collect data, and they do not use surveys.
- The researcher used qualitative themes and categories as a method to explore and describe the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering the foster care services to undocumented children.

#### **4.2.1 Rationale for qualitative research approach**

In the current study, the researcher aimed to explore participants' views on the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Understanding the challenges and experiences of statutory social workers can assist child welfare organisations, social workers, and other role players to offer suitable support services suitable undocumented children. The finding of the study is also useful in minimising any negative events which might be anticipated. Lastly the findings of the study contribute insight to policy development and implications for social work practice. It is important for social workers to develop an insight on their role to promote the inclusion of these undocumented children in their services.

#### **4.3 Research Paradigm**

For the current study, the researcher has employed constructivist paradigm during this research study. According to Creswell (2014:37), constructivist paradigm was first developed in 1967 by Berger and Luekmann of Mannbein. Constructivist paradigm believes that each person attaches meaning to the world in which they exist in. It is further stated that, the meaning people attach to the world will be different from person to person because people experience the world differently. Yin (2018:16) explain that when conducting the study, the researcher needs to appreciate the participants from their point of view and to accept that there are multiple realities.

The researcher is of the opinion that constructivism paradigm was favourable in the current study because it was in line with the qualitative research approach. The concept of constructivist paradigm differs from positivist paradigm since it advocates for the application of the methods of natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond which is implemented in the quantitative research approach (Bryman, 2012:28). In the current study the researcher embraced constructivist paradigm because it focused on using dialogue as a way of conducting interviews with the statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children and in addition, they were considered experts of their lived experiences.

#### **4.4 Research design**

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013:95) research design is a proposal on how the study is to be conducted, what it involves, where and when the study is taking place, method used to collect, analyse, and interpret data. Angelopulo and Barker (2013:403) and Williams (2015:70) are of the same opinion as Sekaran and Bougie when they stated that a research design, outlines the methods used to collect data. They further describe the conditions under which data is collected and how the participants are chosen, and the instruments used to collect data. They also further explained that research design generally provides the information about when, what, who, where and how of the research project to be conducted. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018:183), qualitative research is exploratory, descriptive, and contextual in nature. For the current study, the researcher used exploratory, descriptive, and contextual research designs as used by other qualitative researchers.

##### **4.4.1 Exploratory research design**

Exploring the topic is important and thus using exploratory research designs (Paul & Leedy, 2015:386). Exploratory research design is used to discover relatively unknown social realities to learn about them (Gray, 2013:36). Hay and Chaudhury (2015:678) are also of the opinions that, for the researcher to study a phenomenon, which has been insufficiently studied or are misunderstood, he/she should use exploratory research design. Marshall and Rossman (2016:78) further describe the purpose of exploratory research design to create propositions for further and future studies. The researcher can therefore conclude that exploratory research design is used to determine what is going on, what has been done and what is available in the social reality. Although much is known about foster care and undocumented children, there is limited knowledge about the challenges faced by the statutory social workers when rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

Therefore, the study asked the question such as the one that follows; “what are the current services rendered to undocumented children?” The question is therefore related to exploratory research design to assist in understanding the challenges faced by participants when rendering foster care service to undocumented children.

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

After the researcher has explored about the phenomenon to be studied, the second step is to describe what they have explored using the descriptive research design (Koch, Niesz & McCarthy, 2014:134). Descriptive research design is defined as a plan which concentrates on describing in more details the social reality being studied (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:51). They further highlighted that the researcher starts by observing the social reality and then they describe what they have observed. According to Creswell (2014:386), descriptive research design also provides a detailed description of phenomena that has been explored. In the current study, following the exploration of the statutory social workers' experiences in relation to their challenges when rendering foster care services to undocumented children, the researcher provided a detailed description of what was explored during the interviews. Through qualitative descriptions, the researcher was able to communicate the challenges of statutory social workers when rendering foster care services to undocumented children from the participants' perspectives (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:51). The researcher utilised descriptive research design to highlight the details that would have been observed. Furthermore, to provide detailed descriptions of what would have been explored.

#### **4.4.3 Contextual research design**

It is important for the researcher to determine exactly where their research is going to take place by utilising contextual research design. According to Cannell (2015:595), it is important to understand the environment or the space of a social reality when conducting a study during the qualitative research approach. Grossman, Tracy, Richer and Erkut (2015:34) argues that the views of the qualitative researcher about a phenomenon studied are not important. Corbin and Strass (2015:155) explains that participants' perceptions, experiences, and feelings create a context in which the meaning attached to the phenomenon is expressed in the form of explanations or reasons that the participants draw from a situation.

The researcher is of the opinion that, outside the environment of the study the result for the study is not relevant. The study was conducted within the Gauteng Department of Social Development Ekurhuleni Region, services points, and it's funded NPOs to

explore the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children in their work environment.

#### **4.5 Research methods**

Swaminathan and Mulvihill (2017:20) define research methods as a type of techniques used to study a phenomenon. According to Bryman (2016:4), research methods are not chosen in isolation, certain factors influence the type of research methods to be chosen when conducting a study. He further states that the theory used to understand research and literature review are some of the factors that influence the type of research methods chosen by the researcher. According to Creswell (2014:45), the forms of research methods include data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the study. Therefore, this section provides an outline of how the research methods were followed, focusing on the population, sampling, and data collection, methods of data analysis and data verification.

##### **4.5.1 Population**

Research population is defined as a big gathering of components from which a sample is taken and which the researcher wishes to draw conclusions (Neuman, 2014:247; Marshall and Rossman, 2016:110; Maxfield & Babbie, 2013:437; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013:152). Maxfield and Babbie (2013:437) define a population as “all people, things, or other element in which the research wishes to represent. Best and Kahn (2014:11) goes further to state that a population is a group of individuals with at least one common characteristic which distinguishes that group from other individuals. Due to time and money constraints the researcher was not able to include the whole population hence a sample was drawn, however the sample size was determined by the point of data saturation, which is when the data or information starts repeating itself (Creswell, 2014:248). Bless et al (2013:179) explained that when applying qualitative approach, the sample size is not determined at the initial stage of the study, but the concept of data saturation is used for this purpose. The stage of data saturation was reached when the 12<sup>th</sup> participant was interviewed during the interviewing process and the data collection process was terminated during the study.

## **4.5.2 Sampling**

According to Maree and Pietersen (2016:192), during the study there are certain factors such as time and money that make it impossible to include whole population hence sampling is used during process of data collection. The small group chosen from the entire population that will be used to draw conclusion of the study is called a sample (Loseke, 2017:117). Leavy (2017:76) and Okeke and van Wyk (2015:226) highlighted that a sample is utilised to select the small group of participants that will represent the entire population in the study to achieve the objectives of the study. For example, the sample for this study was all the statutory social workers, specifically rendering foster care services to undocumented children selected for the study and who meet the selection or inclusion criteria.

### **4.5.2.1 Sampling technique**

There are two main types of sampling methods that a researcher can use to collect data, namely, probability and non-probability sampling (Babbie & Mouton, 2016:166). According to Pascoe (2014: 136), in applying probability sampling methods fairness will be used when selecting samples from a population. Sampling of participants is an autonomous process to the researcher when probability sampling is applied (Chambliss and Schutt, 2013:90). Probability sampling is not used in this study as it was not in line with the study and is most relevant in quantitative research. According to Chambliss and Schutt (2013:90-97), non-probability sampling is described as a sampling method in which the probability of selection of population elements is not revealed and is used in qualitative research. To achieve the goal and objectives of the study, the researcher decided to adopt a non-probability sampling since it is often used in qualitative research.

For the current study, a purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling is a kind of non-probability sampling, in which the researcher uses his/her own judgement to select participants who have more information and knowledge about the issue being researched and they are willing to participate on the research (Carey, 2013:47). Furthermore, Sekaran and Bougie (2013:240) explains that a purposive sampling is strictly chosen when the previous knowledge of the population and the objectives of the study can result in the researchers using their judgement to select a sample.



The authors further explained that the advantage of using purposive sampling is that it enables the researcher to select participants that can answer the questions designed for the study based on their knowledge and experiences. Patton (2015:264) also defines purposive sampling as a way in which the researcher selects participants or source of data based on the fullness and significance data in relations with the research question of the study. The researcher is of the opinion that, purposive sampling is used when the researchers have control over the participants that are chosen in the study.

Statutory social workers who met the following criteria were included in the sample.

- Willingness to participate in the study.
- Statutory social workers rendering foster care service to undocumented children specifically at the Gauteng Department of Social Development, Ekurhuleni Region.
- A minimum of two years working experience and being a social worker rendering foster care services to undocumented children.
- Registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP).
- Diverse gender and race.

Statutory social workers who do not meet the following criteria were excluded in the sample.

- The statutory social workers who were not willing to participate in the study.
- Statutory social workers with less than two years of working experience rendering foster care services to undocumented children.
- Statutory social workers who are not employed by DSD, Ekurhuleni Region in Gauteng and not rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

The researcher has sent a letter to head of the Gauteng Provincial DSD requesting permission to undertake the research and the information required, together with an information sheet on the research and the ethics clearance certificate. The approval was received from DSD. The researcher emailed the Ekurhuleni regional director to negotiate entry at DSD Ekurhuleni region and emails were also sent to the managers of the funded NPOs in order negotiate entry into their NPOs.

The Ekurhuleni regional directors and the managers of the NPOs were regarded as the gatekeepers in the study. After the approval of the request for access by the gatekeepers to conduct the study, the researcher scheduled an appointment in their offices where she requested to recruit the statutory social workers who met the set criteria and who were interested to be part of the study. There are twelve participants who volunteered to participate in the study by sending emails to the researcher.

According to Schmidt and Brown (2015:243), some of the researchers argue that the number of a sample to be selected should not be established ahead of the study because they are guided by the criterion called 'saturation' of information. When the researcher has observed this trend and they are confirmed by the supervisor, the process of purposefully recruiting participants is terminated or stopped. In the current study, the researcher was guided by the criterion of data saturation and the supervisor on whether to continue collecting data or to stop. The supervisor advised the researcher to stop collecting data after interviewing twelve participants and when the researcher was getting the same information from the participants.

## **4.6 Data collection**

### **4.6.1 Method of data collection**

The next step of the study is data collection in the context of qualitative research. Data collection is defined as the process whereby the researcher gathers information from different sources, places and that data can be collected from people to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2014:147). Burns and Grove (2013:44) further explained that data collection is a systematic way of collecting information that will assist to reach the purpose of the research. Babbie (2013:38) highlighted that data is used as a method of differentiate between the literature review and empirical data collection. Interview, observations, and documents are some of the data collection methods that are used to gather information from participants. Therefore, in the following section, the researcher discusses the methods used for data collection, such as preparations for the data collection, and data collection approach.

#### **4.6.2 Preparation for data collection**

Getting consent to conduct the study from the identified gatekeeper is the initial stage of preparation of data collection (Creswell, 2013:57). It is important for the researcher to build relationships with the gatekeeper because they are the best people to assist in accessing participants during the process of data collection (Roller, 2015:16). Therefore, the researcher sought consent from the gatekeepers before collecting data.

Building rapport and networking are critical skills that are required during the process of data collection. As previously stated, that the researcher is employed as a statutory social worker at Midrand Child and Family Care Association which is one of the NPOs funded by DSD Gauteng Province, the researcher has on several occasions referred cases to several NPOs and DSD Ekurhuleni Region. This means that the researcher may have in the past interacted with prospective participants and they may relate to the researcher as a colleague. During the study, the researcher explained to the participants that their views on the chosen topic was important to the researcher. Since the researcher might have interacted with prospective participants, that could have been the positive outcomes on the study.

The following are ways in which the researcher prepared for collecting data.

- The researcher emailed a letter to Gauteng DSD, Ekurhuleni Regional director requesting permission to conduct the study in the region and the researcher provided verbal telephonic explanation when it was needed. A response for approval to gain access in the region was received via email.

The following are ways in which participants were prepared.

- The researcher emailed and issued letters to participants requesting them to participate in the study and the researcher provided verbal telephonic explanation when needed. The participants agreed to participate in the study verbally and via by email.
- The researcher issued the participants with the consent form, and they signed it, once she explained the purpose of the study.
- The researcher explained to the participants that taking part in the study was voluntary and participants were free to withdraw at any time they felt uncomfortable.

### 4.6.3 Data collection approach

In this study the researcher used semi-structured interviews as method of data collection. Semi-structured interviews involve an interaction between the researcher and participants where participants' views of the participants are major part of this interaction and the researcher have organised and prepared questions to ask them although not necessarily a sequential order of questions (Babbie & Mouton, 2017:289). Pathak and Intratat (2016:4) are of the opinion that, semi structured interviews are useful tools when the researcher wants to employ a somewhat flexible structure and gain more information from a dialogue with the participants.

Semi-structured interviews are most useful when there is a research question in which the researcher would like answered and, therefore, in this case she used open-ended questions, although they were not put to each participant in the same order (Mauldin, 2020:292). The researcher is of the opinion that unlike structured interviews, during the semi-structured interviews, the participants and the researcher can build a rapport and the participants will be able to give more details on the challenges they face when rendering foster care services to undocumented children. The researcher used semi-structured interviews consisting of a list of open-ended questions that were included in an interview guide.

The following are the examples of questions that the researcher asked participants, followed by probes:

- What is the racial group that you associate yourself with?
- What is your home language?
- How old are you?
- What gender do you associate yourself with?

The questions directed to the statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children were as follows.

- How long have you been a statutory social worker rendering foster care services to undocumented children?
- What are the current services rendered to undocumented children?
- What are the current services sought by the prospective foster parents or caregivers of undocumented children?

- What are the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children?
- What are the services that you would like to render to undocumented children to ensure that they are cared and protected?

The following are the communication skills that were used by researcher during the interviews.

- *Listening*

Ebigbo (2019:80) stated that intensive listening is a systematic effort to understand participants from their frame of reference and it encourages participants to share with the researcher their deepest traumatic experiences. Listening is understood to include receiving information and attaching meaning to it (Grobler, Schenck & Mbedzi, 2013:49). According to Waite (2015:254), listening is when you intend to pay attention to the spoken words. Grobler et al. (2013:49) explains that the skill of listening is important when conducting qualitative research because it ensures that the researcher becomes aware of verbal and non-verbal messages from the participants. The researcher is of the opinion that the definition by Waite limit listening to becoming aware of verbal messages and this idea was not suitable during the study. During the study, the skill of listening that the researcher used throughout the interviews enabled her to reflect her understanding back to the participants from their own frame of references.

- *Probing*

In this study a communication skill called probing was used. Babbie (2016:269) and Creswell and Poth (2018:191) define probing as a way which the researcher aims to elicit more information or clarity on the initial given answer and they further highlighted that when probing is used people are encouraged to express themselves by providing full details of their lived experiences. Waite (2015:709) defines probing as the state of “investigating matters closely”. The researcher is of the opinion that this skill is highly valuable during the interviews and when exploratory research design is employed during qualitative research approach. The following are some of the examples of probing questions that the researcher used:

During the interview with participant labelled P2 responded as followed

“I have been working as a statutory social worker rendering foster care services to undocumented children for four years. I do not know that will also count but I was also assisting statutory social workers who were rendering foster care services to undocumented children while I was still doing my practical as a student social worker two years before I became a qualified social worker.”

The following is an example of probing questions that the researcher used:

R: Can you tell me more about your experiences while you were a student social worker observing statutory social worker rendering foster care service to undocumented children?

- *Attentiveness*

Grobler, Schenck and Mbedzi (2013:47) describe attentiveness as a communication skill that one uses to ensure that they are physically and psychologically attending to their participants during communication, for example one need to attend to the sitting arrangement, temperature, and lighting in the room. One needs to be aware of the participants and their own emotion. Fukushima (2020:4) concurs with Grobler et al. by stating that attentiveness is a two directional process in which one attends to what they say, do and feel, while attending verbally and non-verbally. Waite (2015:50) implies that someone needs to be fully present at something. The researcher can conclude that this basic communication skill was important to build a relationship between the researcher and the participants. During the interviews the researcher was attending physically and psychologically to the statutory social workers who are rendering foster care services to undocumented children. During an interview with participant labelled P1 silence was used as a way in which the researcher attended to the participant.

#### **4.7 Pilot study**

Strydom and Delport (2013:394) shared that a pilot study in qualitative research “is usually comprised of an informal and a few participants possessing the same characteristics as those of the main investigation and can be involved in the study, merely to ascertain certain trend. While Dikko (2016:523) is of the opinion that although the pilot testing is a fundamental rule of research, it presents problems with

the focus group. However, it should be noted that the researcher will not be using a focus group interview, instead she will be using a semi-structured interview. According to Mafokane and Shirindi (2018:41), it is important to identify practical and ethical issues to minimum their negative consequence on the study. For this study, the researcher identified the statutory social workers employed at Gauteng DSD, Ekurhuleni Region and funded NPOs to participate on the semi-structured interviews. Only participants that met the inclusion criteria were chosen to be part of the pilot study. Findings of the pilot study were not used during the main study, but it was a useful tool when the researcher was compiling the interview guide and it was useful in the feasibility of the main study. The researcher interviewed four participants as part of pilot testing.

#### **4.8 Data management and analysis**

This is the stage of the research where the researcher must decide what to do with information or he/she must make sense of the data that was collected. According to (Graue 2015:8), data must be analysed. Nieuwenhuis (2016:114) explains that the focus on data analysis is content analysis which is systematic analysis of written or verbal responses. Creswell (2014:180) concurs that data analysis in qualitative research implies a thorough study of the data collected in search of themes or patterns on that data and presenting the outcome of the themes or patterns using figures, tables, or a discussion. Creswell (2014:180) further stated that the researcher should be aware of the themes and patterns that do not follow the normal standards of the behaviour from participants in the study during data collection. Therefore, data analysis are patterns that are created according to the content of the interviews based on the challenges faced by statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children; the researcher was able to interpret these patterns. Based on this, it is important that this should be understood from the context that data would be collected to correctly understand it.

In this study, the researcher used the following Tesch's eight steps to analyse data as adapted from Creswell (2014:198).

- The researcher began by transcribing the interviews and read them to make sense of the gathered information. During this process, the researcher wrote down ideas that came to mind.
- The researcher chose one interview for reading. While reading the interview, the researcher asked herself, "What is it all about"? "What is the meaning of what was shared"? Through this process, ideas were generated and noted on the margins.
- A list of topics or themes were grouped according to their similarities. The major topics were written as themes, followed by sub-themes.
- This process was followed by choosing a suitable abbreviation that has been attached to each theme identified. The abbreviated codes were then written in the margins, next to the segments that matched a particular code. During this process, new codes emerged.
- In this stage, the researcher grouped themes that are like each other in order to reduce a list of categories.
- The researcher then made a final decision on the abbreviations for each theme and wrote alphabets on these themes.
- The researcher continued with data analysis by combining the data material belonging to each theme in one place and conducted the preliminary analysis.
- . Where necessary, the data has been recorded; hereafter, the researcher commenced with the process of reporting the research findings.

It can be concluded that, in this study the researcher adopted thematic analysis as outlined above.

#### **4.9 Data verification**

According to William (2015:119), following or during the data analysis, data verification occurs. Lichtman (2014:386) stated that data verification is a way in which the researcher ensures whether the conclusions of the study are valid as reflected in the study. Being aware of personal biases is important to this concept (Polit & Beck, 2017:570). Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014:258-259) point out that, as opposed to quantitative researcher who use numbers as evidence, a qualitative researcher uses conditions to determine the trustworthiness or credibility of the



research findings. They further state that the aim of the research is to promote the understanding of a particular phenomenon within a specific context and not to generalise results to a broader population. They further stated that a predominant term that is employed for validity and reliability in qualitative research is trustworthiness, which is further divided into credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

- *Credibility*

According to Waite (2015:204), credibility is defined as the truth. Schmidt and Brown (2015:236) and Pilot and Beck (2014:323) concurs with the above definition by stating that according to qualitative research, credibility is a synonymy of validity, which implies the accuracy of the study conducted. The researcher applied credibility by allowing enough time for interviews, building relationships, and encouraging open communication with the participants and ensured that participants are aware of the importance of their contribution to the research project (Hadi & Closs, 2015:3), this ensured that participants share their lived experiences freely.

The researcher observed participants during the semi-structured interview to ensure that the verbal communication compliments the non-verbal communication. Regarding the peer examination strategy, the researcher utilised her supervisor as an expert in qualitative research. Participants' verbatim accounts (audio recordings and transcripts of interviews) were made available to the supervisor so that he can critically assess the interpretations from direct quotes. Regarding the authority of the researcher, the researcher as a Master of Social Work student, attended online workshops on proposal and research writing planned by the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa. The researcher obtained a Bachelor of Social Work, majoring in psychology and communication science at the University of South Africa in 2009. She also completed all social work modules as non-degree purpose in 2013. During her undergraduate studies, she completed the following module: SCK410B (Research project: planning and execution). The following was her research topic: "*the realities of the street hawkers on the city street corners*" in qualitative research approach. The researcher was employed as a Statutory Social Worker at Midrand Child and Family Care Association.

- *Dependability*

According to Anney (2014:272-281), qualitative research describes the concept dependability as the following: the idea that the result of the study will remain the same if the study could be repeated in a different environment. The sample size has been determined by the need to ensure generalisation of finding to the study of the whole population. According to (Pilot & Beck, 2014:323), dependability implies that if the study is replicated in the same study with the same participants the findings will remain the same. It is further stated that the point of views of the participants is important. Waite (2015:236) defined dependability as the state of being trustworthy or being reliable. The sample size was not determined by the need to ensure generalisation of the findings of the study regarding the entire population of statutory social workers who are rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Therefore, there is a need to study the topic fully and thoroughly.

- *Transferability*

According to Babbie and Mouton (2014:277), transferability is defined as a concept where the findings of the study will apply in future studies. Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings could be used to address similar issues in different contexts, following the same procedure (Mabudusha, 2014:38). According to Padgett (2017:210), generalisation of the findings of research is confirmed by trustworthiness of the study. The researcher included only statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children and she used purposive sampling to understand them and not to generalize findings. To ensure that the research and its results can be compared favourably with research in similar settings, thick descriptions were obtained from the participants about the phenomenon researched and careful attention was given to the context and the process of this study.

- *Confirmability*

According to Nieuwenhuis (2016:125), confirmability is the confirmation that the findings of the study are linked with the detailed responses of participants and not in any way reflect the frame of reference of the researcher. To ensure conformability, researchers should always become aware of their personal feelings and experiences so that they do not result in them using their own judgement (Schmidt & Brown, 2015:235; Koonin, 2014:259). Strategies to ensure confirmability has been employed

in the form of keeping a reflective journal of all relevant events that occurred during the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018:259-261; Nieuwenhuis, 2016:125). The researcher implemented reflexivity as a strategy by continuously assessing and evaluating the impact of herself, her experience, her interests, her background, and her role on the research process. According to (Bryman, 2016:303), conformability evaluates data quality and refers to the neutrality or objectivity of the data by an agreement between two or more independent persons that the data is similar.

#### **4.10 Ethical considerations**

According to Neuman (2014:69), and Babbie and Mouton (2016:520), ethics refer to the values, norms and moral judgement that guides behaviour. The above definition of “ethics” mean that the behaviour of the person/people is under certain standards that must be met to be recognised as a socially and legally accepted behaviour. The research ethics are applied as guidelines which the researcher will implement when performing their duties and they will assist him/her avoid unethical behaviour during their interaction with the participants of the study. The ethical considerations that the researcher adhered to are as follows; informed consent, confidentiality/privacy/anonymity, and avoidance of harm and management of information.

##### **4.10.1 Informed consent**

Informed consent means that participants, prior to the involvement in a research project, need to be informed of all aspects of the research including its risks. As alluded by Thomas (2011:69) informed consent implies explaining to the participants the terms and conditions involved in participating in a research project prior to consenting to participating. Whereas according to Marshall and Rossman (2016:52), informed consent is when the participants can fully comprehend the terms and conditions of participating in the study. Chambliss and Schutt (2013:46) highlighted some of the information that should be included in the informed consent form and is presented as follows.

- The general purpose of the study.
- The qualifications and organisational affiliation of the researcher.

- The expectations of the research participant (e.g., duration of the interview, venue, time, and kind of questions to be asked, etc.).
- An assurance of confidentiality.

The researcher explained the goal and objectives of the study and individual participants were expected to give a written consent to take part in the study out of their free will or not to participate. This ethical consideration means that participants were not forced into participating in the research project. Therefore, the researcher did not coerce, deceive, and manipulate the participants in this research project. The participants had every right to refuse, and the researcher respected that right. Even though the gatekeepers brought participants in the research project, the researcher made sure that the individuals did not take part in the research project because of the powers and manipulation of the gatekeepers. The participation in the research project was voluntary and the participants were asked to sign the informed consent form. After the signing of the consent form, the researcher ensured that the participants volunteered to participate. The researcher can conclude that it is important to ensure that the participants have the cognitive and legal capacity to provide informed consent.

The researcher sent a letter to the Head of the Gauteng Provincial DSD requesting permission to undertake the research and the information required, together with an information sheet on the research and the ethics clearance certificate. The approval was received from DSD. The researcher emailed the Ekurhuleni Regional Director to negotiate entry at DSD Ekurhuleni Region and emails were also sent to the managers of the funded NPOs in order negotiate entry into their NPOs.

The Ekurhuleni Regional Directors and the managers of the NPOs were gatekeepers in the study. After the approval of the request for access by the gatekeepers to conduct the study, the researcher scheduled an appointment in their offices where she requested to recruit the statutory social workers who met the set criteria and who were interested to be part of the study to voluntarily participate in the study. The twelve participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study verbally and by sending emails to the researcher. The researcher ensured that the informed consent was obtained.

#### **4.10.2 Confidentiality/privacy/anonymity**

According to Babbie (2017:67), confidentiality is being secretive about what has been disclosed during the interview. This will result in all information that is collected from the participants during the interviews to be kept hidden between the researcher and the participants. Grobler, Schenck and Mbedzi (2013:43) are of the opinion that to maintain confidentiality during the research study, both the researcher and the participants must be confident and can keep the information that has been shared in the study. It is important that the information which participants had shared should never be linked back to them. The Department of Social Development (2014:11) highlighted that it is important for the facilitator and the group members to agree on the rules and policies that guides how information will be private in the group. This will encourage people to be honest in the group.

According to Protection of Personal Information Act no 4 of 2013, any person who is the collector of information should be able always keep such information confidential in the performance of his/her duties (Republic of South Africa, 2013:64). To ensure confidentiality, the researcher ensured that all the information provided by the participants and data collected during the study was kept private between her and the participants, and the results were only shared with her supervisor. The researcher prepared the confidentiality forms that were signed by herself and the participants.

Privacy is defined as a state in which you are not watched by anyone else (Waite, 2015:708). It refers to the participants' ability to control when and under what conditions others will have access to their belief, values, or behaviour (Nortjie & Wessel, 2019:238). The researcher ensured that the rights and privacy of the participants are protected. The duty of the researcher was to ensure that privacy is maintained, and the researcher ensured that only the researcher and participant were present in the room when the interview was conducted.

According to the researcher's understanding, anonymity means that participants' identity will be kept anonymous and will not be shared with other people (Waite, 2015: 32). The researcher ensured that the participant information is not linked to their names or even going to the press after sharing information with her (Bless et al 2013:33). This was done by assigning codes to the participants or using pseudonyms as their names such as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11 and P12. The

researcher ensured that she does not reveal information that might endanger the lives, friends, relationships, jobs and living conditions of participants. The researcher also ensured that she was empathetic and sensitive in all the questions asked. The participants were educated that there was no mischief or distress in the form of physical, passionate, social and/or lawful harm during participation in interview sessions.

#### **4.10.3 Psychological harm**

It is important to highlight that when conducting the study, the researcher must avoid always harming the participants (Schmidt & Brown, 2015:60). The researcher can cause harm when they are asking the participants sensitive questions that might evoke negative emotions (Gibson, Benson & Brand, 2012: 12). Once the researcher is aware that the participants are distressed, it is important that debriefing or counselling session should be organised or offered to the participants (Picardi & Masick, 2014:35). The researcher ensured that she does not reveal information that might endanger the lives, friends, relationships, jobs and living conditions of participants.

The researcher ensured that she is empathetic and sensitive in all the questions asked. The participants were educated that there would be no mischief or distress in the form of physical, passionate, social and/or lawful harm during participation in interview sessions. Psychological harm cannot be predicted in most cases, and sometimes it remains subtle. However, in addressing such, the researcher ensured that she asked the participants how they felt after participating in the study. The participants were well-informed that they should not respond to any question when they feel that such a question is violating their right to confidentiality and that they can withdraw their participation in the research study whenever they think that they can no longer continue. A social worker was identified who the participants were referred to in case debriefing is required after the interview is conducted.

#### **4.10.4 Management of information**

According to Carey (2012:101), it is important to consider how data will be stored and how anonymity of the participant will be protected and also to determine who will have

access to this data before it is collected. Grove, Gray and Burns (2015:88) and Neuman (2014:154) goes further to explain that management of information is in fact how the researcher is going to handle or manages the information that is provided by the participants. The notes, audio recorder and transcripts of recording were kept in the safe space at all the times during the study, for example in a lockable cabinet and computer encrypted with a password. After the research was completed, the audio recordings will be destroyed after a period of five years. The researcher submitted the research to her supervisor without disclosing the names of the participants.

#### **4.11 Limitations of the study**

The limitations in the study were as follows.

- The participants were interviewed in their office and there was a lot of distractions as the offices were open spaces or open plan shared with their other colleagues. However, both the researcher and participants ensured that all the information shared is not heard by any other person not part of the research study.
- The senior administration officer employed by Gauteng DSD reported load-shedding as the reason, an email containing written approval for the researcher to conduct the study was delayed.
- The participants at the employ of the funded NPOs felt that written permission was needed from their managers even though the researcher had written permission from DSD as the state department monitoring the NPOs.

#### **4.12 Reflexivity of the study**

Reflexivity explains that the researcher reflects on her actions, role, and data in the research process (Lichtman, 2014:31). It explores the overlapping relationship between literature review, the researcher's experience, her role, and the world around her. As the study was an exploratory study, there were no assumptions about findings, but qualitative interviewing was a highly personal activity that necessitated critical self-reflection at all stages of the research process which the researcher tried to exercise as well as she could (King, Horrocks & Brocks, 2019:177).

The researcher was aware of issues that affected the study and the participants. Based on the idea that the research area was sensitive because statutory social workers might find it difficult to express their true feeling about rendering foster care services to undocumented children because they fear be judged, the researcher has constantly reassured the participants that there is experience is vital and they will be accepted unconditional. In addition, the researcher took off the hat of being a social worker and worn a hat of being always a researcher. Furthermore, the researcher also ensured that she does not use her personal feelings and beliefs during the study.

#### **4.13 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher presented the research methodology that were following conducting in the study. Qualitative research approach was used in this study and to explore and described the challenges of statutory social worker in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Exploratory, descriptive, and contextual research design was implemented. A sample of 12 statutory social workers employed by Gauteng DSD, Ekurhuleni region rendering foster care services to undocumented children were selected through snowball and purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews assisted with an interview guide were used to collect data from the statutory social worker rendering foster care services to undocumented children. The researcher further presented the process of data verification. The ethical considerations were also outlined.



## **5. CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the study conducted on the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. As indicated in the previous chapter (Chapter 4), this study adopted a qualitative research approach. In addition, the researcher used a semi-structured interviews to collect data with twelve participants, who are statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Furthermore, a purposive sampling was used to select the participants and the researcher also used Tesch's eight steps to analyse data as adapted from Creswell (2014:198). These social workers who participated in this research study are employed by the Department of Social Development (DSD), Ekurhuleni Region and its various funded NPOs.

In this study and chapter, the researcher presents the research findings, utilising main themes, and sub-themes, that emerged from the data analysis process. The findings of the study are supported by direct responses or quotes of the participants that were recorded during the interview. In addition to this chapter, the researcher begins by presenting the biographical data of the participants.

### **5.2 Demographical data of the participants**

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with twelve participants employed at the DSD, Ekurhuleni Region, and its funded NPOs. For ensuring anonymity, the researcher used pseudonyms as the names or identifying particulars of the participants. These pseudonyms are as follows; P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, and P12. During the study, it is critical to note that all the participants were willing to converse in English during the process of data collection. Fortunately, the researcher and the participants were familiar with the English language since it was used as the medium of instruction in most of the universities during their studies of a social work degree. The demographic profile of the twelve participants who participated in this study is presented under Table 5.1 below, which reflects the

participants' names, racial group, home language, age, gender, and years of work experience.

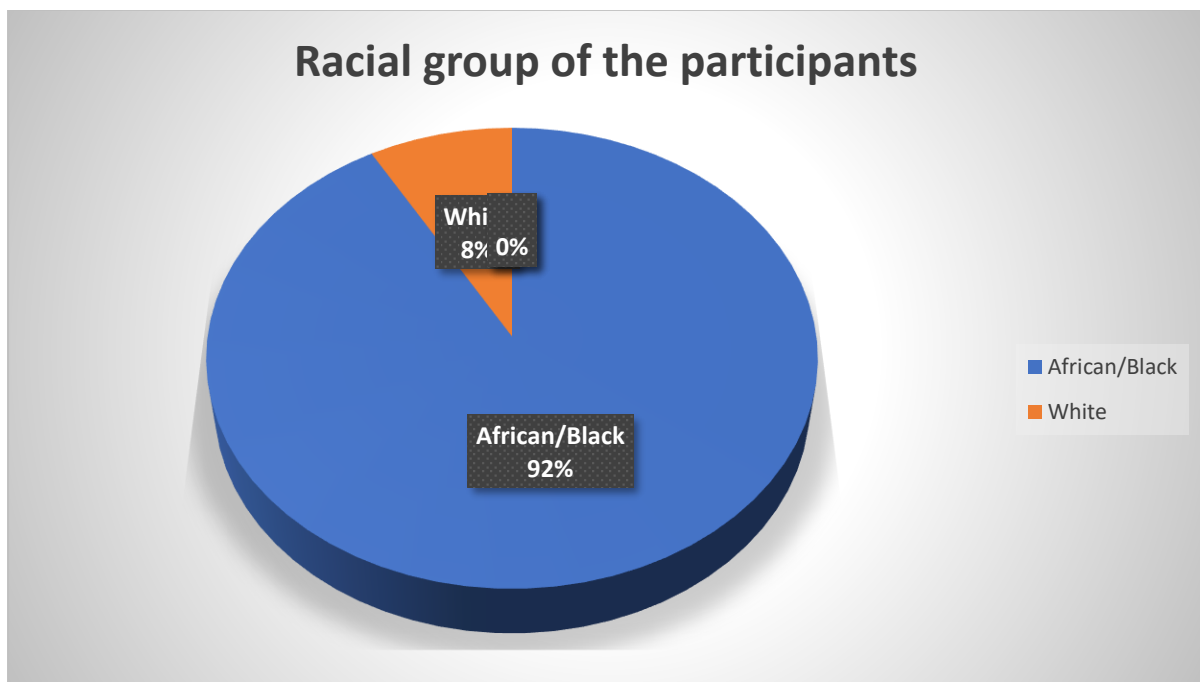
**Table 5.1 Biographical profile of the participants**

<b>Name of the participants</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Home language</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Years of work experience</b>
P1	African/black	IsiZulu	39	Female	5
P2	African/black	IsiZulu	36	Female	4
P3	African/black	Sepedi	29	Female	2
P4	African/black	Shona	38	Female	6
P5	African/black	Sepedi	31	Female	5
P6	White	English	73	Female	30
P7	African/black	IsiZulu	36	Female	4
P8	Africa/black	IsiZulu	38	Female	12
P9	Africa/black	IsiZulu	39	Female	4
P10	African/black	Xhosa	42	Female	4
P11	African/black	Sepedi	33	Male	4
P12	African/black	Sepedi	36	Male	8

- *Racial group of the participants*

As identified in Mokoka (2016:72), Sekgobela (2021:100), and Naicker (2021:151) the majority of social workers who participated in these studies were from African/black racial group. Similarly, table 5.1 above reflects that eleven (92%) out of 12 participants were from African/black racial group, which was the majority racial group in this study and one (8%) was white. This corresponds with the Statistics South Africa (2021:17), which reported that in the year 2021, the estimated number of African/blacks is 23 761 051 (80.9%), followed by Whites who are estimated to be 2 257 654 (7.7%). Whereas Indians are estimated to be 790 412 (2.7%) and Coloureds reported to be 2 578 930 (8.8%). The racial group of the participants is presented in the pie-chart below

**Figure 5.1: Racial group of the participants**

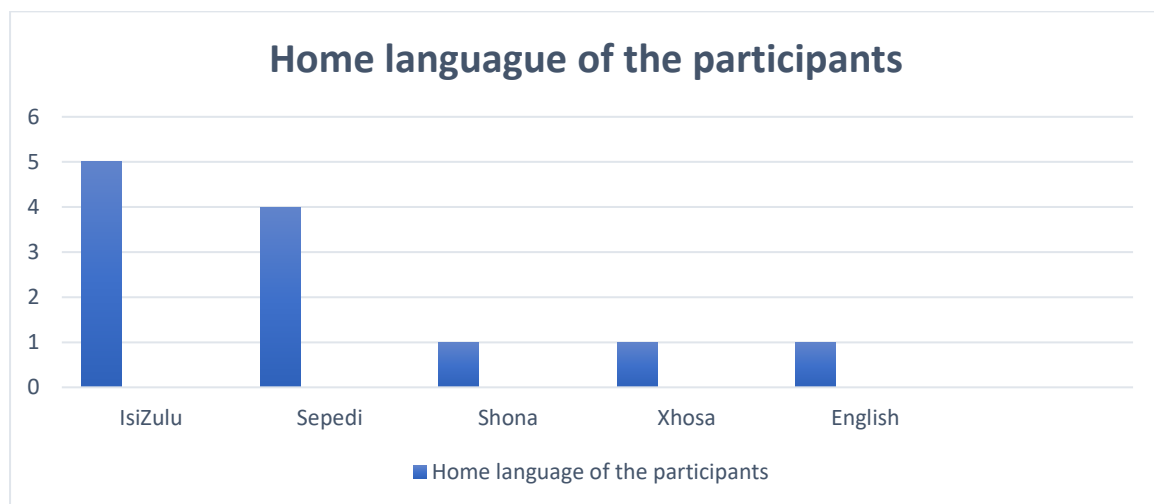


- *Home language*

According to table 5.1, five (42%) of the twelve participants were speaking IsiZulu, four (34%) participants were speaking Sepedi, while participants who speak Shona, Xhosa and English was found to be one (8%), respectively. This was attributed to the general idea that Gauteng Province (GP) comprises of people who are multilingual. However, it is important to note that, the majority of the participants were Zulu speaking. As of

2018, Zulu speaking people were a majority in South Africa as compared to other 10 South African Languages (Galal, accessed 2022 July 15). The idea that the home language of participants depends on the province where the study is conducted is supported by a study of Madisha (2019:66), when he/she shared that the home language of all participants was Sepedi because the study was conducted in Limpopo province. The home languages of the participants are presented in the graph below

**Figure 5.2: Home language of the participants**



- *Age of the participants*

Out of the twelve participants, 9 (75%) were between the age of 31 to 40 years. While there was one (8, 33%) of the participants between the age range of 21 to 30 years, 41 to 50 years, and 70 years and above. On the other hand, there were zero (0%) participants who were between the ages of 51 to 60 years. The majority of the participants were between the ages of 31 to 40 years. This is attributed by the fact that student social workers complete their degrees after the age of 22 years and above. The age range of participants in this research study is similar to the study conducted by Sikhitha (2018:138), where participants who participated in that study were found to be between the age ranges of 30 to 39 years. The age range of participants in this research is also similar to the study conducted by Madisha (2019:65), where

participants who participated in that study were found to be between the age of 29 and 43 years old. The age range of the participants is presented under table 5.2 below.

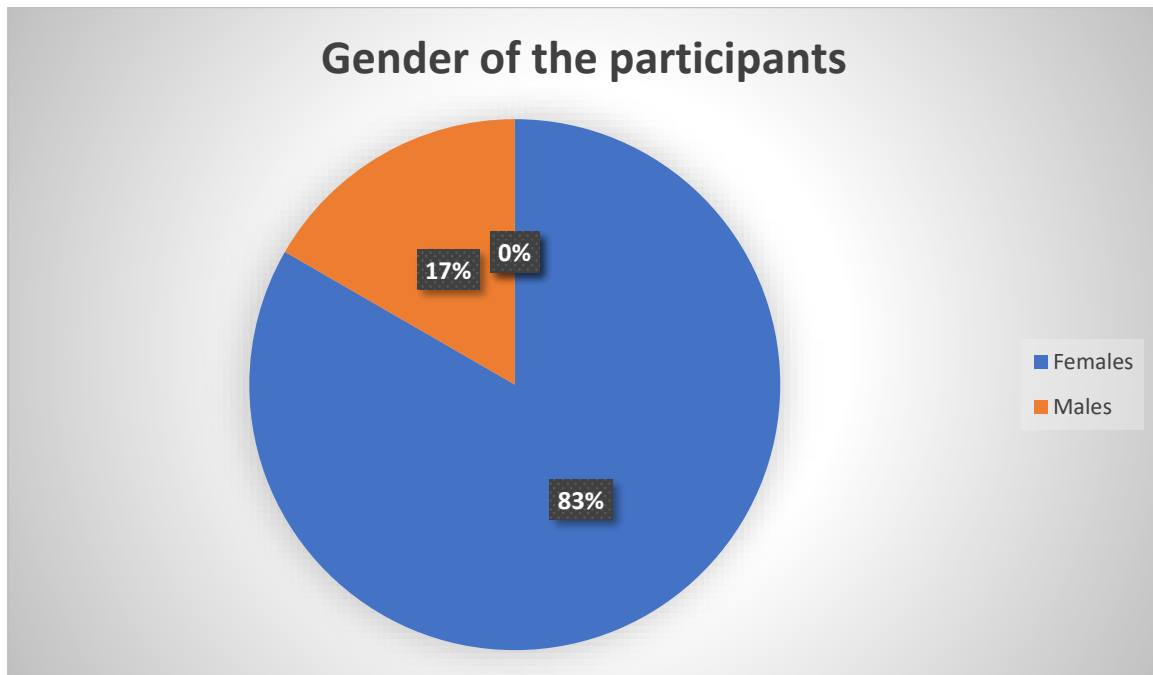
**Table 5.2 Age of the participants**

<b>Age range</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
21-30	1	8, 33%
31-40	9	75%
41-50	1	8, 33%
51-60	0	0%
61-70	0	0%
70+	1	8, 33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

- *Gender of the participants*

According to table 5.1 above, the biographical profile on gender of the participants in this study revealed that 10 (83%) out of 12 of the participants were females, whereas, 2 (17%) out of the 12 participants were males. This is attributed to the idea that the social work profession is generally dominated by women as it is seen with the majority of women who participated in the research study conducted by Maphoto (2020:28), where it was found that all eight participants who participated in that study were females, while zero were males. In a study conducted by Mokoka (2016:71), it was also found that eight of the ten participants were females while two of the participants were males. In a study conducted by Naicker (2021:149), it was found that eleven of the fourteen participants were females and three were males. The gender of the participants is presented in a pie-chart below;

**Figure 5.3: Gender of the participants**



- *Years of work experience in rendering foster care service*

Table 5.1 shows that the majority or all the participants have between two to twelve years and above work experience practicing as statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Therefore, the findings of the study indicates that the majority of the participants are well experienced in rendering foster care services to undocumented children as per the inclusion criteria above. Similarly, Maphoto (2020:28), Maluleka (2021:140), and Mokoka (2016:71) found that the work experience of social workers who participated in those studies ranged from two to over ten years and this also means that they had knowledge of the explored phenomenon. The years of work experience of the participants is presented in the table below.

**Table 5.3: Years of work experience of the participants**

<b>Years of work experience</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
2-10	10	83,33%
11-20	1	8,33%
21-30	1	8,33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **5.3 Presentation of key themes and sub-themes**

According to Guest (2012:12), the researcher utilised the research questions to identify the main themes, as well as sub-themes in the study. Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013:355) is of the opinion that key themes are identified from the storylines of the participants from the interviews conducted. Whereas Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen and Snelgrove (2016:101) explains that to understand the comprehensive nature of the data, themes can further be subdivided into subthemes, which may further be categorised if necessary. Data relating to the research findings, which are conveyed as themes are emphasised by the storylines or verbatim quotations from the transcribed interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:194). It is important to note that in this research study, the themes and subthemes emerged from the participants' answers from the questions asked by the researcher during the interview. In addition, the research questions were aligned to the specific objectives of the study. These themes and sub-themes are presented in the table below.

**Table 5.4: Themes and sub-themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
Theme 1: Current services rendered to undocumented children	Sub-theme 1.1: Statutory social work services

	<p>Sub-theme 1.2: Linking undocumented children and parents with relevant services from various government departments or stakeholders</p>
<p>Theme 2: The current services sought by the foster parents or caregivers of the undocumented children</p>	<p>Sub-theme 2.1. Linking prospective foster parents or caregivers of the undocumented children with services or assistance on behalf of the undocumented children</p> <p>Sub-theme 2.2. Requesting assistance with placements of children with a court order</p>
<p>Theme 3: The challenges experienced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented foster children.</p>	<p>Sub-theme 3.1: Difficulty getting assistance in applying for an undocumented child's birth certificate from the Department of Home Affairs</p> <p>Sub-theme 3.2: Difficulty in recruiting prospective foster parents who are willing to care and foster the undocumented children.</p> <p>Sub-theme 3.3: Lack of support from the Department of Social Development</p>
<p>Theme 4: Suggestions on how to improve statutory services rendered to undocumented children.</p>	<p>Sub-theme 4.1: Collaboration with other government departments and stakeholders</p> <p>Sub-theme 4.2: Training of statutory social workers to be provided by the Department of Social Development in relation to rendering foster care services to undocumented children.</p>



	Sub-theme 4.3: Statutory social workers should be able to form support groups for prospective foster parents or care givers of undocumented children
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## **THEME 1: CURRENT SERVICES RENDERED TO UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN**

This theme originated from the research question that was formulated as follows; “what are the current services rendered to undocumented children? Through data analysis, the theme that arose was that statutory social workers render a wide range of social work services to undocumented children, including statutory social work services and connecting undocumented children as well as their caregivers with appropriate services from different government departments and stakeholders rendering services to migrants. These social work services are outlined in the sub-themes below and supported with direct quotes from the participants.

### **Sub-theme 1.1: Statutory social work services**

According to DSD (2012:19), the statutory social work services rendered by social workers to undocumented children includes the following: court related, and court ordered services. This is also confirmed by Mmoloke (2017:128) when he/she shared that the statutory service is a legislative process which is initiated by the social workers by presenting the matter of children in a children’s court to determine whether the said child needs care and protection. During the interviews with the participants, it was shared that social workers firstly screen the service users, followed by the investigation from the field social worker. If the child has been found to be in need of care and protection in terms of Section 150 (1) of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2006:65), then the designated social worker will refer the case to the Commissioner of the Children’s Court inquiry in order to ensure that an order is granted in terms of Section 155 of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2006:65). The participants provided few statutory social work services that they are aware of. The views of the participants are captured in the quotes below.

*“I investigate whether the children need care protection in term of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 and find a suitable person to place the child with. After the investigation, I make the conclusion that the child needs care and protection or not. In addition, I compile a report and submit to the Clerk of the children’s court where the Commissioner of the Children’s Court Inquiry decide whether to issue an order or not. If the order is issued, it will indicate that the child is found to be in need of care and protection and whether a foster child grant must be paid to the foster parent or not”. (P2, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

Another participant shared as follows.

*“Another service is statutory service that involve children’s court proceedings”. (P5, 5 years practising as a social worker).*

While another participant shared her view as follows.

*“If a case is reported that a child is abandoned on the street by her alleged biological mother, the first thing is that the social worker has to try to do is to locate and find out the whereabouts of the family and if they cannot locate the child’s family, the child in question has to be placed in a temporary safe care in a Child and Youth Care Centre (CYCC) or private safety care parent for three months, after three months the social worker is expected to finalise the case”. (P4, 6 years practising as a social worker).*

From the above excerpts it can be deduced that the current services that statutory social workers render to undocumented children is the statutory work services. In a study conducted by Mmoloke (2017:80), which focused on foster care as one of the placement methods within statutory services, it was found that social workers mainly render services such as statutory social work services to service users. According to the DSD (2013b:18) and the Information Guide on the Management of Statutory Services, in terms of Children’s Act 38 of 2005, statutory intervention is a specialised field within the field of social work, that seeks to improve the social functioning of individuals, families and couples, by applying administrative procedures as prescribed by the law. In addition, it embraces different interventions in various categories of cases, including those aimed at court–ordered prevention and early intervention. Furthermore, and those arising from crises, reported cases that is brought before the

commissioner of the children`s court and those resulting in a child being placed in alternative care.

### **Sub-theme 1.2: Linking undocumented children and parents with relevant services from various government departments or stakeholders.**

This sub-theme emerged from the responses provided by participants and the researcher sub-divided them in two the following two categories.

#### **2.3.1. Category: Assisting with referral to the Department of Home Affairs**

Some of the participants shared that some of the statutory social work services rendered by social workers includes referring service users to the Department of Home Affairs. The following statements testifies to the fact that statutory social workers assist undocumented children with referrals to the Department of Home Affairs to ensure that they are in possession of legal documents while they are within the borders of the Republic of South Africa. It is critical to note that social workers also assist any South African citizen who is struggling with registration of birth, by referring such individual to the Department of Home Affairs. The following verbatim quotes were taken from the three participants.

*“One of my duties is to assist the undocumented children to acquire birth certificates or any kind of identifying documents. This is the most important social work service that we render to these children, in which we try to ensure that those children who are undocumented are documented. Generally, we have to conduct our investigation and determine the nationality of the child, because for the purposes of an application of a birth certificate that is a requirement from the Department of Home Affairs”. (P5, 5 years practising as a social worker).*

*“I assist with the referral to the Department of Home Affairs in order to ensure that the foster parent or caregiver apply for a child`s birth certificate”. (P8, 12 years practising as a social worker).*

*“The service we render to undocumented children is that we help them with the process of registration of birth”. (P11, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

It is apparent from the above responses of the participants that statutory social workers assist undocumented children with referrals to the Department of Home Affairs. This is in line with the Department of Home Affairs requirements of registering neglected and abandoned children, which states that notice of birth of neglected and abandoned children who have not been registered with the Department of Home Affairs shall be given at the Department, after an enquiry has been opened and finalised in terms of the Children’s Act no 38 of 2005 by a social worker or any authorised officer (Republic of South Africa, 2006:08). It further stipulates that, provided that the biological parent of the child is traced after the registration of birth, the particulars of the child should be correctly reflected or captured to include the personal details of the biological parents. It further stated that the notice of birth of an orphaned child does not list any persons contemplated in terms of Section 9(1) of the Act and it shall be given by a social worker after an enquiry in terms of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 is completed (Republic of South Africa, 2006:8). This was also confirmed by study by Mathe (2018:208) which finds that assistance with an application of an identity document is one of the services frequently required of by the undocumented migrant children from social workers.

### **2.3.2. Category: Assisting with motivation letter to the schools**

The majority of the participants shared that as part of the statutory social work services, the undocumented children are also assisted with motivation letters required by various schools in order to admit the children in question. The below direct quotations are evidence that the participants assist undocumented children with motivation letters to the schools for the purposes of admission.

*“It is also important to ensure that the children are enrolled at a school and as social workers, we assist them by issuing motivational letters to school”. (P7, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

*“The fact that they don’t have birth certificates, they experience challenges in accessing services such as schools or educational services if you don’t have a birth certificate the school would want a letter from the social worker. Therefore, we help them with those letters”. (P4, 6 years practising as a social worker).*

*“We also assist by writing a motivation for the undocumented child to be enrolled in a school because it is their basic right to have access to education”. (P10, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

*“I also assist with writing a motivation letter to ensure that the children are admitted at school”. (P3, 2 years practising as a social worker).*

*“As social workers, we also help the parents or caregivers of undocumented children with the process of school application”. (P12, 8 years practising as a social worker).*

These statements from the participants show that statutory social workers assist parents and caregivers of undocumented children with motivation letters for the schools with admission purposes. This is supported by a study conducted by Mathe (2018:208), which highlighted that assistance with enrolment at a school is one of the services frequently required of by the undocumented migrant children from social workers. According to the Department of Education (2017:18), in England the social workers together with other officials should collaborate to ensure that the appropriate educational provision for the undocumented unaccompanied children is arranged together with the placements. This view that statutory social workers assist undocumented children with motivation letters to the schools for admission purposes, seems to be contradicting the view shared by Gaun (2019:17), which states that the South African School Act (SASA) and the constitution of the Republic of South Africa stipulates that the admission of undocumented learners including migrant learners to public schools is mandatory.

## **THEME 2: THE CURRENT SERVICES SOUGHT BY THE PROSPECTIVE FOSTER PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS OF THE UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN**

The focus of this section was on understanding the statutory social workers views on the existing services sought by prospective foster parents or caregivers of the undocumented children. This section has two sub-themes namely (1) Linking prospective foster parents or caregivers of the undocumented children with services or assistance on behalf of the undocumented children. For example, they request to be assisted with the application of a birth certificate, enrolling the undocumented

children at a school and many other services, and (2) Requesting assistance with placements of children with a court order will be discussed below.

**Sub-theme 2.1. Linking prospective foster parents or caregivers of the undocumented children with services or assistance on behalf of the undocumented children.**

This theme was deduced from the following question, “What are the current services sought by the prospective foster parents or caregivers of undocumented children”? In responding to this question, most of the participants made reference to the idea that the prospective foster parents or caregivers would like to be or are linked with services from other departments where they will get assistance on behalf of the undocumented children. For example, they request to be assisted with the application of a birth certificate, enrolling the undocumented children at a school and many other services. The following are the participants` verbatim responses to this question.

*“You find that the care givers expect statutory social workers to assist them to get the foster care grant, birth certificates for the undocumented children and all basic necessity, for example, clothes and food”. (P9, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

*“Others you find that they are looking to be assisted with the application of a birth certificate because they are not able to access services from the other government departments or stakeholders”. (P11, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

*“First of all, they want a responsibility letter that proves they are taking care of the child. Secondly, they want to be assisted with the application for a birth certificate for the undocumented child they are caring for. Thirdly they would like to be assisted in enrolling the child in a school and finally because most of them are living in poverty, they need food parcels”. (P5, 5 years practising as a social worker).*

*“Most of them visit our office because they are looking for assistance with the process of the application of a birth certificate. In addition, they also want help getting the children in a school. Furthermore, they are looking or expecting to be assisted with an application of foster care grant so that they will be able to have the financial means to meet the basic needs of these children”. (P10, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

It is clear from the above responses, that most participants are of the view that prospective foster parents or caregivers would like to be linked with the services from other departments where they will get assistance on behalf of the undocumented children, for example, they often request to be assisted with the application of a birth certificate, enrolling the undocumented children at a school and many other services. This is contradicting to idea that undocumented families often do not seek assistance for their children because they fear that authorities will deport them once they discover that they do not have relevant or legal identity documents (Platform for International Cooperation Undocumented Children, 2017:2). This is also not in line with existing literature such as from the Department of Education (2017:5), Mathe (2018:19), and The Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town (2017:3), which focused their research studies on the challenges of undocumented and unaccompanied migrant children, which are defined as a person under the age of 18 years who arrive in a foreign country without a parent or a known relative and without legal identity documents. An example of this kind of children are the sixteen (16) children who were arrested during the “O ka molao” operation as stated in Chapter one of this study. These children were travelling alone without adult supervision.

### **Sub-theme 2.2 Requesting assistance with placements of undocumented children with a court order.**

Some of the participants are of the view that prospective foster parents or caregivers are requesting statutory social workers to assist them by placing undocumented children with them. The following are the findings of the study presented in a form of direct quotes, taken from two participants.

*“Sometimes you find that the prospective foster parents or caregivers are looking to be assisted with placing an undocumented child with them by a court*

*order because the court order is required when they are requesting services from other departments such as the Department of Home Affairs or any other stakeholder on behalf of the undocumented children”. (P12, 8 years practising as a social worker).*

*“They come to our offices because they want to enquire about the process of foster care placement since the biological mother of the undocumented child has abandoned a child with them”. (P10, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

*“First of all, they want a responsibility letter that proves they are taking care of the undocumented child”. (P5, 5 years practising as a social worker).*

The storylines above are consistent with the definition of formal foster care placement which refers to an alternative care where children are placed in the care of a suitable person/s for a specific period by the Children’s Court order (Kazibona, 2015:17; Carter & Van Breda, 2016:209; Mosimege, 2017:27). According to the Republic of South Africa (2006:65), for a child to be placed in formal foster care he/she must be found to need care and protection in terms of section 150(1) of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005. In terms of Section 155 of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 a social worker plays a vital role in the process of formal foster care. The social workers are the expert witness in the Children’s Court, and they are expected to submit a report where they make recommendations to the Children’s Court. The presiding officer of the Children’s Court is not bound by the recommendations of the social worker, however, the recommendation from the social worker assists the Commissioner of the Children’s Court inquiry to decide if indeed the child is need of care and protection (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015:335).

### **THEME 3: THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY STATUTORY SOCIAL WORKERS RENDERING FOSTER CARE SERVICES TO UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN**

This study explored the challenges faced by statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children. The following are the sub-themes that emerged from data collected with the social workers rendering services to undocumented children, namely, difficulty getting assistance in applying for an



undocumented child`s birth certificate from the Department of Home Affairs, difficulty in recruiting prospective foster parents who are willing to care and foster the undocumented children, and lack of support from the Department of Social Development.

### **Sub-theme 3.1: Difficulty getting assistance in applying for an undocumented child`s birth certificate from the Department of Home Affairs**

Some of the participants shared that they find it difficult to get help from the Department of Home Affairs in applying for the undocumented child`s birth certificate or to facilitate registration of birth for these children. The following direct quotes from the transcribed interviews of the five (5) participants support this sub-theme.

*“Another thing is that the Department of Home Affairs seems to be not interested in helping us to assist these children because you find that, when you go there, you will spend the whole day and at times we don’t even get assistance”.(P3,2years practising as a social worker).*

*“...and when we go to the Department of Home Affairs, they take forever to help u s”. (P9, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

*“The Department of Home Affairs become one of the major obstacles, because of the delays to assist us with the issuing of birth certificates of these undocumented children”. (P7, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

*“It is a struggle to apply for a birth certificate because you will be taken from pillar to post by the Department of Home Affairs”. (P11, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

*“The challenge for me as a statutory social worker will be the waste of time because it takes too much time when you approach the Department of Home Affairs, and with the process again, they will tell you it will take a year or two”. (P10, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

Mathe (2018:175) is of the opinion that DHA is the only department that is entrusted with the mandate of issuing documentation and in most instances, this department does not carry out this duty effectively and efficiently. The author further acknowledges that the social worker’s lack of authority in the issuing of documentation makes it

difficult for them to render further services to the undocumented migrant children. In another study conducted by Ngidi (2012:128), it is revealed that, cases of poor service delivery in the DHA, is demonstrated by delays in processing applications for the service users. In addition, the following was also identified, incorrect processing of documents, cases of fraud and corruption or inefficient systems. The author further pointed out that any evidence of service delivery works against some of the Batho Pele principle in the public service. The findings in Ngidi's research seems to be corroborated by the participants' responses in this research, in which they identified challenges such as the difficulty getting assistance in applying for an undocumented child's birth certificate from the Department of Home Affairs and in recruiting prospective foster parents who are willing to care and foster the undocumented children.

### **Subtheme 3.2: Difficulty in recruiting prospective foster parents who are willing to care and foster the undocumented children.**

Some of the participants identified a challenge in recruiting the prospective foster parents who are eager to care and look after the undocumented children. It has been found that several prospective foster parents are reluctant to foster undocumented children. Underlining this sub-theme under discussion, the following utterances were made by the three (3) participants and are quoted below.

*“Most of the prospective foster parents and caregivers do not want to take the undocumented children into their care”. (P9, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

*“First of all, if you want to place these children into a family unit, you find that many prospective foster parents are not willing to care for these children”. (P10, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

*“The other challenge is that the prospective foster parents refuse to take the undocumented children into their care. (P12, 8 years practising as a social worker).*

In contradiction to this sub-theme and the above storylines, Muchanyerei (2015:80), in his study on the challenges experienced by social workers placing children living

with HIV in foster care in Johannesburg, found that all the foster parents who participated in that study, are said to have no problem bringing children living with HIV into their care. It is clear that the foster parents were willing to care for children despite their health challenges. These findings seem to be contradicting the above storylines as the views of the social workers highlighted that, the prospective foster parents and caregivers were not willing to care for children without documentation. According to Brown, Sebba and Luke (2014:7), the success of the foster care placement is highly dependent on the recruitment or selection of suitable and willing individuals to become the foster parents.

### **Sub-theme 3.3 Lack of support from the Department of Social Development**

This study also identified lack of support from the Department of Social Development as one of the challenges experienced by statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children. This is evident in the quotations below:

*“There is no structure and no support from the Department of Social Development, no guidelines, all the children are trafficked without documents.” (P6, 30 years practising as a social worker).*

*“Another thing, even if you refer all these challenges to the Department of Social Development for their assistance, they do not assist with anything. All the officials from DSD, all they know is to blame us, more especially us the ones working for the NPOs”. (P10, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

*“We are not getting all the support we need from the Department of Social Development; we need intervention from the provincial level”. (P11, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

It is evident from the above presented storylines that participants do not receive support from the DSD which is not in line with the idea that Gauteng Department of Social Development under the field and intake directorate give support to statutory social workers by planning to appoint five social work supervisors to supervise social workers. One of the responsibilities of these social work supervisors will be to give supervision and advice to social workers and social auxiliary workers to ensure that

effective social work services are rendered to the service users (Public Service Vacancy, 2022: 181). On the 14 September 2022 the Gauteng Department of Social Development hosted an internal seminar at Sunnyside Park Holiday Inn for social workers in order to empower them to be able to render an effective service to their clients ([www.facebook.com/DepartmentofSocialDevelopment](https://www.facebook.com/DepartmentofSocialDevelopment) of Social Development published on the 14 September 2022).

#### **THEME 4: SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO IMPROVE SERVICES RENDERED TO UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN**

The following theme presents the suggestions provided by the participants on how social workers can improve their services that are rendered to undocumented children; namely, collaboration with other government departments and stakeholders, training to be provided by the Department of Social Development in relation to rendering foster care services to undocumented children and statutory social workers should be able to form support groups for prospective foster parents or care givers of undocumented children.

##### **Sub-theme 4.1: Collaboration with other government departments and stakeholders**

Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017:173), in their research study found that a lack of integration of services or collaboration within different sections in the Department of Social Development is a major factor in the delivery of foster care services which is inadequate. In light of that, the theme arose from the responses of the participants to the question which sought the suggestions that the participants would provide in order to improve the services rendered to undocumented children. The following direct quotations refers to the suggestions made by the participants that there should be a collaboration or coordination between various government departments in order to provide a better service to the undocumented children.

*“It is better if we work together with officials from other departments and also social workers from and other countries in order to give services that will better the children’s lives”. (P3, 2 years practising as a social worker).*

*“Our departments are not really working together, and I think a better solution or suggestion could be that our departments work together. It is important to note that the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 is emphasising that the best interest of the children is paramount, and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa also stresses that it is the child’s right to have basic education and have identity documents. Though that is not happening on the ground. So, you see working together by the various departments will be crucial”. (P5, 5 years practising as a social worker).*

*“My wish is to have collaboration with all the stakeholders working with children in need of care and protection. There should be an agreement to prioritise these children”. (P9, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

In a study conducted by Skhosana (2013:177), it is recommended that different government departments and stakeholders need to come together to ensure better services to the children in need of care and protection are achieved. This recommendation is in support of the above theme which suggests that there must be an integration of services with various government departments and other stakeholders. Furthermore Naicker’s (2021:384) study also recommended that alternative documentations should be recognised by all the government departments to ensure that efficient services are provided to ensure that the best interest of the children in need of care and protection is maintained.

#### **Sub-theme 4.2: Training of statutory social workers to be provided by the Department of Social Development in relation to rendering foster care services to undocumented children.**

Most participants in this study were of the view that training of statutory social workers needs to be provided by the Department of Social Development in relation to rendering foster care services to undocumented children in order to ensure that an effective service is rendered. P9 with 4 years practicing experience as a social worker, shared the following recommendation.

*“I am still experiencing a high number of undocumented clients mainly from nearby countries. According to the guidelines and requirements of the department, documentation is required from the clients in order to provide*

*services to them. Unfortunately, the Department of Social Development does not tell us clearly what we as social workers need do when we are faced with this type of clients. It is important that we are taught and trained on how to render foster care services to undocumented children”. (P9, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

P5, with 5 years working experience as a social worker attest that:

*“I think the Department of Social Development should be able to provide us with information of where to go to when it is difficult for us to get the undocumented children documented because sometimes you will find yourself stacked because everywhere you go to get assistance on behalf of the undocumented child leads to dead end”. (P5, 5 practising as a social worker)*

While P12 suggested as follows.

*“I think it is important for the social workers not only to be educated on the guidelines of rendering foster care services in general. To be specific the department provides need specialised education because different children who are found to be in need of care and protection require different types of services”. (P12, with 8 years practising as a social worker).*

It can be deduced from the above statement that participants are of the view that training of statutory social workers should be provided by the Department of Social Development in relation to rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Mokoka (2016:111) found that the Department of Social Development in Johannesburg, regional managers organise seminars and workshops to train the social workers and their supervisors for them to understand what is expected from them. She further found that to ensure professional growth and development of officials it is important to hold in service training.

#### **Sub-theme 4.3: Statutory social workers should be able to form support groups for prospective foster parents or care givers of undocumented children.**

It appeared during the interviews that the participants are of the view that statutory social workers should form support groups for prospective foster parents or care givers

of undocumented children to deal with the challenges that they experience when taking care of these undocumented children. This was confirmed during the interview with P4 with 6 years working experience as a social worker, who recommended as follows.

*“Many prospective foster parents come to my office because they are having challenges in accessing a service from other departments or stakeholders. As a social worker I think a support group must be formed and facilitated, so that the prospective foster care parents or care givers will be able to share their different challenges in raising undocumented children and give each other support”. (P4, 6 years practising as a social worker).*

In addition, P11, with four years working experience and practising as social worker, recommended as follows.

*...” Because the prospective foster parents or the caregivers of the undocumented children come to our office with the same problem often, I recommend that a social worker form a support group that can help them (prospective foster parents) to share their ideas on how to care for these undocumented children”. (P11, 4 years practising as a social worker).*

The views of the participants in the above storylines are consistent with the views shared in a study conducted by Muchanyerei (2015:72) when they recommended that a support group must be formed for foster parents to ensure that they are able to support each other. The support group seeks to ensure that foster parents, can share their common experiences with each other to better their lives. The group members can share their challenges and experience of being a foster parent in a safe space without being judged by other group members. The group assist group members to learn from each other and assist them to feel understood and that they are not alone in their situation (Nelson, accessed on 2017 March 24).

#### **5.4 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter presented the research findings that emerged from data collection and analysis with the participants from the study conducted on the challenges experienced

by social workers rendering services to undocumented children. The findings of the study represented four main themes, accompanied by sub-themes and categories. The themes, subthemes and categories are complemented by storylines from the transcripts that were justified with literature. The demographic profile of the statutory social workers who participated in the study were also presented to understand the biographical information of the participants as per the inclusion criteria.

Theme one presented the current services rendered to undocumented children. Two subthemes were introduced namely, statutory services and linking undocumented children with services with another departments or stakeholder and this subtheme was further divided into two categories namely assisting with a referral to the Department of Home Affairs and assisting with motivation letter to the schools. Theme two presented the current services sought by prospective foster or caregivers of the undocumented children. This theme is divided into two sub-themes namely, linking prospective foster parents or caregivers of the undocumented children with services or assistance on behalf of the undocumented children, and requesting assistance with placements of undocumented children with a court order. Theme three presented the challenges faced by statutory social worker in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Three subthemes were introduced namely, difficulty getting assistance in applying for a birth certificate from the Department of Home Affairs, difficulty in recruiting prospective foster parents who are willing to care and foster the undocumented children and Lack of support from the Department of Social Development. Finally theme four presented the participants' suggestions on how to improve services to undocumented children, namely, collaboration with other government departments and stakeholders, training of statutory social workers to be provided by the Department of Social Development in relation to rendering foster care services to undocumented children, and statutory social workers should be able to form support groups for prospective foster parents or care givers of undocumented children. The chapter below will then focus of the conclusions and recommendations based on the empirical findings of the study.



## **6. CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter represents a synopsis of the research results and suppositions taken from this research study. Finally, suggestions will be put together centred on the findings and inferences to provide detailed understanding of the challenges experienced by statutory social workers providing foster care services to undocumented children. Additionally, statutory social workers will have more understanding of what must be performed to guarantee that undocumented children are provided with foster care services and in that way their basic and financial needs will be met.

### **6.2 Conclusions**

This research study sought to discover the challenges faced by statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children within the borders of South Africa, to ensure that their basic and financial needs are met, as well as to guide statutory social workers providing foster care services to undocumented children. The investigator is of the idea that this aim of the study has been attained from the results gained during the discussions with the statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented. Furthermore, the outcomes are predicted to contribute to social work practice by guaranteeing that standards for assisting undocumented children are established for social service professionals and promote to the development of the policy. The goal of this study was attained reaching the following specific objectives.

- To explore and describe the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children.
- To examine the current services rendered to undocumented children.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations about the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

### **6.2.1 Current services rendered to undocumented children**

This conclusion is linked objective number two (2) which was about examining the current services provided to undocumented children. It is obvious, looking at the results that there are various services rendered to undocumented children by the statutory social workers, namely, statutory social work services and ensuring that undocumented children and their caregivers are linked with relevant services from different government departments or stakeholders. The results of this study are in line with Jamieson (2013:95), when it was shared that social workers employed by the Department of Social Development and various Non-Profit Organizations are expected to investigate and compile reports which are then submitted to the Children's Court for the opening and finalization of the Children's Court inquiry. In addition, to ensure that a court order is granted to confirm that the child is in need of care and protection.

This research concluded that a statutory social worker through statutory services must be able to link foster children with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. Once the court order is issued the foster parent is expected to apply for foster care grant at the South African Social Service Agency (SASSA) (Mampane & Ross, 2017:3; Boning & Ferreira, 2013:526). This research study further concluded that the social worker would link the foster children and their foster parent with SASSA. Mmoloke (2017:128) concurs with the above statement when he defines statutory intervention as a legal process where the social worker initiates by bringing matters of child protection to the magistrate to determine whether the children are in need of care and protection. Dhludhlu (2021:231) in his thesis recommended that it is important to assist foster children with the Further Education Training in order for them to further their education.

### **6.2.2 Current services sought by the foster parents or caregivers of the undocumented children.**

This conclusion is also linked with objective number two (2) which focused on the services sought and rendered to undocumented children. It is clearly shown on the outcome of the study that there are different services sought by foster parents or caregivers of the undocumented children, namely, foster parents or caregivers would like to be linked with services from other departments where they will get assistance

on behalf of the undocumented children and requesting assistance with placements of children with a court order. This is contradicting to idea that undocumented families often do not seek assistance for their children because they fear that authorities will deport them once they discover that they do not have relevant or legal identity documents (Platform for International Cooperation Undocumented Children, 2017:2). This is also not in line with existing literature such as from the Department of Education (2017:5), Mathe (2018:19), and The Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town (2017:3), which focused their research studies on the challenges of undocumented and unaccompanied migrant children, which are defined as a person under the age of 18 years who arrive in a foreign country without a parent or a known relative and without legal identity documents. An example of this kind of children are the sixteen children who were arrested during the “O ka molao” operation as stated in Chapter one of this study. These children were travelling alone without adult supervision.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the following are the services sought by the prospective foster parent, which are aimed to assist the undocumented children; it is found that linking the prospective foster parents with the following services namely they often request assistance with the application of birth certificate and enrolling the undocumented children into the schooling system. The study also found that prospective foster care or care givers request statutory social workers to assist them by placing the undocumented children into their care.

### **6.2.3 The challenges experienced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children**

This conclusion addresses objective number one (1), which explored and described the challenges experienced by statutory social workers rendering services to undocumented children. It is clear from the outcome that there are several challenges experienced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. They experience challenges such as difficulty in getting assistance in applying for a birth certificate at the Department of Home Affairs. Mathe (2018:175) is of the opinion that DHA is the only department that is entrusted with the mandate of issuing documentation and in most instances, this department does not carry out this duty effectively and efficiently. The author further acknowledges that the social worker’s lack of authority in the issuing of documentation makes it difficult for

them to render further services to the undocumented migrant children.

In addition, difficulty in recruiting prospective foster parents has been found as a challenge experienced by statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Muchanyerei (2015:80), in his study on the challenges experienced by social workers placing children living with HIV in foster care in Johannesburg, found that all the foster parents who participated in that study, are said to have no problem bringing children living with HIV into their care. The foster parents were willing to care for children despite their health challenges or condition. These findings seem to be contradicting the outcomes of this study, where it has been found that the prospective foster parents and caregivers were not willing to care for children without documentation. According to Brown, Sebba and Luke (2014:7), the success of the foster care placement is highly dependent on the recruitment or selection of suitable and willing individuals to become the foster parents.

Lack of support from the Department of Social Development has also been identified as challenge experienced by the foster parents or caregivers caring for the undocumented children. This is in line with the studies from Sibanda and Lombard (2017:177) and Maphoto (2020:52) where it was found that DSD is failing to provide social workers rendering foster care services with support. DSD does not provide social workers with resources such as transportation and other tools to perform their duties effectively. Sekgobela (2021:150) also confirms that social worker does not receive support from their employers when they are performing their duties, including rendering statutory services.

Based on the three paragraphs presented above, it can be concluded that statutory social workers are experiencing the following challenges when rendering foster care services to undocumented children; difficulty getting assistance in applying for an undocumented child's birth certificate from DHA, difficulty in recruiting prospective foster parents who are willing to care and foster undocumented children and lack of support from DSD

### **6.3 Recommendations**

The followings recommendations emerged from the research results that were collected during data collection from the statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Therefore, these recommendation addresses the challenges experienced by statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

#### **6.3.1 Collaboration with other government departments and stakeholders**

Collaboration with other government departments and stakeholders is important to ensure that the foster care services rendered by statutory social workers is efficient and effective. Dhludhlu (2021:225) recommended that “integration of services within various stakeholders will help address the challenges and experience of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa”. In addition, Naicker (2021:349) found that it is important for different role players who affect the service delivery when rendering foster care service to have good relationship to aspire to reach a common goal of delivering an effective foster care services to the undocumented children. Lastly, Muchanyerei (2015:85) recommended that all stakeholders rendering foster care services to children living with HIV/Aids are required to coordinate their efforts to ensure that the process of fostering these children is successful.

According to the findings of this study, it can be recommended that there should be collaboration or coordination between government departments and stakeholders rendering services to undocumented individuals to provide better services to undocumented children. The following are the examples of stakeholders who must render successful foster care services to undocumented children, namely, Department of Social Development, Non-Profit organizations, family courts, South African Social Security Agency, the Department of Home Affairs and Department of Basic Education.

#### **6.3.2 Training of statutory social workers to be provided by the Department of Social Development in relation to rendering foster care services to undocumented children**

In the study conducted by Naicker (2021:386), it was suggested that the department of Social Development need to mandate the training institutions to provide social workers with professional growth. It was further suggested that the training should

address the following: skills and experience required to perform their duties and tools required to perform their duties. Bopape (2022:242) also proffered the following recommendations pertaining to the training, education and continuous professional development for social workers rendering trauma informed services. Lastly, Muchanyerei (2015:84) recommended that social workers working with children living with HIV/Aids should be trained on issues of the virus in order to enable them to provide valid and detailed information on the virus to the prospective foster parents.

The findings for this study indicated that, linking undocumented children with another department(s) or stakeholder(s) which include assisting the referral to the Department of Home Affairs and assisting with motivation letters to the schools. Based on this finding, the researcher recommends that statutory social workers need to be provided with training and education pertaining to the legislations, policies and guidelines governing DHA and the Department of Basic Education to ensure that they are understand the requirements of these departments in relation to undocumented children.

### **6.3.3 Statutory social workers should be able to form support groups for prospective foster parents or care givers of undocumented children**

In a study conducted by Masha (2020:151) it was recommended that social workers should develop pre-foster care support groups or programs where the foster parents and their families will be educated or empowered with knowledge about the foster care system. Lastly, Muchanyerei (2015:72) believed developing foster parents support groups will assist them to address their experiences and challenges of fostering children living with HIV/Aids. In addition, the support group also offer the group members psychological and emotional support.

The findings for this study indicate that statutory social workers have difficulty recruiting prospective fosters parents to care for the undocumented children. These are challenges faced by statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that statutory social workers employed within the Department of Social Development and funded Non-Profit Organisations need to develop parenting skills programmes and educate the prospective foster parents about the experiences of undocumented children.

#### **6.3.4. Recommendation for future research**

Furthermore, future research is required to be done to explore more of the challenges experienced by statutory social workers rendering services to undocumented children, more especially in other provinces since these challenges are not only affecting social workers employed within the Gauteng Province. Other areas for future research on the challenges experienced by statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children should be as follows:

- Since the study was limited to Gauteng Department of Social Development Ekurhuleni Region and their funded NPOs, a study that include other regions may be necessary to get a clear picture of the challenges faced by statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children in the whole of Gauteng DSD and their funded NPOs.
- Based on the idea that the study focused only on the challenges faced by statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children, it is further recommended that future research is required where the experiences and challenges of officials from other departments and stakeholders are explored when they are rendering services to undocumented individuals and children.
- Further research studies can also be undertaken on the experiences of the undocumented children and/or their caregivers in receiving foster care services. It is important to hear their experiences from their frame of reference because it is clear that there are many challenges that they experience, and such research will enable social workers to have a better understanding on the ways to provide them with appropriate services.

#### **6.4. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

The report consists of six chapters and these chapters are presented as follows.

Chapter One provided the background and context of the study, problem statement, motivation of the study, goal and objectives, research questions, clarification of key concepts and structure of the dissertation.

Chapter Two is on the literature review. The chapter reviewed literature on the undocumented children globally, regionally and in South Africa. It further continued with the discussion of foster care as an alternative option for undocumented children found to need care and protection. A brief discussion on the policies regarding foster care services of undocumented children in South Africa was provided. Lastly, in this chapter, the legislative framework was also discussed as well as the role of statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children

Chapter Three focused on the theoretical framework of the study. The theoretical framework that was utilised in the study was social inclusion. The chapter presented the assumptions of social inclusion theory. This framework explored how statutory social workers need to integrate undocumented children into South African society or system and ensure that they participate in the programmes and services offered by the state within the community.

Chapter 4 focused on the research methodology. The chapter includes a discussion on the research approach, research paradigm, research design, research methods, data collection approach, data management and analysis, data verification/trustworthiness, ethical considerations, potential limitations of the study, and reflexivity.

Chapter 5 presented the findings according to the themes, sub-themes, and categories. Literature review is used to affirm or contradict findings of the study. The data were independently analysed by the researcher and her supervisor to ensure that the study is credible.

Finally, Chapter 6, presents the conclusions and recommendations, based on the findings of the study. It ensures that the goal and objectives of the study is achieved.



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## **APPENDIX A: REQUESTS FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT THE STUDY AT GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Gauteng Department of Social Development

29 May 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Re: RESEARCH ON THE CHALLENGES FACED BY STATUTORY SOCIAL WORKERS IN RENDERING FOSTER CARE SERVICES TO UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN**

My name is Miss Thabang Mapheto I am masters' student social worker in the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Dr Sandile Dhludhlu who is, employed as a lecture at the University of South Africa. As part of my studies, I am expected to undertake a research project and for this reason, I have decided to do an investigation into the challenges faced by statutory social worker in rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

The study was, influenced by the idea that there are little support systems and no information for statutory social workers about rendering services to undocumented children. The goal of this study is to develop an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. I request your permission to recruit potential participants from the Gauteng Department of Social Development. The statutory social workers are, employed by Gauteng Department and its funded NPOs. I request your assistance in linking me with potential participants. Participation is voluntary and there is no monetary remuneration.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study, you can contact me at the following number: 078 058 9752 (anytime of the day) or email on [35356200@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:35356200@mylife.unisa.ac.za). My supervisor, Dr Sandile Dhludhlu on the following number: 012 429 4285 or email on [dhludsl@unisa.ac.za](mailto:dhludsl@unisa.ac.za)(during working hours) should you need more clarity.

Please note that the Research and Ethics Committee<sup>1</sup> of the Department of Social Work at Unisa have approved this study. Without the approval of this committee, the study cannot, be conducted. Should you have any questions and queries not sufficiently addressed by me as the research, or my supervisor, you are welcome to contact the Chairperson of the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at Unisa. His contact details are as follows: Dr K.J. Malesa, telephone number: 012 429 4780, or email [maleskj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:maleskj@unisa.ac.za) .

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours faithfully

Thabang Mapheto

Researcher

## APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Enquiries: Dr. Sello Mokoena  
Tel: 082 331 0786  
File no.: 20/07/22

Dear Ms MT Mapheto

**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 on the research on **"THE CHALLENGES FACED BY STATUTORY SOCIAL WORKERS IN RENDERING FOSTER CARE SERVICES TO UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN"** at the **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 endorsed on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

You have permission to interview departmental officials and beneficiaries, 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: 20/07/2022



**APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM UNISA COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE.**



**COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

31 January 2022

Dear Ms Mabolotse Thabang, Mapheto

**Decision:**  
Ethics Approval from 31 January  
2022 to 31 January 2025

NHREC Registration # :  
Rec-240816-052  
CREC Reference # :  
35356200\_CREC\_CHS\_2022

**Researcher(s): Name:** Ms Mabolotse Thabang, Mapheto  
**Contact details:** [35356200@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:35356200@mylife.unisa.ac.za)  
**Supervisor(s): Name:** Dr S.L. Dhludhlu  
**Contact details:** 012 429 4285

**Title:** The challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

**Purpose:** MSW

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, 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



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confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (31 January 2025). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number 35356200\_CRECHS\_2022 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

Signature: pp



Prof. KB Khan  
CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson  
Email: khankb@unisa.ac.za  
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Signature: PP



Prof. K. Masemola  
Executive Dean: CHS  
E-mail: masemk@unisa.ac.za  
Tel: (012) 429 2298

## **APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SOCIAL WORKERS**

Name: Thabang Mapheto (Social Worker and Student)

Contact details: 078 058 9752

Supervisor: Dr Sandile Dhludhlu (Lecturer and Social Worker)

Name Institution: University of South Africa

Contact details of the Supervisor: 012 429 4285

Research participant

I would like to request you to participate in the study that will be conducted as follows:

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Exploring the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. I would like to do this through a semi-structured interview with you.

### **NATURE OF THE STUDY**

I would like to have 45 minutes to an hour-long interview with you and I might need to have a follow up interview when necessary.

I will have to record our interview sessions so that I will be able to capture the interview accurately.

I would like to conduct an interview in your office and at most convenient time for you.

Should you decide to participate in this study; please be advised that there will be no reimbursements for your participation. In addition, the following are the important things to note:

### **CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE**

Whatever you disclose during the interview will never be revealed to anyone except my supervisor at the university. Your name will be withheld, and I will be using pseudonyms. I will make sure that in my research report, your name, and any other identifying details are not mentioned. Also, note that the information will be kept in a safe place and after five years it will be destroyed.

## **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

This means that you can quit from this study at any time if you feel uncomfortable. Furthermore, there are no adverse consequences of non-participation or withdrawal from the study that you will experience because of quitting.

## **CONSENT**

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby agree to participate in the research study regarding the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. I understand that I am participating freely without being forced in any way. I also understand that I can withdraw from this study at any point should I not want to continue, and that this decision will not affect me negatively.

The purpose of the study was explained to me and I understand what is expected of my participation. I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not to necessarily benefit me personally. I also, understand that my answers will remain confidential.

**Participant signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date signed** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researchers' signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date signed** \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX E**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

Interview schedule for statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

The following are the questions determining the biographical information of the statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

- What is the racial group that you associate yourself with?
- What is your home language?
- How old are you?
- What gender do you associate yourself with?

The questions directed to the statutory social workers rendering foster care services to undocumented children were as follows;

- How long have you been a statutory social worker rendering foster care services to undocumented children?
- What are the current services rendered to undocumented children?
- What are the current services sought by the prospective foster parents or caregivers of undocumented children?
- What are the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children?
- What are the services that you would like to render to undocumented children to ensure that they are cared and protected?

Thank you for your contribution.

## **APPENDIX F: LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPANTS' PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

Department of social work

University of South Africa

25 May 2023

Dear participant

Research project on the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children.

My name is Mabolotse Thabang Mapheto and I am masters' student social worker in the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project and for this reason I have decided to do an investigation into the challenges faced by statutory social worker in rendering foster care services to undocumented children. The reason for undertaking this project is because so little is known about the topic and since you have personal experience about this subject, I regard you as an expert who can provide me with valuable information about it.

I would like to explain to you what your participation in this research project will involve (if you agree to participate)

Should you agree to participate in this project, I would like to have one-on-one interview with you. This interview will not take longer than 60 minutes. If necessary, arrangement will be made with you for a follow up interview. During the interview the following questions will be asked:

What is the racial group that you associate yourself with?

What is your main language?

How old are you?

What gender do you associate yourself with?

How long have you been a Statutory Social Worker rendering foster care services to undocumented children?

What are the current services rendered to undocumented children?

What are the current services sought by the prospective foster parents or caregivers of undocumented children?

What are the challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children?

What are the services that you would like to render to undocumented children in order to ensure that they are cared and protected?

Since I would like to give you my full attention during the interview and I might forget some valuable information that you share with me, I would like (with your permission) to record the interview on the audio-recorder. After the interview, this audio-recording will be written out word for word. When the interview is written out all the information that might identify you personally will be removed so that no one will be able to link you to any of the information that you have shared during the interview. Some of the information that you shared will be documented in a research report and nowhere will your name or any personal information be shared; this will make it impossible for anybody to identify you.

Please note that participation in the research is completely voluntary (you are free to participate or not to participate). You are not forced in any way to take part in this research project. Your decision to participate and not to participate will not affect you in any way now or in the future.

If you decide to take part, you still have the right to change your mind at any point in time during the study and to withdraw from the study.

If I see that the information that you have shared have left you feeling emotionally upset or anxious, I am required to refer you to a counsellor for debriefing or counselling (if you agree).

You have the right to ask questions concerning the study at any time. Should you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact these numbers:

Ms Mabolotse Thabang Mapheto, the researcher at 078 058 9752.

This research project has been approved by UNISA's Research and Ethics Committee. This committee is tasked to make sure that research participants will be protected from harm. Furthermore, you are welcome to contact my supervisor and the chairperson of the Research and Ethics Committee to address any other questions or concerns that you may have about this research.

Supervisor: Dr Sandile Dhludhlu

Contact number: 012 429 4285

E-mail address: [dhludsl@unisa.ac.za](mailto:dhludsl@unisa.ac.za)

Chairperson of the college research ethics committee: Dr K.J. Malesa

Contact number: 012 429 4780

E-mail address: [maleskj@unisa.ac.za](mailto:maleskj@unisa.ac.za)

If you agree to participate in the study, I would like you to sign the consent form that follows:

Yours sincerely

Date 25 March 2023

Mabolotse Thabang Mapheto

Researcher



## APPENDIXG: RISK ASSESSMENT & CATEGORY

1HOW SHOULD THIS STUDY BE CATEGORISED? (Please tick all the appropriate boxes.)		
Personal and social information collected directly from participants	Yes <b>X</b>	No
Participants to undergo physical examination*	Yes	No <b>X</b>
Participants to undergo psychometric testing**	Yes	No <b>X</b>
Identifiable information to be collected about people from available records (e.g. medical records, staff records, student records, etc.)	Yes	No <b>X</b>

Please note: \*For medical or related procedures, please submit an application to an accredited health research ethics committee. \*\*Please add details on copyright issues related to standardized psychometric tests.

## 2. RISK ASSESSMENT CATEGORY

**Guided by the information above, classify your research project based on the anticipated degree of risk. [The applicant completes this section. The HSREC critically evaluates this benefit-risk analysis to protect participants' rights]**

*Place an 'x' in the box provided*

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
<b>Negligible</b>  No to indirect human participant involvement.	<b>Low risk</b>  Direct human participant involvement. The only <b>foreseeable</b> risk of harm is the potential for minor discomfort or inconvenience, thus research that would not pose a risk above the everyday norm.	<b>Medium risk</b>  Direct human participant involvement. Research that poses a risk above the everyday norm, including physical, psychological and social risks. Steps can be taken to minimise the	<b>High risk</b>  Direct human participant involvement.  A real or foreseeable risk of harm including physical, psychological and social risk that may lead to a serious adverse event if not managed responsibly.

		X		likelihood of the event occurring.		
(a) Briefly justify your choice/classification.						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The interviews focuses on the professional self of the participants</li> </ul>						
(b) In medium and high-risk research, <u>indicate the potential benefits</u> of the study for the research participants and/or other entities.						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>it improved the participants professional growth as social workers</li> </ul>						
(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.).						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participants were referred to a social worker for debriefing should risk of harm be identified during the interviews.</li> </ul>						

**3. DESCRIPTION OF STEPS TO BE UNDERTAKEN IN CASE OF ADVERSE EVENTS OR WHEN INJURY OR HARM IS EXPERIENCED BY POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED STUDY.**

- Where need arise debriefing counselling of participants were offered by Social worker

**4. WHAT IS THE AGE RANGE OF POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS FOR THE PROPOSED STUDY?**

- The participants were over the ages of 21 years old.

**5 If the potential participants are 18 years and older, is the participants' informed consent form attached?**

YES	No	Not applicable
X		

**6 If the proposed participants are younger than 18 years, are consent and assent forms attached?** (In order for minors -younger than 18 years of age- to participate in a research study, parental or guardian permission must be obtained. For minors a youth assent form is required.)

Yes	No	Not applicable
		X

**7 DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PROCESS FOR OBTAINING PARTICIPANTS' INFORMED CONSENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

- The following was explained to the participants; the general purpose of the study, the qualifications and organisational affiliation of the researcher, the expectations of the research participant (e.g., duration of the interview, venue, time, and kind of questions to be asked) and an assurance of confidentiality will be explained by the researcher.
- Informed consents were obtained when participant's signs the consent form before the interview is conducted.
- The participants were able to give informed consent as they were over the age of 21 years.
- Unwilling participants were not forced partake in the proposed study. In other words, participating in the current study was voluntary.

**8 DESCRIPTION AND/ OR AMOUNTS OF COMPENSATION INCLUDING REIMBURSEMENTS, GIFTS OR SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO PARTICIPANTS (IF APPLICABLE) (Will potential participants incur financial costs by participating in the proposed study? Will there be any incentives to be given to potential participants for participation in this proposed study?)**

The study was voluntary, and the participants were not remunerated.

**9 DESCRIPTIONS FOR ARRANGEMENT FOR INDEMNITY (IF APPLICABLE)**

The participants were expected to complete a consent form

## APPENDIX H: TURNITIN REPORT

Final_dissertation-_Thabang_Mabolotse			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
17%	18%	8%	4%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	hdl.handle.net Internet Source		5%
2	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source		4%
3	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source		4%
4	Submitted to University of South Africa Student Paper		1%
5	repository.up.ac.za Internet Source		1%
6	Maphoto, Kgomo Selby. "The Views of Designated Social Workers on the South African Foster Care System", University of Johannesburg (South africa), 2021 Publication		<1%
7	bettercarenetwork.org Internet Source		<1%
8	core.ac.uk Internet Source		<1%

## APPENDIX I: EDITORS' REPORT



28 June 2023

To Whom it May Concern

**Re: Proof of editing**

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited a research dissertation authored by **Mabolotse Thabang Mapheto**

The title of the dissertation is: *The challenges faced by statutory social workers in rendering foster care services to undocumented children*. Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Work in the subject Social Work, in University of South Africa.

In this dissertation, I conducted language editing.

Note: The student made further input after my editing.

If there are any questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Best Regards  
Oncemore Mbeve  
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(ACMS) MA Psychology Research and Coursework, Wits University  
BSW, Wits University  
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