

**THE FOSTER CARE AWARENESS PROGRAMME AS AN INTERVENTION
STRATEGY FOR GRANDMOTHER-HEADED FAMILIES: A CASE OF
DIEPSLOOT**

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DECLARATION

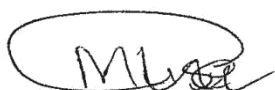
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The foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families: A case of Diepsloot.

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



16 June 2023

SIGNATURE

(M.A. Musetsho)

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Mafemani Richard Hlungwani, and our two beautiful children, Muvhuya and Akani Musetsho, for being supportive throughout this research study. It is also dedicated to my mother, Ndateni Agnes Musetsho, and my late father, Nthanyiseni Sydney Musetsho, who always encouraged me and taught me that education is the key to life and success.

ABSTRACT

The foster care awareness programme (FCAP) plays a critical role in strengthening the foster caregivers' understanding of how to support vulnerable children. The activities of the programme support grandparents to be effective and efficient caregivers. The goal of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and challenges of grandmother foster parents in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy.

The findings of the study show that the FCAP benefitted the grandmother-headed families. They learnt from the group activities and from one another. They acquired communication skills and learnt how to better discipline their children, build strong family values, and manage the household's budget. The recommendations emphasise the need to incorporate foster children in group activities for joint learning. Combined group activities for foster children and parents are recommended. The Department of Social Development is encouraged to utilise group and community work methods to strengthen families and communities.

KEY TERMS

Foster care, foster care awareness, programme, kinship care, foster caregivers, foster children, social work, intervention strategy, grandmother-headed families, Diepsloot.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
CBO	Community-based organisation
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DSD	Department of Social Development
ECDC	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
FCAP	Foster care awareness programme
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IASSW	International Association of Schools of Social Work
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OOHC	Out-of-home care
SACSSP	South African Council for Social Service Professions
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization

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CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter details a general overview of the study which informed the research process of gathering information on the foster care awareness programme (FCAP) as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families: a case of Diepsloot. The background covers the international and local outlook of foster care, kinship care programmes, and the history of the concept foster care awareness and where it originates from. The problem statement, motivation for the study, and the research questions, goal, and objectives are also discussed in this chapter. A summary of the research methodology and the characteristics of qualitative research are provided. Furthermore, the chapter defines the key concepts of the study and the ethical considerations. The last section of this chapter gives an outline of the structure of the chapters of this study.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Many children in South Africa find themselves in vulnerable situations where both parents are deceased. In some cases, the children experience a lack of parenting, as the parents are not there to raise them. Some of these children are then left in the care of grandparents as foster carers. The Children's Amendment Bill (South Africa 2020) defines foster care as an alternative care placement that occurs when a child is placed by an order from the Children's Court with a suitable person, who then becomes a foster parent to the child. Foster care placement is when the foster parents provide an environment that is conducive to the child's growth and development.

Internationally, 2.4 million grandparents are reported to be living with their grandchildren; 29% of these grandparents are African American; 17% are Hispanics/Latino; 2% are American Indian or Alaskan Native; 3% are Asian; and 47% are White. Thirty-four percent of these grandparents live in households with

the children's parents present (United States Census Bureau 2020). It is estimated that 2.7 million grandparents are raising their grandchildren in the United States of America (USA).

It is further indicated that a significant number of South African children are placed with their grandmothers, who serve as the primary caregivers (Statistics South Africa 2012:5). Data from Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) (2012:5) also shows that there are around 2.3 million orphans living in South Africa of which 1.2 million have lost their fathers, 460 308 have lost their mothers, and 374 520 have lost both parents. It was found that older grandparents who parent adolescents and become full-time caregivers face major challenges to their personal and work routines, as well as increased risks to their health (Peterson 2017:394).

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as cited by Holborn and Eddy (2011:1), estimates that since 2007, approximately 2 500 000 children in South Africa lost one or both parents due to several causes.

1.2.1 The history of foster care awareness

The concept of foster care awareness was introduced in 1988 in the USA by President Ronald Reagan. It was used to recognise all foster parents who have opened their homes to foster children and families in need. This initiative was promoted by the United States (US) Government's Office of the Administration for Children and Families Children's Bureau (Reagan 2019). The Children's Bureau (2019:5) outlines that the USA honours foster care awareness as a support for foster carers, foster parents, and biological families as a path towards healing. During the foster care awareness sessions, individuals and organisations are encouraged to play the role of making their homes a better place for children in foster care (Reagan 2019).

Nichols (2019:v) states that the aim of foster care awareness is to explore the general knowledge of the foster care system and motivate the foster carers to take care of their children, while Gilkes (2015:5) states that foster care awareness increased the awareness of the needs of the grandmothers.

The concept foster care awareness has had an influence in the Department of Social Development (DSD). In 2015, the DSD, Johannesburg Metro Region, established the FCAP as an intervention strategy for grandparents. The purpose of the FCAP is to give caregivers skills, knowledge, and tools to provide high-quality foster care for foster children. FCAPs are substantial and their focus is on strengthening families and keeping family members together, while also encouraging the grandparent-headed families to take responsibility for their grandchildren (Swart 2012). When families are strengthened, their condition and problem-solving skills improve and then the children will be safe in the care of their parents (Strydom 2011:221).

1.2.1.1 *The foster care awareness programme*

The DSD initiated the FCAP to address the special needs of the grandparents. The grandmothers who raise grandchildren are confronted with a myriad of challenges which may affect their health, both physical and emotional (Kelley, Whitley & Campos 2019:143). In addressing the challenges that come with foster parenting, the FCAP has incorporated different aspects which help grandmothers to cope under any circumstances. Carter and Van Breda (2016:210) state that when foster care placement is inadequately assessed, whether the foster parents are related or unrelated to the child, there is an increased likelihood that the placement can break down, which is detrimental to the child's well-being.

The social workers have a responsibility to strengthen the FCAP as a strategy to improve the lives of grandmother-headed families who are caring for their grandchildren. The programme is facilitated and conducted through group supervision workshops. The grandmothers who are foster carers are identified from caseloads and invited to attend the group supervision workshop. During the workshops, foster parents are provided with different skills.

The provision of FCAPs for grandmother-headed families is a strategy to empower them in order to enhance the best possible development of needy children and to prevent their statutory removal from families to alternative care (Strydom 2011:221). Grandmothers are often the stable caregivers in a severely strained kinship network, and their care is marked by affection and efforts to create continuity (Block 2016:151). Grandmothers' care then has broader aims than just ensuring physical

health and adherence; it is geared towards social inclusion. While Shabalala, Lannoy, Moyer and Reis (2016:9) state that grandmothers' care is not only about the grandmother-grandchild dyad; it is about others who are present where the care takes place.

Bailey (2012) affirmed that for grandparents, becoming parents again can be challenging and overwhelming, but can also be a rewarding and unforgettable time if support and resources are available to the family. Therefore, social workers are tasked with the responsibility of supporting grandparents when they take on the role of foster carers. The DSD developed the FCAP as an intervention strategy to support the grandparents who are foster carers. The goal of this study is to explore and describe the experiences and challenges of grandmothers who are foster carers and are part of the FCAP in Diepsloot. Diepsloot is an informal settlement area in the northern region of Johannesburg. It has over 25 000 families, many of which live in shacks and scramble for survival (Harber 2011:15).

The FCAP helps to create a suitable space for grandmothers to learn together and to share their experiences in group settings. Androff (2016:33) states that human rights provide the agenda that guides policy and practice interventions and assist social workers to develop different strategies, especially those social workers who are engaged in the muddy work of transforming human misery into its highest potential of freedom, compassion, and healing.

The researcher, as a social worker in practice, has observed that even though grandmothers have experience in parenting, their knowledge and skills in parenting and running family affairs may not be as relevant as they were before. There are new emerging challenges that they are confronted with as grandmothers. Every day grandmothers learn about peer pressure and new drugs on the market that the children are exposed to in schools and on the streets. The grandmothers have shared in groups that their grandchildren overuse computers and mobile technology.

They smoke and use new drugs like *Nyaope*¹. They are confronted by the demands of social media and peer pressure. Therefore, the FCAP assists with capacitating grandmothers with different relevant skills so that they are able to meet the needs of their foster children.

1.2.1.2 The foster care awareness programme and kinship care programme

Kinship care is referred to as “the full-time care, which is designed to nurture and protect children by relatives, members of their tribe or clan, godparents, step-parents or any another adult who has a family relationship with the child” (Davey 2016:18). Kinship care occurs when children are removed from their homes and placed with their relatives or someone considered close to the family (fictive kin).

In 2016 in the USA, there were about 2.3 million (3.1%) children raised by their relatives while no biological parents were present (Unites States Census Bureau 2016). Kinship care is currently the preferred placement type for children, because it is considered the “least restrictive, most family-like placement and in the child’s best interest” (Wu, White & Coleman 2015:6). Children in kinship care have fewer placement disruptions (Koh 2010:389).

The FCAP gives caregivers the skills, knowledge, and tools to provide high-quality foster care for children. Through this programme, the social workers can strengthen and improve the lives of grandmother-headed families who are caring for their grandchildren. The South African FCAP is similar to the kinship care programme model described above. These programmes may differ from country to country. Different countries structure their support programme for kinship or family care according to the needs of their communities and families.

In the case of Diepsloot, the challenges of the families in the informal settlement are unique because of their setting. The informal settlement areas have challenges related to high unemployment, poverty, drug use, crime, and peer pressure. The

¹ *Nyaope* is known as *Whoonga* or *Wunga*. *Nyaope* is a street drug in South Africa. It is said to have originated from the suburbs of Durban, but today it has spread to other parts of South Africa. *Nyaope* causes mothers to abandon their children (Smith 2020:1).

DSD has structured the foster care programme so that it can address the special needs that the foster carers have in that setting. From the above one can conclude that kinship care and FCAPs are structured to strengthen and support members of families who are foster carers. The details of how these programmes are structured will be covered more in Chapter Two.

1.2.1.3 DSD and parenting programmes

In South Africa social work services are structured to empower, educate, and assist individuals and communities (DSD 2015:5). The DSD has several programmes designed to service and support different clients, groups, families, and communities. In this section, the researcher will outline some of the programmes that were introduced to support families. The parenting programme, family preservation programme, and Integrated Services Delivery Model are the three critical programmes. These programmes are used widely to support all parents, school-aged children, and adolescents, as well as parents of children with disabilities:

- **The parenting programme:** This is a programme that teaches all parents to understand their children (National Institute of Relationship Enhancement 2019). Parenting skills strongly influence a child's life experiences to improve their cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and social development across their life course (Britto, Ponguta, Reyes & Karmati 2015:3). Parenting programmes can be effective in improving parental mental health and psychological functioning (Barlow, Smailagic, Huband, Roloff & Bennett 2014:41).
- **The family preservation programme:** This is a programme that is structured to support families. It is defined within the different levels of intervention, namely preservation, early intervention, statutory, and after care services (Revised White Paper on Families in South Africa 2021:38). Family preservation seeks to enhance the capacity of families to take care of their children, thus preventing child maltreatment (Revised White Paper on Families in South Africa 2021:38). The long-term goal of the DSD (2020:7) is to broaden the provision of prevention services, which will in turn narrow the provision of early intervention, statutory, and aftercare services. This goal will also be covered in detail in Chapter Two. When providing these services, social

workers conduct home visits, assessments, and family meetings, and refer children or family members to specialised services, such as drug rehabilitation centres (Swart 2012).

- **The Integrated Services Delivery Model:** This is a special programme that the Department of Social Welfare uses as a team-based, person-centred approach to provide social welfare services, especially to vulnerable populations. This model's focus is on the prevention and promotion of social welfare services which strengthen the grandmother-headed families (DSD 2020:37). It will be covered in more detail in Chapter Two.

The grandparents, as part of the larger group of foster carers, do qualify to participate in all the above-mentioned programmes. However, the FCAP was designed as a special programme to support the grandparents and to address their special needs as foster carers. The FCAP, as indicated above, is structured the same way as kinship care, even though the activities may differ from country to country. The details of the similarities and differences will be further discussed and covered in Chapter Two of this study.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem formulation starts with the identification and clear formulation of a research problem (Babbie & Mouton 2016:73). The researcher needs to articulate the specific problem that he or she wants to investigate (Fouché & Delport 2011:101). In addition, Creswell (2013:130) explains that the intent of a research problem in qualitative research is to provide a rationale or need for studying an issue or problem. Formulating the research problem is more than just deciding on the topic. It is informed by an ontological and epistemological standpoint and the researcher's familiarisation with and critiquing of the literature, both of which help the researcher to rationalise why he/she is interested in studying that area (Creswell 2013:130).

The FCAP, as outlined above, is designed specifically to support grandparents, in particular grandmothers, who are foster carers. Grandmothers are vital as foster

carers. They play a specific role in the family. They are the pillars of the family. Various studies report the important abilities of grandmothers who have taken on the role of 'parent' in terms of their resourcefulness, resilience, and strengths (Hayslip & Smith 2013). Grandmothers are often the stable caregivers in severely strained kinship networks, and their care is marked by affection and efforts to create continuity (Block 2016:151).

Several studies were conducted locally and internationally on foster care and grandparents, in particular grandmothers. These studies will be utilised as references for the study. They do not specifically address the experiences and challenges of the grandmother-headed families in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy. The following are some of the studies that the researcher found when conducting a literature search on the topic.:

- Cox (2016) investigated the cultural diversity among grandparent caregivers.
- Dolbin-MacNab, Jarrott, Moore, O'Hora, De Chavonnes Vrugt and Erasmus (2016) examined the resilience of South African grandmothers in raising grandchildren.
- Maphoto's (2020) study focused on gaining an understanding of designated social workers' views regarding the challenges and benefits of the implementation of the foster care system.
- Cervantes (2016) investigated a kinship support group addressing the challenges of grandparents who participated in the support group in the USA.

These studies do not address the issues related to the FCAP. The researcher could not find any study related to foster care programmes as outlined in the DSD documents. The problem statement for this study is therefore as follows: No study has been conducted on the FCAP as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot households. This research study therefore endeavours to fill the gap and contribute towards new knowledge in the field of social work and foster care systems.

1.3.1 Rationale for the study

The rationale of the study is the justification, importance, and contribution of the study (Fouché & Delport 2011:107). The rationale of the study explains why the researcher undertakes the study and what inspired him/her at a personal level (Dudovskiy 2022:1). While Fouché and Delport (2011:107) state that the rationale of the study is defined as the justification, importance, and contribution of the study, Maree (2016:30) explains that the rationale of the study describes the reason why the researcher developed an interest in this particular topic and why it is worthwhile to be conducted.

Dudovskiy (2022:1) further indicates that the rationale of the study must be explicit and should narrate the following points:

- The research needs to add the eradication of a gap in the literature.
- The research can be directed to solve an explicit problem.
- The study needs to contribute to the professional growth of the researcher.

The researcher is a social worker employed by the DSD in the Johannesburg Metro Region. She works in the field of child care and protection, which involves investigating foster care cases, conducting home visits, and complying to the Children's Court processes and procedures. She specialises in placing foster children found to need care and protection in alternative care, such as foster care.

The FCAP was introduced by the DSD in 2015. As a practicing social worker, the researcher has utilised this programme for over seven years and it is in her interest and for the benefit of the DSD and the profession to understand the lived experiences and challenges of grandmother-headed families, as the FCAP is being used as an intervention strategy. It has been implemented in Diepsloot for over seven years. The study will assist the researcher and her colleagues in practice. The researcher utilises the FCAP regularly, as she sees so many foster parents. Her observations about the role of foster parents in foster care fascinated her.

In South Africa, social workers render services to vulnerable individuals and groups. This is part of the new Framework for Social Welfare Services (DSD 2020:6). The FCAP is critical and central when providing services to families. The study will

contribute towards the field of child protection and foster care. Therefore, in documenting the lived experiences of grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot, the study will help the DSD to work on the suggestions and recommendations of the findings to improve the programme. The DSD management came up with this approach, as they realised there is a need to empower the foster parents, especially the grandmothers. The intervention has never been studied to find out whether it is effective and successful, so Diepsloot will serve as a case study to reflect on the programme.

1.4 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS, PRIMARY GOAL, AND OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The following section focuses on the research questions, primary goal, and objectives of the study.

1.4.1 Research questions

The literature review serves as a foundation for forming research questions, operationalising the objectives of the proposed research, focusing the research hypotheses, and clarifying what information needs to be collected, from what sources, and under what conditions (Mertens 2019:116). Research questions are empirical questions that focus on an actual phenomenon embedded in the real world (Rule & John 2011:27). More importantly, the research question is the overall guiding question for the entire research study (Flick 2018:84). The research questions that the researcher intends to address in this research study are:

- What are the experiences of the families in relation to the foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy?
- What are the challenges of the grandmother-headed families in relation to the foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy?
- How is the foster care awareness programme utilised as an intervention strategy by grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot?

1.4.2 Goal and objectives

Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011:34) and Strydom (2013:149) state that the research goal refers to what the researcher wants to achieve. The classic purpose of research is to add to knowledge for its own sake, or for the general good as judged by the researcher. The purpose of a research study can shape the choice of topic and the subsequent research design (Veal & Burton 2014:57). Furthermore, Creswell (2013:134) also describes the goal as the “road map” to the study.

1.4.2.1 *The goal of the study*

The goal of the research study is as follows:

- To have an in-depth understanding of the experiences and challenges of grandmothers in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot.

1.4.2.2 *Research objectives*

Wilson and Maclean (2011:256) state that research objectives are a clear, concise definition of what you are studying. De Vos, Fouché, Delpont and Strydom (2011:94) suggest that the term “objective” refers to a real, measurable, and quickly attainable concept of such a “plan to do or achieve”. Creswell (2013:134) states that the objective provides major intent or a “road map” to the study in an entire qualitative study.

The overall research objectives are as follows:

- To explore and describe the experiences and challenges of grandmothers in Diepsloot in relation to the foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy.
- To contextualise findings made from the collected data on the grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot in relation to the foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations from the findings on the experiences and challenges of grandmothers in Diepsloot in relation to the foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section gives a brief overview of the research methodology employed in the study. Babbie and Mouton (2016:647) define research methodology as methods or techniques that are used in the process of implementing the research design or research plan. This study focuses on a qualitative research approach, which allows the researcher to collect data directly as reported by the participants (De Vos et al 2011:91). In this study, the researcher is interested in gaining an in-depth understanding of the FCAP as a strategy for grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot.

This study is based on a qualitative research methodology. The qualitative methodology allowed for interpretations from the frame of reference of the research participants as they explored and described their understanding of their own histories; social, economic, and material circumstances; and their perceptions and experiences of a phenomenon (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls & Ormston 2014:4). Denzin and Lincoln, as cited by Creswell (2013:44), state that qualitative research is an activity that locates the observer in the world of the participant, thereby making the world visible. The researcher utilised the qualitative research method to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and challenges of grandmothers in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy in their families in Diepsloot.

The researcher was able to get to know the experiences and challenges with which they live with their grandchildren and families on a day-to-day basis. The researcher was also able to observe and understand how they use the skills and knowledge acquired from the FCAP. Being able to enter their world, the researcher was able to observe, hold conversations, and develop themes from the data collected. Chapter Three outlines and presents the research methodology in detail.

1.5.1 Characteristics of qualitative research

In this section the researcher will summarise the characteristics of the qualitative research method as it was applied in the study. As outlined above, the characteristics are discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

Creswell (2013:45-46) highlights the following as the characteristics of qualitative research:

- **The researcher is focused on the natural setting.** The qualitative researcher gathers information in the relevant settings or at the site where participants experience the issue, problem, or condition being researched. In this study the researcher visited the participants' houses where they live to ensure that the natural settings are not interfered with and so that the participants are interviewed and observed in their natural settings with their families.
- **Researcher as key instrument.** The researcher collect data on her own through interviews. The researcher utilised skills such as observations, listening, reflecting, and summarising and engaged the participants with the research questions.
- **Participants' meanings.** Researchers believe that the information shared by the respondents has greater meaning and importance than information which they have gathered from literature research and other sources. The data collected in this study was presented as the lived and actual experiences of grandmother-headed families while they care for their grandchildren or foster children utilising the FCAP skills and know-how.
- **The researcher presents a holistic picture.** Qualitative research studies capture broader views instead of the fragmented lived experiences of participants. For this study the researcher looked at a socio-economic phenomenon and used a holistic approach through open-ended questions. Therefore, the use of the qualitative approach in this study provided the researcher with a holistic picture and deeper understanding of the FCAP as an

intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families, as the researcher delved deeper into grandmothers' experiences regarding the FCAP.

1.6 CLASSIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

In this section, the researcher defines and clarifies key concepts important to the study. Sequeira (2015:4) states that language is often vague and therefore it is important for the researcher to have a clear understanding of the words and terms that will be used in the study to avoid misinterpretation that could cause conflict with measurements and results later in the research. By clarifying key concepts, the researcher will specify the meanings of the terms used in this research.

1.6.1 Foster Care

Foster care, according to the United Nations (UN) (2010:29), is a process in which “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, approached and supervised for providing such care”. Foster care is thus the temporary placement of a child who needs care and protection. The child is placed in the care of a suitable person who is not the parent or guardian of the child (South Africa 2006a). Foster care is a way of providing a family life for children who cannot live with their own parents (DSD 2005).

The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997:63) defines foster care as a child-centred service. Foster care should also be the cost-effective, family-centred, and community-based way of caring for children whose parents are unable to do so. Ngwenya (2011:1) also defines foster care as a child-centred service to children in difficult circumstances regulated by the Children's Act 38 of 2005, which is the basic instrument of the protection of children in need of care. Section 155 (2) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006a) places the child's best interest at the forefront.

1.6.2 Awareness

The term awareness is less than clear. To be aware means to know, to realise, or to be interested in knowing about something. Awareness in general means being knowledgeable and conscious of events, objects, or sensory patterns (Gafoor 2012:2). The word awareness is a secondary way of defining knowledge. Awareness may refer to a person's general knowledge of the existence of something (Trevethan 2017:1).

1.6.3 Foster care awareness programme

The concept foster care awareness originates from the USA (Reagan 2019). In 2015, the DSD Johannesburg Metro Region established the FCAP as an intervention strategy for grandparents. The purpose of the FCAP is to give caregivers skills, knowledge, and tools to provide high-quality foster care to foster children (DSD 2015). Nichols (2019:v) states that the aim of the FCAP is to explore the general knowledge of the foster care system and motivate the foster carers to take care of their children. The FCAP increases the awareness of the needs of the grandmothers (Gilkes 2015:2).

1.6.4 Programme

A programme is a plan which has been developed for a purpose (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* 2016, sv “programme”). A programme can be structured with activities with the purpose of addressing the need of a group. For example, a cash transfer programme can cover the child support grant, school meals, and skills development to support families on nutrition, education, and health care (UNICEF 2019:1).

1.6.5 Intervention

Intervention should concentrate first on prevention and early intervention by enhancing family functioning, then on protection, and lastly on the provision of statutory services (South Africa 2006a). “Intervention” refers to any activity undertaken with new objectives and strategies (Smith, Morrow & Ross 2015:1). Social workers are knowledgeable about interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organisations, and

communities (Zastrow 2017:90). Intervention is based on effective engagement with clients within a therapeutic relationship (Ruch 2010:22).

1.6.6 Strategy

Strategy includes a long-term vision and a clear understanding of one's current issues and opportunities. It refers to setting clear goals and implementing a set of initiatives that will help a person to achieve his/her goals and eventually reach his/her vision (Sola & Couturier 2014:4-5). McKeown (2012:1) outlines that strategy is about shaping the future in order to figure out what to do now to get what one really wants later. The research study explores the FCAP as a strategy for foster care support for grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot.

1.6.7 Grandmother

The term "grandmother" refers to a female who has entered a social role as a result of her son or daughter giving birth to or adopting a child (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* 2010, sv "grandmother"). For this study, the term refers to a female aged 60 years or older who is staying with her foster children. Grandmothers traditionally provide support, for instance looking after younger family members. Grandmothers love their grandchildren and often experience stress, anxiety, and financial hardship (Berman & Snyder 2012:427).

1.6.8 Diepsloot

Diepsloot is one of Johannesburg's newest informal settlements. It was established in 1994 as a relocation area for informally settled households from Zevenfontein. In less than 20 years, Diepsloot has grown into a bustling neighbourhood, covering approximately five square kilometres with a population of more than 350 000. Many people live in shacks with an area of three meters by two meters, assembled from scrap metal, wood, plastic, and cardboard. Some families in Diepsloot lack access to basic services such as running water, a sewage system, and rubbish removal (Harber 2011:2).

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following section presents the ethical considerations which guided the study and the ethical guidelines about informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and management of information.

De Vos et al (2011:63) define ethics as “a set of moral principles suggested by an individual or group which is subsequently widely accepted and which offers rules and behavior expectations about the most correct appropriate conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents/participants, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students”. Research ethics focuses on the influence researchers’ interventions may have on participants with whom they are conducting research and the procedures applied to protect the participants in the study (Flick 2018:135). Ethical considerations refer to a set of moral principles which provides guidelines for an appropriate relationship between the researcher and the participants (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014:58)

The concepts of ethics, values, morality, community standards, laws, and professionalism differ from one another without necessarily being mutually exclusive. The term ethics implies preferences that influence behaviour in human relations, moral duty conforming to a code of principles, the rules of conduct, the responsibility of the researcher, and the standards of conduct of a given profession (cf. Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole 2013:28-29; Monette, Sullivan, DeJong & Hilton 2014:50). Ethical behaviour and practice in research are guided by set of ethical guidelines, principles, and policies that researchers should use to evaluate their own conduct (Bless et al 2013:29). The study was ethically cleared by the University of South Africa (UNISA). It was important for the researcher to take into consideration the following ethical aspects in the study: voluntary participation; informed consent; anonymity and confidentiality; and management of information.

1.7.1 Informed consent

Informed consent relates to participants making a voluntary decision to participate in the study after they have been fully informed about all aspects of the research without deceit, duress, or similar unfair manipulation (Ogletree & Kawulich 2012:64).

The researcher should provide participants with the following information when requesting their informed consent: the goal of the investigation; the expected duration of the participant's involvement; the procedures which will be followed during the investigation; and the possible advantages, disadvantages, and dangers to which respondents may be exposed (De Vos et al 2011:117). In this study the researcher ensured that participants were psychologically competent to give informed consent and were informed that have the right to withdraw from participating at any time. Enough information about the study was given to the participants to enable them to make an informed decision regarding whether they would be willing to participate. Consent forms were given to those who agreed to take part in the study, and they were requested to sign the agreement (Addendum C).

1.7.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity is when the participant is not known to the researcher and the readers (Monette, Sullivan & DeJong 2011:58). Anonymity implies that anyone reading a final research report or document will not be able to link any particular response to a specific respondent (Bhattacharjee 2012:138). It requires data to be collected in such a way that it is impossible for anyone to link the data collected to the participants. However, this may be difficult to achieve due to the nature of the study, which might require contact with the participants (Monette et al 2011:58).

Confidentiality involves concealing the identifying particulars of the participants and avoiding any information that might cause potential harm to the participants (Ogletree & Kawulich 2012:64). Mertens and Wilson (2012:415) indicate that confidentiality implies the collecting, analysing, storing, and reporting of data in such a way that the data cannot be traced back to the person who provided the information. To safeguard the participants from harm which might occur as a result of the association of their identities with the data collected, the researcher ensured that the data gathered was kept confidential by not divulging information shared by the participants with other people except the professional independent coder and the study supervisor. The researcher locked away the transcripts and field notes. Numerical and alphabetical codes were assigned to the participants when recording

information, thus concealing their identities. In this way, the participants remain anonymous to other people.

1.7.3 Management of information

In managing information, the researcher ensures that the ethical principle of confidentiality and anonymity is maintained when collecting, storing, and presenting data (Flick 2011:220). The researcher offers participants an opportunity to identify and destroy the data which they wish to remain private after the data has been collected (Monette et al 2011:58). In managing information, the researcher offered grandmother-headed families the opportunity to point out any information which they wished to keep private. Information gathered from the participants was always managed and kept secure by locking it in a cabinet to which only the researcher and the supervisor has access. Before a researcher begins the process of data analysis, he/she must organise and manage the data collected and not lose track of the information gathered through the interviews (Flick 2018:371). In this study, names of participants were not disclosed to the independent coder who had access to the information at some point (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner 2012:16). However, numerical and alphabetical codes were used to protect their identities.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTERS

This section outlines how the five chapters in the study are structured. They are as follows:

Chapter One: General orientation to the study

This chapter entails the introduction of the study, the problem statement, the rationale, the research questions, the research goal, and the objectives of the study. It outlines the research approach and design, the clarification of the key concepts, and the ethical considerations.

Chapter Two: Literature review and theoretical perspectives of the foster care awareness programme

This chapter will outline the literature as related to the research study. It will also discuss the legal and the theoretical framework as related to the study.

Chapter Three: Application of the qualitative research method

This chapter will cover the research methodology, focusing on the qualitative research approach and its application. It will cover the qualitative research methodology, pilot study, data collection methods, and data analysis and verification.

Chapter Four: Presentation and discussion of the findings

This chapter will outline the findings, which will be presented according to themes and sub-themes and, where necessary, categories. This will be supported by a literature control which is related to the topic.

Chapter Five: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

The last chapter focuses on the outcomes of the study in themes, the limitations and recommendations pertaining to the research findings, and proposals for further and future studies.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE FOSTER CARE AWARENESS PROGRAMME

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher will outline the relevant literature related to the study. The concepts to be defined are foster care, kinship, and foster care awareness, including the history of foster care locally and internationally. The chapter looks at the DSD's family support programmes and outlines the legal framework related to foster care. It will cover the international, regional, and local foster care systems. It will further cover private or formal kinship care, public or formal kinship care, kinship care using the life course approach, and the FCAP as a model of kinship in South Africa. The chapter will define and explain the theoretical framework and how it fits with the study. The role of the grandparents, in particular the grandmothers, as the key participants in the study will be discussed, as well as the role of grandmothers in the FCAP. The critical role that social workers and the DSD plays in supporting families, foster parents, and foster children is also covered in the chapter.

2.2 THE CONCEPT FOSTER CARE DEFINED

Foster care exists because parents and caregivers go through challenging experiences like illnesses or even deaths, leaving kids in a position where there is no one who can take care of them. The researcher is of the opinion that foster care also exists because some parents and caregivers create unsafe and painful living environments for children, either by neglecting or abusing them. Either way, children are forced to pay a very big price. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006a) describes foster care as a system in which a child or a minor is placed in different types of homes, cluster foster care, or in a private home, is cared for by a state certified caregiver, who is referred to as the foster parent, or a family member approved by the state. It is a service for children and their families who must live apart for a longer period. Furthermore, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006a) defines foster care as the placement of a child, by means of an order of the

Children's Court, with a person who is not a biological parent or guardian of the child. Such a person must be "fit and proper to be entrusted with the foster care of the child" (South Africa 2006a: section 155).

The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997:63) defines foster care as a child-centred service and a cost-effective, family-centred, and community-based way of caring for children whose parents are unable to do so. In support of this, Ngwenya (2011:1) also defines foster care as a child-centred service to children in difficult circumstances regulated by the Children's Act 38 of 2005. Section 155(2) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006a) states that the child's best interest is critical.

Due to changes in the nature of foster care around the world, the researcher will now provide an overview of foster care internationally and locally.

2.3 FOSTER CARE AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

The preambles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) emphasise that children must grow up or be raised in families. The ACRWC notes that the child occupies a unique and privileged position in African society and that for the full and harmonious development of his/her personality, the child should grow up in a family environment and in an atmosphere of happiness, love, and understanding (Chibwana 2019:120).

In the USA, grandparents raising grandchildren constitute the fastest growing segment of the population. The 2009 American Community Survey reported that 2.7 million grandparents are functioning as caregivers providing for the basic needs of their grandchildren, such as food, shelter, and clothing (Van Etten & Gautam 2012:18-22). Foster care support is a global service and started informally in 1856 in the USA. Between 1900 and 1930, children from all classes in colonial America were indentured into new homes. This slowly and gradually led to the professionalisation of social work. Foster care works together with increased

government involvement in child welfare to cause a shift toward the boarding-out system and away from the institutional care of children (Hasci 2017:).

In Australia the number of children entering the out-of-home care (OOHC) system is increasing dramatically. The report from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (2010:6) shows that one in 32 Australian children has experienced child protection services and 74% of these children are repeat clients. This means that the foster care service is growing in some parts of the world.

China, like many other countries, is experiencing challenges with foster care. Child maltreatment has been recognised as a social problem in China (Zhao, Hämäläinen & Chen 2017). The current foster care programme is not well equipped for the placement of children who are abused or neglected. Some challenges have emerged in providing alternative care for maltreated children who need OOHC.

2.4 FOSTER CARE AND REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

In the Southern African region, Zimbabwe, like other countries, has suffered loss in several ways because of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) pandemic, persistent droughts, and other environmental challenges. Official statistics state that about 185 000 AIDS-orphaned Zimbabwean children are living under the guardianship of their grandparents (Duri & Marongwe 2021:30). Dziro and Mhlanga (2018:20) state that the death of parents has an impact on the survival strategies of orphans and other vulnerable children. These children are left in the care of family members. It is the researcher's view that this refers to foster care services in families.

In Tanzania, children in need of alternative care belong to the group of vulnerable children that require special attention and protection by the state and the community (Buchumi 2021:3). Section 16 of the Tanzanian Law of Child Act of 2009 outlines and identifies that a child needs alternative care due to different reasons (Buchumi 2021:3). The Government of Tanzania acknowledges and appreciates that the community plays a critical role in providing for needy children. Furthermore, in Tanzania foster care is treated as family-based alternative care rather than

institutional care. Foster care is understood as a requirement for adoption rather than an independent form of alternative care as provided by law (Buchumi 2021:5).

2.5 FOSTER CARE AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

The South African Government provides people who are in need with basic support, especially underprivileged children. Section 28 of the Constitution (South Africa 1996:52) requires that orphans and vulnerable children be placed in child and youth care centres, be adopted, or be placed in foster care to prevent the growing phenomenon of child-headed households in South Africa's urban areas.

Foster care placement in South Africa has been impactful in reducing the number of children placed in child and youth care centres. The placement of children in these state institutions should be the last resort, because these institutions face their own challenges (Magagula 2015; Molepo 2014). As Kaziboni (2015:02) states, South Africa as a developing state is responsible for the social welfare of all people living in the country, regardless of their race or citizenship. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (South Africa 1996) states that a child's best interest is very important in any matter concerning the welfare of a child.

2.6 FOSTER CARE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.6.1 Policy framework internationally

The foundations of foster care in the United Kingdom (UK) lie in the apprenticeship that was established by means of the Poor Law of 1536 and the practice of wet nursing that emerged during the early part of the 19th century (Brown 2014:9). The White Paper Care Matters, published by the Department for Education and Skills in 2007, sought to improve the lots and futures of children in public care (Brown 2014:9). Central to this agenda, the UK Government was improving the quality and stability of foster care and the stability of foster carers (Brown 2014:9). Furthermore, the Department for Education (2013) set out the two-stage process for the assessment of prospective foster carers. These regulations were published by the Department for Education in 2013 and cover the temporary approval of prospective adopters as foster carers (Department for Education 2013).

In the USA the creation of the foster care system took place in the early 1960s. However, it was not until the 1970s that the US Government put an emphasis on expanding their role in child welfare by implementing a policy framework and providing funding. The US Government implemented the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-272). This is the policy that set the precedent for the court handling the placement of soon-to-be foster children (Combs 2015:149). The goal of the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 is to achieve legal permanence for foster children (Girish 2020:7). In January of 2000, the Department of Health and Human Services announced the implementation of a new set of guidelines known as the Child and Family Services Reviews. The purpose of these new regulations is to improve the odds of positive outcomes among foster care and other child welfare programmes (Combs 2015:151).

2.6.2 Policy framework in Africa

The legal framework for child welfare practice in Zimbabwe largely borrows from the UK (Shangwa & Mathende 2019:49). Child protection in Zimbabwe is governed by several national, regional, and international statutory and policy framework documents. The major document underpinning child protection in Zimbabwe is the Children's Act, Chapter 5. This legislation informs statutory social work and defines a child, as well as the scope of children in need of care (Shangwa & Mathende 2019:51).

The right to alternative care for children is guaranteed under the UNCRC. The ACRWC of 1990 and the UNCRC were both ratified by Tanzania in 1991 and 2003, respectively. Mainland Tanzania domesticated these treaties through the Law of Child Act in 2009, in which the need for alternative care for children deprived of their family environment is rectified, with an emphasis on family-based alternative care rather than institutional care (Buchumi 2021:1). The Government of Tanzania has also taken certain steps aimed at promoting child development. These steps include the ratification of the UNCRC, the signing of the Organisation of African Unity's Charter on the Rights of the Children, and the ratification of the Law of Child Act (2009) aimed at promoting and protecting the rights and interests of children, including street children (Chingonikaya & Salehe 2019:2).

2.6.3 Policy framework in South Africa

South Africa went through different political and socio-economic phases as the country moved from the apartheid era to the new democratic dispensation. During the apartheid era the welfare services regime was residual and institutional and did not focus on the protection of all children in South Africa, even though they all experienced abuse and neglect (South Africa 2006a). Dolbin-Macnab et al (2016:2182) alluded that many Black South African families continue to face significant challenges to their well-being. Since apartheid ended and the citizens voted for new a government in the country's first free election in 1994, not much has changed. Non-contributing social pensions were introduced and this constituted the most expensive social assistance grant. Social grants, such as foster care, maintenance, and disability grants, were generally only available to the White, Coloured, and Indian families (Patel 2015:76). Patel further states that 20 years later, many of the disparities caused by the apartheid system have improved, but some remain while others show greater disadvantage experienced by Black South Africans.

To address the inequality and unjust apartheid system and its historical challenges, new policies and laws were formulated and designed. Schmid (2012:20-21) states that in the post-apartheid era in South Africa, the child protection system experienced transformations with the introduction of new policies. The new legislation and policies on child protection focused on a welfare policy that addresses poverty and aims to redress the injustices of the past (Strydom, Schiller & Orme 2020:384).

According to the UN (2010:29), foster care is a process in which "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, approached and supervised for providing such care". Foster care is thus the temporary placement of a child who needs care and protection. The child is placed in the care of a suitable person who is not the parent or guardian of the child. Foster care is a way of providing a family life for children who cannot live with their own parents (South Africa 2006a).

Placing children in foster care is done through a valid court order and is done for the purpose of providing care and protection in a nurturing, caring, safe, and healthy environment with positive support. The South African Parliament states that 478 158 children are receiving the Foster Child Grant in South Africa (Parliamentary Monitoring Group c2022). Foster care is governed by the Children's Act 38 of 2005. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006a) intends to give effect to certain rights of children as contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, set out principles relating to the care and protection of children, define parental responsibilities and rights, make further provision regarding Children's Court orders, and make new provision for the adoption of children. The child care and protection system is governed by the Children's Act 38 of 2005. The Act provides the full range of social services needed to support vulnerable children and their families, and provides protection services for children who have suffered abuse, neglect, abandonment, or exploitation (South Africa 2006a).

2.7 THE CONCEPT FOSTER CARE AWARENESS PROGRAMME

The FCAP raises awareness of the needs of children and youth in the USA, specifically foster children who require temporary and sometimes permanent homes with safe, nurturing families. It also recognises those in the community who are committed to serving vulnerable children, including foster families, kinship caregivers, and child welfare professionals. The primary goals of the FCAP are to raise awareness of the challenges and needs of children in foster care and to inspire more people to consider fostering or finding a way they can show care and support for vulnerable children (Kirsch 2023).

The FCAP is a support to families. Children should stay with family when possible and even extended family is important to the development of children who feel surrounded by love and the continuation of cultural traditions (Chilton 2022:386).

When families are strengthened, their condition and problem-solving skills improve and then the children will be safe in the care of their parents (Strydom 2011:220). The researcher is of the view that the government is doing its best to support

grandmother-headed families. South African grandmothers are providing special care for their grandchildren and those who are not related to them due to the absence of the children's biological parents. Therefore, the grandmothers require guidance for them to continue to support the foster children. The FCAP is a tool that is used to support grandmothers, like the kinship care programme in the USA.

2.8 THE CONCEPT KINSHIP CARE PROGRAMME DEFINED

Kinship care is the most common form of care for children unable to reside with a biological parent. Kinship care provision can take place either formally through legal procedures or informally through private family arrangements, which may or may not include statutory involvement (Wijedasa 2015:30).

Kinship care involves relatives or friends who take on the full-time care of children because their parents are not able to care for them. This can be an informal arrangement, or the child may have been placed in kinship care by the court (Starks & Whitley 2020:5).

Kinship care often occurs when a child is in an unsafe environment and goes to live with other family members. Kinship caregivers are most often relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or other close relatives (Hetro 2023:1).

More than 2.5 million children are in kinship care in the USA. Kinship care helps to minimise trauma for children and preserve their cultural identities and connections to their communities. The kinship care programme provides assistance to kinship caregivers during the transition period when a child first moves into the non-parent caregiver's home. The programme assists in meeting the immediate needs of the child (Annie E Casey Foundation 2014).

This section will provide examples of kinship care programmes and how they are structured.

2.8.1 Kinship care programmes and how they are structured

2.8.1.1 *Kinship navigator programmes*

Kinship navigator programmes are social service delivery programmes intended to inform foster parents raising children about available resources and services. Kinship navigator programmes improve family resilience, social support, and caregiver self-efficacy (Rushovich, Murray, Woodruff & Freeman 2017:111). Kinship navigator programmes assist kinship caregivers to become familiar with and access supports and services to help meet their families' needs. Kinship navigator programmes establish information and referral services for kinship caregivers and those who support them, and provide outreach to kinship caregivers through websites (Williams & Sepulveda 2019).

2.8.1.2 *Private or informal kinship care*

Out of the estimated 2.7 million children in kinship care in the USA, the largest group consists of children in private kinship care. In private kinship care, an arrangement is made privately between parents and kin caregivers, and children may have no known prior or current involvement with child protection services (Testa 2017:14). An estimated 49% of all children living with kin are in private care. The second largest group is children in voluntary kinship care in which child welfare services arrange the kinship placement. Informal kinship care consists of private and voluntary care and since the arrangement is not via the foster care system, kinship caregivers cannot receive foster care payments (Bramlett, Radel & Chow 2017:41).

2.8.1.3 *Public or formal kinship care*

Public or formal kinship care is generally known as kinship foster care, where caregivers are certified as foster parents and are entitled to receive foster care payments. In public kinship care, the child welfare agency has legal custody of the children while relatives have physical custody (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2018:15).

Permanent kinship care has emerged more recently and refers to the arrangement where relatives become children's legal guardians or adoptive parents. The child welfare agency transfers legal custody to the relatives when they become the child's legal guardian. The Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program offers such

permanency options for children in foster care (Testa 2017:16). Different countries design and establish special programmes to support family members as foster carers.

In this section the researcher briefly outlines the American and Australian kinship care programmes. The American kinship care programme consists of the following activities aimed at assisting the grandparents, relatives, and other family members who are foster carers (Children's Bureau 2022):

- **Maintaining connection and minimising trauma:** This is an activity where placing children with relatives helps to maintain family connections and cultural traditions that can minimise the trauma of family separation. This creates a safe space. Grandparents can create a sense of belonging for a child. The grandparents are then assisted on how to maintain family connections and enhance the social and emotional competence of children, as well as boost resilience in the children.
- **Managing family dynamics:** Grandparents as caregivers often have a tough time reconciling their growing responsibility when kids harbour feelings of resentment toward the relative who holds custody. Having to set aside family grievances for the sake of the children and moving things forward can be challenging. The Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative Center for States features videos with real life stories of families discussing the dynamics and various aspects of kinship care.
- **Modelling positive parenting and positive communication:** Kinship caregivers have a unique opportunity to model positive parenting practices and healthy and constructive communication. Grandparents are assisted in this regard. They are supported through training on how they should communicate with their grandchildren. Seeing this in practice and how children respond to it may help parents to embrace positive behaviours. This may mean making a conscious effort to defuse anger and to steer clear of negative comments.

A similar kinship care programme has been designed and developed in Australia. Connolly Kiraly, McCrae, and Mitchell (2017:94) describe a kinship care programme

that they refer to as the Kinship Care Practice Framework using a life course approach.

2.9 KINSHIP CARE USING THE LIFE COURSE APPROACH

Kinship care using the life course approach consists of the following activities that are structured to support the grandparents and relatives, as they deal with children who are at different stages of development:

- **Partnership and stability:** Kinship caregivers need to understand the child's needs, build on strengths, and acknowledge their capacity for resilience in overcoming adversity. The provision of ongoing support should be geared very much for helping to manage challenging behaviour; this is the key to creating stability. Families are to work together with the other support systems to strengthen their role as foster carers. These stakeholders are outlined and discussed with them, as their role in the family will help to bring stability to the children. The training is helpful for carers, as they are assisted to identify resources and partners.
- **Relationship-supportive:** Maintaining positive family relationships is important for the child's long-term interests and well-being. Caregivers need to know that emotional support in a relationship is about encouragement, love, acceptance and reassurance, and support. The caregivers are supported on how to build strong family relationships with other family members and one another. This training is done through activities and demonstrations.
- **Caring for multiple children:** In the case where more than one child is placed with a family, special support and training is offered to the grandparents on how to set up a family structure and system for the different children who may be at different developmental stages. Kinship caregivers are supported and trained to develop a caring, loving relationship with their grandchildren.

As outlined above, the South African FCAP is similar but not the same as the kinship care programme model. These programmes differ from country to country. The countries structure their support programme for kinship or family care according to the needs of their communities and families. In the case of the Diepsloot

grandmothers, their needs and challenges are unique. The families are in an informal settlement with many problems and challenges. The informal settlement areas have a high unemployment rate, poverty, drug use, crime, and peer pressure for preteens and teenagers. The DSD has structured the FCAP to address the special needs that the foster carers, in particular grandmothers, experience in the informal settlement. The FCAP is structured to strengthen and support grandparent-headed families who are foster carers.

2.10 FOSTER CARE AWARENESS PROGRAMME AS A MODEL OF KINSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA

The FCAP is the model of kinship in South Africa where grandparents care for orphans and vulnerable children. South Africa faces one of the worst HIV epidemics globally, with 5.6 million people living with HIV and 31 400 people dying from AIDS each year (UNAIDS 2021). The epidemic has also altered the psychological landscape for the kinship caregivers who confront the challenges of caring for children orphaned by AIDS (UNAIDS 2021). Traditionally, the role of caregiving was the responsibility of women and grandmothers who were perceived as knowledgeable in giving guidance and able to positively influence their grandchildren's growth. The role has been entrenched in gender and socio-cultural practices (Mtshali 2016:369). The children are positively influenced by grandparents in different ways; grandparents transfer their cultural values and practices to their grandchildren (Ezenweke 2015:143-153).

Grandparents provide the necessary discipline and attend to their grandchildren's educational, financial, physical health, and safety needs (Dolbin-Macnab & Yancura 2018:33). The family is the basic unit upon which society is based. This makes it the most important unit of society. Due to issues of poverty, child neglect, and the death of biological parents, grandparents are increasingly becoming the primary carers of children in South Africa, most specifically in Black, semi-urban communities such as Diepsloot.

Grandparents, mostly grandmothers, play an important role in families, especially in African families. They are major providers of child care, due to ongoing changes and

issues in families and communities. Various studies report the important abilities of grandparents who have taken on the role of 'parent' in terms of their resourcefulness, resilience, and strengths (Hayslip & Smith 2013:51). Many children, especially orphans, are raised by their grandmothers (Wellard 2012:257-263). In most cases grandparents take over full responsibility for bringing up their grandchildren, because the children's parents are unable to do so due to challenges with drug or alcohol abuse or unemployment, or due to the death of their parents (Hayslip, Fruhauf & Dolbin-MacNab 2019:e152-e163).

This situation is caused by a change in structures within families, because many children are left without their biological parents as a result of HIV/AIDS-related deaths and the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Grandparents feel morally and culturally forced to take on the responsibility of caring for their grandchildren, even though they are not prepared to support their grandchildren financially (Sooryamoorthy & Makhoba 2016:309-321).

Historically, caregiving provided by grandparents has served as security for children in need of parenting across cultural groups (Luo, LaPierre, Hughes & Waite 2012:1143). Among the 3% of all households in the USA contain grandparents and grandchildren, and 60% of those households were maintained by the grandparents (Ellis & Simmons 2014:40). Scommegna (2012) states that 54% of grandparents in the USA also carried the primary responsibility of providing for the basic needs of their grandchildren. In 2013, about 2 million US residents aged 65 or over lived in households in which a grandchild was present and over 500 000 of these elderly residents also assumed the primary responsibility for their grandchildren.

The DSD has the mandate to promote and ensure that the policies and programming across the board acknowledge the importance of the family as a core unit of society and work to foster family well-being, as well as strengthen and support vulnerable families (Revised White Paper on Families in South Africa 2021).

2.11 THE ROLE OF GRANDMOTHERS IN THE FOSTER CARE AWARENESS PROGRAMME

When the grandmothers are invited to attend the group supervision workshops, they are provided with the following skills:

- **Savings and financial skills:** Grandparents are being called on to maintain and take care of their grandchildren when parents are unable to fulfil their parenting role. These grandparent caregivers find themselves in an economic dilemma. Grandparents strive for financial well-being (Bailey, Haynes & Letiecq 2013:672). Individuals are more responsible for their personal finances than ever before. With an increase in life expectancy, pension funds and social welfare systems are being strained (Lurdardi 2019:16). Grandmothers are provided with the skills of how to save the Foster Child Grant for their foster children's tertiary education. The grandmothers are taught how to manage the grant and helped practically with putting together a simple budget and plans for financial management.
- **Communication skills:** Effective communication requires an understanding between the grandmother foster parents and their foster children (Kourkouta & Papathanasiou 2014:65). Communication skills training is an effective way to reduce conflict (Darban, Balouchi, Narouipour, Safarzaei & Shahdadi 2016:ICO1). This is a skill grandparents need to help them to communicate with the children in different age groups. This is necessary, as they need to understand their foster children. The training is structured according to the life development stages of their children. The training allows the grandparents to understand their grandchildren much better, especially with the pressures that the children have in this modern era.
- **Grandparents' parenting skills:** To respond to the need of parenting skills, grandmothers need to have knowledge on how to meet foster children's basic needs (Chung & Park 2018:1556). Due to the challenges faced by foster caregivers, improving their parenting capability should be an important component (Children's Bureau 2019). At the workshops, the foster parents are educated about parenting skills and how to handle the behaviour of the foster

children. Foster parents also share their experiences and challenges of raising their foster children.

- **Family health matters:** To respond to the needs of their foster children, grandmothers must develop knowledge of developmental milestones and norms that help to keep children safe and healthy (Winter, Morawska & Sanders 2012:85). Knowledge about health and safety is about obtaining and acquiring health care and promoting quality hygiene (Campell et al 2013:652). The grandparents are trained about their own health matters, including the challenges of the children in different stages of development. The grandparents are exposed and taught through practical lessons on how to teach children of different ages to take care of themselves, as they experience changes in their lives and bodies. When grandmothers are offered the opportunity to attend a FCAP, it enables them to gain more knowledge about the developmental stages of their foster children.
- **Psychological needs of foster children:** Children in foster care are often exposed to many challenges at a young age and they need to learn how to cope with past experiences (Steenbakkers, Van Der Steen & Grietens 2016:5). Meeting the psychological needs of children in foster care may lead to stable and secure placement, which can help them to overcome their past experiences (Berrick & Skivenes 2012:1956). This refers to being able to handle emotions and deal with life challenges.

2.12 THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The social work profession seeks to help individuals, families, groups, and communities to solve their problems and attain a better level of social functioning. It recognises the importance of the family in promoting an individual's well-being and development (DuBois & Miley 2014:3). The FCAP strives to enhance family functioning guided by social work practice perspectives, such as the strengths-based perspective and the social development approach (Walker 2012:6).

Rwomire (2011:1) states that defining the roles of a social worker requires an understanding of what the profession is all about.

Social work is defined by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) (c2021:2) as:

...a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

The social worker's role should be supportive to enable vulnerable people to use their own abilities to maintain control over their lives (Sims, De Chenu & Williams 2014:371).

Social workers are responsible for the foster care system. It is their role to place children in foster care and supervise and monitor the placement. In monitoring foster care, there are certain programmes, such as the FCAP, which aim to create foster care placements conducive for both grandmother foster parents and foster children. Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people, which is the reason the researcher was interested in gaining insight into and an understanding of foster care awareness as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot.

This programme is aimed at ensuring that foster parents understand their responsibilities and rights during foster care placements. The role of the DSD in terms of raising awareness and ensuring support for grandmother-headed families is vital, and Assim (2013) warns that the lack of empowerment of foster children could result in a phenomenon called a 'welfare state' if not addressed sooner. This is what motivated the researcher to focus on the FCAP as a strategy in order to address challenges faced by grandmother-headed families and also to understand their perceptions in terms services rendered by the DSD.

2.13 THE FOSTER CARE AWARENESS PROGRAMME IN DIEPSLOOT

The concept FCAP was introduced in the Diepsloot community in 2015 by the DSD Johannesburg Metro Region. The DSD has the mandate to promote and ensure that policies and programming across the board acknowledge the importance of the family as a core unit of society and work to foster family well-being, as well as strengthen and support vulnerable families (Revised White Paper on Families 2021). The FCAP is an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families. The purpose of the FCAP is to give caregivers the skills, knowledge, and tools to provide high-quality foster care for foster children. The FCAPs in the Johannesburg Metro Region are conducted by social workers through group supervision workshops.

Grandmothers who are foster caregivers are identified from caseloads and invited to attend group supervision workshops that take place in the Diepsloot community. During the workshop, foster grandmother-headed families are provided with different skills that are outlined above. When caregivers lack skills and knowledge, children may feel abandoned and may express anger towards caregivers (Nesmith & Ruhland 2011:105). The FCAP therefore refers to creating a suitable space for learning. Pamphlets about foster care are distributed to the foster parents during the group supervision workshop.

Androff (2016:33) states that human rights provide the agenda that guides policy and practice interventions and assists social workers to develop different strategies, especially those social workers who are engaged in the muddy work of transforming human misery into its highest potential of freedom, compassion, and healing. During the FCAP, grandmother-headed families share their stories of the death of their children, what has been the most difficult part for them, and what they found to be helpful. The death of a child is often a heart-breaking experience that can have a significant impact on parents (Jonas, Scanlon, Rusch, Ito & Joselow 2018:579-580). The researcher's observation as a social worker in practice is that even though grandmothers have experience in parenting, their knowledge and skills in parenting and running family affairs may not be adequate, as there are new challenges that they are confronted with as grandmothers.

Every day parents learn about peer pressure and new drugs. The grandmothers shared in groups that their children overuse computers or mobile technology and abuse drugs like *Nyaope*, and they may not be able to handle these new challenges. Therefore, the FCAP capacitates grandmother-headed families to support them with different relevant skills so that they can be able to meet the needs of their foster children. The FCAP is a specialised programme for grandmothers. Grandmothers play a major role in child development (Harnett, Dawe & Russell 2014:411) and they often provide critical social support to children (Zinn 2012:602). When the home environment is conducive for child development and security, grandmothers might be the first to be designated to care for a child through a placement order (South Africa 2006a).

2.14 THEORETICAL APPROACHES

A “theoretical approach” is defined as any empirical theory of social or psychological processes that can be applied to the understanding of a phenomenon. It can be viewed as the structure which guides our thinking and actions (Venter 2012:8). A theoretical approach is a set of assumptions about reality and is based on the assumption that social systems such as society and the family exist.

It is important for research, because it serves to organise thoughts and ideas (Crossman 2020). A research project often adopts a specific theoretical perspective from which to understand the research focus and analyse the data collected (Taber 2013:1). Choosing an appropriate developmental service delivery strategy requires the identification and consideration of alternative interventions (Patel 2015:237). A theoretical framework is a theory that has been employed to reinforce a study. Furthermore, it functions as a theoretical lens in research studies (Creswell 2013:23). Similarly, it helps researchers to ensure that their research project is consistent and to focus their attention on what the research is trying to accomplish (Green 2014:35).

According to Turner (2011:8-9):

The importance of theory is its ability to explain and hence predict the phenomenon; it helps in anticipating outcomes and speculating about unanticipated relationships between variables, and also helps us to carry knowledge from one situation to another by helping us to recognise what is similar or different in practice.

The use of a theoretical framework in this study assisted the researcher to further understand the experiences and challenges of grandmother-headed families.

2.15 STRENGTHS-BASED PERSPECTIVE

A strengths-based perspective was initially developed at the University of Kansas in the USA in the early- to mid-1980s by Professor Charles Rapp and doctoral students Ronna Chamberlain, Wallace Kisthardt, W Patrick Sullivan, and Professor Dennis Saleebey. The strengths model of case management provides support to persons in the community. It is related to empowerment practice, resilience theory, and capabilities theory, and supports employment and positive aging (Rapp & Goscha (2012:5). Min (2011:16) refers to the strengths-based perspective through different levels: (1) to regard the strengths-based perspective as a new, intervening approach, opposite to the deficit-focused approach; (2) to see the strengths-based perspective as a basic view of social work practice, balanced over clients' strengths and problems; and (3) to perceive the strengths-based perspective as a principle of addressing the basic demands of social work.

One of the aims of the FCAP is to strengthen families and encourage parents to take responsibility for raising their children (Swart 2012). When families are strengthened, their condition and problem-solving skills improve and then the children will be safe in the care of their parents (Strydom 2011:220). When collaborating with grandmother-headed families, a social worker needs to believe that these grandmothers and their families have strengths, resources, and the ability to recover from diversity. The strengths-based perspective allows social workers to see opportunities, hope, and solutions, rather than just problems. Social development also ensures that such opportunities are recognised and implemented

in such a way that they will help generate income and improve the well-being of communities.

Therefore, the study adopted the strengths-based perspective because the strengths-based perspective believes that every person has some inherent strengths, regardless of the nature of the problem he or she might be experiencing (Sekudu 2015:93).

2.15.1 Characteristics of the strengths-based perspective

The strengths-based perspective discourages the use of a deficit-based approach that assigns disempowering labels to clients and categorises them in terms of pathology (Saleebey 2013:4). Through difficult and problematic life experiences, families develop skills and coping strategies that they can utilise to alleviate problematic situations (Saleebey 2013:15). Kirst-Ashman (2010:54) states that by focusing on the client's strengths, rather than on the problem, social workers embark on the problem-solving process, which includes the engagement, assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, and termination phases. In this study the researcher made use of the characteristics of the strengths-based perspective, as referred to by Saleebey (2013:5), and they are as follows:

- **Goal orientation:** The strengths-based perspective is goal oriented. The individuals themselves are supported to set goals they would like to achieve in their lives.
- **Strengths assessment:** The primary focus is not on problems or deficits, and the individual is supported to recognise the internal resources they have at their disposal, which they can use to overcome any difficulty or condition.
- **Resources from the environment:** A strengths-based perspective underlines that in every environment there are individuals, associations, groups, and institutions who have something to give that others may find useful, and it is the social worker's role to build bridges to these resources. Explicit and different methods are used for identifying the clients' and environmental strengths for goal attainment. For example, in solution-focused therapy clients

will be assisted to set goals before the identification of strengths, while in strength-based case management individuals will go through a specific 'strengths assessment'.

- **Relationship is hope-inducing:** A strengths-based perspective aims to increase the hopefulness of the client with the focus on a strengthened relationship with people, communities, and culture.
- **Meaningful choice:** A strengths-based approach highlights the view that people are experts in their own lives and the social worker's role is simply to widen or multiply and explain choices and empower and motivate people to make their own decisions and informed choices.
- **Culturally bound:** Culturally bound strengths are strengths that are culturally expressed. Every individual, group, family, and community has strengths. Trauma, abuse, illness, and struggles may cause pain and suffering, but they may also be sources of challenges and opportunity. Every environment is full of resources (Saleeby, in Zastrow 2009:53; Kirst-Ashman 2017:63). The researcher utilised the strengths-based perspective and its characteristics to align the study with the theoretical framework. The strengths-based perspective takes a relativist stance in emphasising that the practitioner should work in conjunction with the client in identifying the desired goals. Every individual, group, family, and community has strengths and resources (Joseph, Herrera & Doyle 2020:13).

Individuals and environmental strengths need to be taken into consideration for a more positive, respectful, and empowering shift in assessment to occur. The strengths-based approach is effective, and the practitioners have more knowledge about the needs of the client than does the client himself/herself. Everything that a social worker does will help the clients to discover and explore their strengths and resources, in service of assisting them to achieve their goals and realise their dreams (Edwards, Young & Nikels 2016:19). Furthermore, the theoretical framework fits with the FCAP, as grandmothers are encouraged to be self-reliant

and also to use available resources to uplift and empower themselves and their families.

2.16 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

The democratic Government of South Africa adopted the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997), which obliged the country to a developmental approach to social welfare. The application of the developmental approach to social services is the shared responsibility of private sectors, as well as government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Patel 2015:93). The social development approach “is a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole within the context of dynamic development process. The social development approach was introduced to alleviate poverty and uplift vulnerable populations” (Midgley 2014:13).

Zastrow (2017:9) states that the social development approach, or developmental social welfare, is a process of social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as whole in connection with the dynamic process of economic development. Sekudu (2015:93) mentions that the developmental approach encompasses the empowerment of the clients and it can be used at all levels of social work intervention. The social development approach integrates the provision of social services with economic development and recognises the importance of sustainable development in addressing poverty and unemployment (DSD 2013). The social development approach is a theory and approach to social work that emphasises the fact that economic development should be combined with social intervention (Midgley 2014:10).

Social development is a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development. Lombard and Wairire (2010:98) assert that social workers can help to attain the Millennium Developmental Goals, which are now referred to as the Sustainable Developmental Goals, 2030. Social development can be used as a strategy to promote sustainable development in the community. Elliott (2011:104) argues that social development offers a progressive social work model in practice,

intending to achieve social justice for the empowerment of oppressed, marginalised, and excluded populations.

The FCAP helps to bring development to communities, because it is aimed at addressing the challenges faced by the grandmothers in Diepsloot. It also protects children from being neglected, violated, or abused and helps to maintain order in families and communities at large. In rendering the FCAP and supervision, the social worker must ensure that grandmothers are empowered and educated on their rights and responsibilities in terms of the placement of foster children. This theory fits with the study, because the social development approach is about social workers applying a developmental approach to address the socio-economic status of the grandmothers as foster parents.

2.17 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on a literature review and the theoretical perspectives underpinning the FCAP. In the first section of this chapter a brief history of the FCAP was provided with references to the available literature. Notably, the provision of the FCAP is believed to have started in the USA.

In South Africa, the history of foster care awareness is marked by recent social welfare developments. The concept foster care awareness; the concept of kinship care programmes; how these programmes are structured internationally, regionally, and locally; and the role of the DSD in administering the FCAP were discussed. Considerable attention was given to the theoretical perspectives that inform the FCAP, namely the strengths-based perspective and the social development approach. Chapter Three focuses on the application of the qualitative research method in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: APPLICATION OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the detailed description of how the qualitative research process was applied to understand the experiences and challenges of grandmother-headed families in relation to the FCAP in the Diepsloot community. The focus of the chapter is on the research methodology, research approach, research design, population and sampling, sampling size, saturation principle, preparing participants for data collection, accessing gatekeepers, preparation of participants, interviewing skills, interview schedule/guide, pilot testing, data analysis, and verification of data.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The term methodology refers to the way in which we approach problems to seek answers (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault 2016:3). Babbie and Mouton (2016:647) define research methodology as methods or techniques that are used in the process of implementing the research design or research plan. This study utilised a qualitative research methodology which is based on the belief that knowledge about human beings is subjective, as it is socially constructed (Chilisa & Kawulich 2012:56). Qualitative methodology refers to research methods that address the collecting and recording of a person's spoken or written words and their observable behaviour, and this is described as descriptive data (Taylor et al 2016:7). The methodology consists of approaches that seek to understand the behaviour and lifestyle as experienced by the individuals involved (Creswell 2013:45). In this study, the researcher was interested in gaining an in-depth understanding of the FCAP as a strategy for granny-headed families in the Diepsloot community (De Vos et al 2011:96). Babbie (2011:67) explains that exploratory research provides a better understanding of a phenomenon. The researcher gains insights into a specific phenomenon and answers the "what" question (De Vos et al 2011:95).

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

The three research approaches are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The qualitative research approach refers to a large or wide sense of research that produces descriptive data, people's own written or spoken words, and observable behaviour (Taylor et al 2016:7). Qualitative research methods are more flexible than quantitative methods, allow research procedures to evolve as more observations are geared, and typically permit the use of subjectivity to generate deeper understandings of the meanings of human experiences (Rubin & Babbie 2016:46). Quantitative research methods emphasise the production of precise and generalisable statistical findings (Rubin & Babbie 2016:47). The mixed methods approach is used to collect and combine data from quantitative and qualitative research methods (Creswell & Creswell 2018:4).

Engel and Schutt (2014:206) state that qualitative methods focus on human subjectivity; on the meanings that participants attach to events and that people give to their lives. Qualitative research methods "attempt to generate a coherent, and the story as seen through the eye of those who are part of the story, to understand and contemporary their experiences and actions as they experienced them" (Wagner et al 2012:126). The researcher utilised the qualitative research method for this study, as participants were sharing their own lived experiences on how they function as grandmother-headed families.

In utilising a qualitative approach, the underlying assumption is that individuals' lived experiences can be better understood when the researcher focuses on exploring and demonstrating the meanings that individuals attach to those experiences (Creswell 2013:47). A qualitative researcher focuses on eliciting and presenting a wide range of participants' experiences and challenges (Denzin & Lincoln 2011:4). In this study, the researcher's main focus was on exploring and understanding the grandmother-headed families' lived experiences and challenges in relation to the FCAP.

3.3.1 Characteristics of qualitative research

Creswell (2013:45-46) highlights the following as the characteristics of qualitative research:

- **Researcher focused on the natural setting**

All settings and people are unique. The researcher's own purposes will determine which settings and groups will be the most interesting and yield the most insight. The qualitative researcher gathers information in the relevant setting or at the site where participants experience the issue, problem, or condition being researched. In this study the researcher visited the participants in their houses where they live to ensure that the natural settings are not interfered with and so that the participants can be interviewed and observed in their natural settings. Diepsloot is generally described as a notorious settlement full of crime, violent protests, and unpredictability. This place is inhabited by people from different tribes, cultures, traditions, and nationalities, many of whom have no educational background or skill sets which they can use to find employment. The lack of education may be due to material deprivation, lack of security, and lack of basic necessities such as water and sanitation (Pfigu 2014:2). A total of 4 900 Reconstruction and Development Programme houses have to be constructed in Diepsloot. Many people live in three by two metre shacks, assembled from metal, wood, plastic, and cardboard (Stats SA 2018:3). Most of the participants are not employed, however, they are receiving the Older Person's Grant (also referred to as the Old Age Grant). A few participants are working as domestic workers in Fourways, a nearby suburb.

- **Researcher as key instrument**

The researcher collected data on her own through interviews. The researcher utilised skills such as observations, as she observed participants in their own space and observed how they reflected on the research questions. This is a major aspect in the qualitative research approach, because collecting data and understanding the condition of the participants can only be done through face-to-face interactions with the participants and observation of them in their environment. In this research study, the researcher therefore ensured that she

collected data directly from the participants through semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions to gain a clear understanding of the experiences and challenges of grandmother-headed families. The participants were well-informed about the topic of the research study. The participants were allowed to decide whether or not to participate in the research study. The researcher sought permission from the participants to use audio-recording equipment. Their participation in the research study was voluntarily. They were not obligated to take part in the research study and their decision to participate in this research study was respected. The researcher explained about confidentiality. The researcher accepted any language that the participants chose to communicate in, as clear communication is essential for understanding.

- **Participants' meaning**

The researcher believes that the information shared by the respondents has greater meaning and importance than information which she gathered from literature research and other sources. The data collected in this study represents the lived and actual experiences of grandmother-headed families while they are caring for their grandchildren or foster children. By observing people in their everyday lives and listening to them talk about what is on their minds, the researcher obtained first-hand knowledge of the social lives of the participants.

- **Researcher presents a holistic picture**

Qualitative researcher studies capture broader views instead of fragmented lived experiences of participants, as the researcher will look at socio-economic phenomena and use a holistic approach through open-ended questions. Therefore, the use of the qualitative approach in this study provided the researcher with a holistic picture and a deeper understanding of grandmother-headed families' experiences regarding the FCAP as an intervention strategy. Open-ended questions allowed the researcher to gather more information about the participants as grandmothers utilising the FCAP.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher utilised the exploratory, descriptive, contextual, phenomenological, and case study designs to understand the experiences and challenges of grandmother-headed families in relation to the FCAP as an intervention. The research design is defined as a “plan of action and methods that span on the determination from broad assumption to a particular methods of collection data and analysis” (De Vos et al 2011:65). It also addresses the arrangement of conditions for data collection and analysis to combine relevance and purpose (Leedy & Ormrod 2015:92; Flick 2018:106). A research design is a plan or strategy that moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of participants, the data gathering methods to be used, and the data analysis to be conducted (Niewenhuis 2016:40).

3.4.1 Exploratory design

Babbie (2013:90) postulates that an exploratory study is conducted mostly for three reasons. Firstly, to satisfy the researcher’s curiosity and desire for a better understanding. Secondly, to test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study and, thirdly, to develop methods to be employed in any subsequent study, which will be achieved by addressing the objectives of the study. In this case, the researcher utilised the exploratory design to understand the FCAP as a strategy for grandmother-headed families. The exploratory research design has the overall purpose of exploring the answers to the research question, which usually concerns an unknown phenomenon (Davis 2014:75). The researcher gained an in-depth understanding of the FCAP as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families when utilising the exploratory research design. Semi-structured interviews utilised to gather information helped the researcher to acquire and gain insight into the phenomenon under study.

3.4.2 Descriptive design

The researcher utilised the descriptive design. A descriptive qualitative design is utilised to examine, describe, and document an accurate picture of the social phenomenon being studied through complex textual descriptions (Marshall &

Rossman 2011:69). Descriptive research is not primarily concerned with 'the causes of', but rather the process of recording and reporting data. Descriptive research builds on the explorative design by way of gathering, organising, and describing the data collected (Strydom 2013:152-153). In this instance, the descriptive research design was utilised to assist the researcher in describing the data gathered to provide rich and relevant information about the FCAP as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families.

3.4.3 Contextual design

The contextual design attempts to identify how the everyday settings of people's lives shape their experiences and behaviour (Hennink et al 2011:9). In the opinion of Creswell (2002:9), by visiting people in the context in which they live and work, qualitative researchers can gather personal information in order to understand the historical and cultural worlds of participants. The researcher's intention was to gain an understanding of the social, emotional, and physical functioning of grandmother-headed families in their social environment. Marshall and Rossman (2011:91) state that in qualitative research the social and physical setting or context is of importance, as the behaviour of human beings might be influenced by aspects of the environment, such as schedules, space, salary, rewards, norms, traditions, roles, and values. Furthermore, the researcher took into account that the grandmother-headed families should be interviewed in their own settings to assist in understanding the problem being studied.

3.4.4 Phenomenological design

The phenomenological research design was used to strengthen the exploratory, descriptive, and contextual designs. Fouché and Schurink (2011:316) state that the phenomenological approach's aim is to describe what the participants' lifeworld consists of or, more specifically, the experiences of grandmothers with the FCAP as an intervention strategy to address foster care challenges. Creswell and Creswell (2018:13) mention that the phenomenological design focuses on the description of a phenomenon as articulated by the person making sense of a similar experience. In this study, the researcher explored the grandmothers' experiences with the FCAP and how they applied the skills and know-how they obtained from the group and learning sessions at home.

3.4.5 Case study design

A case study is used to understand the case, how it works, and how it connects to the real-world environment (Yin 2018:xxii). The specific type of case study that was utilised is the instrumental case study. Rule and John (2011:8) explain that the instrumental case study is also referred to as an exploratory case study, which attempts to explain specific cases, test existing knowledge, and generate new information. Fouché and Schurink (2011:321) are of the view that an instrumental case study can be very useful to inform policy development through the generation of new theory and knowledge. Therefore, it is envisaged that this study will provide a new, improved strategy on how to use the FCAP as an intervention strategy to improve the lives of grandmother-headed families.

Leedy and Ormrod (2013:141) explain that the case study could be suitable for learning more about a situation that is not clearly described or understood. The case study chosen by the researcher must consist of specific qualities to inform practice in similar situations. Creswell (2013:98) affirms that a case study entails the research of cases with specific characteristics and within certain boundaries. Participants were purposefully selected to explore their understanding of the FCAP as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families. This will help to improve social workers' knowledge when working with grandmother-headed families. Diepsloot is a township in the north of Johannesburg in South Africa. It is a densely populated settlement made up of government-subsidised housing, brick houses built by landowners, as well as shacks. These shacks were built on any vacant land that could be found. Some landowners charge other residents rent to stay in shacks on their land (Harber 2011:2). Diepsloot is home to over 250 000 families, many of which live in shacks and scramble for survival. As a result of unemployment and congestion, the area has become a magnet for criminal activities (Harber 2011:2).

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Population is a term that denotes the boundaries of the study units and individuals who hold specific characteristics (De Vos et al 2011:223). In research, the term

population refers to the totality of possible persons or other sampling units the researcher is interested in studying to address the research problem (Monette et al 2011:136). In the human sciences, researchers are interested in learning about groups of people who have similar characteristics. These groups of people can be large or small. This group, according to Creswell (2015:142), is referred to as the target population. Of importance to the researcher is that this group has some defining and common characteristics that can be identified and studied by the researcher. The researcher was interested in one population, namely all the grandmother-headed families in the database of the DSD in the Johannesburg Metro Region (Diepsloot community) who are taking care of foster children. In this study, the researcher considered all grandmother-headed families who are taking care of foster children as representing the population, but due to financial and time constraints not everyone in the target population formed part of the study.

Sampling refers to obtaining data from a selected group of the population which has been chosen in a way that is representative of the whole population (Campbell, Taylor & McGlade 2017:36). Sampling can therefore be described as a segment of the population that is selected for investigation (Bryman 2012:187). A sample is a subset of a population, objects, or events chosen to participate in or to be considered in a study (Grinnell & Unrau 2007:574). The researcher utilised purposive sampling, which entails selecting a sample based on one's own judgment about which units are the most representative or useful (Rubin & Babbie 2016:222). The purposive sampling method is when the researcher selects individuals to participate based on a specific need or purpose (i.e. based on the research objective, design, and target population), which is the method most commonly used for qualitative research (Edmonds & Kennedy 2017:19) The purposive sampling method is used to select the participants that represent the characteristics of the population (Babbie 2011:128-129). The researcher selected foster parents who are over 60 years of age and are living in Diepsloot, as per the inclusion criteria (Rubin & Babbie 2013:222).

3.5.1 Sample size

In qualitative research, the sample size is not predetermined; rather data saturation is used as the guiding principle for data collection (Laher & Botha 2012:88; Mason

2010:17). This entails that the researcher focuses on collecting extensive and in-depth information until a point is reached when forthcoming data is no longer adding to the emerging findings (Miles et al 2014:31; Creswell 2013:157). In this study, the researcher did not determine the sample size prior to data collection, as she was interested in gathering in-depth and detailed information from the participants based on their experiences and challenges with the FCAP. However, after conducting a semi-structured interview with the 10th participant, it became evident that the data was no longer yielding new information and the data collection process was finalised.

3.5.1.1 Saturation principle

In this study, the researcher employed the data saturation principle. Data saturation refers to the stage where no new data is generated under the various themes and categories of the study (Creswell & Creswell 2018:84). Saturation is used in qualitative research as a criterion for discontinuing data collection and/or analysis. Data saturation is probably the most common technology applied to describe the achievement of sufficient sample size (O'Reilly & Parker 2013:190). Failure to reach saturation has an impact on the quality of the research conducted (Morse 2015:587). The researcher did not define the sample size in the beginning of the research and discontinued collecting data at the point of saturation.

3.5.2 Inclusion criteria

Inclusion refers to the addition of a control or comparison group within the research design (Edmonds & Kennedy 2017:9). The inclusion criteria which were used to purposively select the participants involved grandmother foster parents who:

- ✓ are 60 years of age and above;
- ✓ have a valid court order;
- ✓ have a foster child/children;
- ✓ speak isiZulu, Tshivenda, Sepedi, or Setswana; and
- ✓ are foster carers in Diepsloot.

3.5.3 Exclusion criteria

The exclusion criteria should be explicit and comprehensive enough so that any article that becomes known could be included or excluded solely based on those

criteria. Exclusion criteria rule out people or elements from participating in a survey or study based on some specific characteristics (Keyton 2018:130). In other words, exclusion criteria are those characteristics that disqualify prospective subjects from participating in the study.

The following foster parents were excluded from the study:

- ✓ Foster parents who are under 60 years of age.
- ✓ Foster parents who do not reside in Diepsloot.
- ✓ Foster parents who cannot speak isiZulu, Tshivenda, Sepedi, or Setswana.
- ✓ Foster parents whose gender is male.
- ✓ Foster parents who do not have a valid court order.

3.6 PREPARING PARTICIPANTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Preliminary contact was established to introduce the study and make logical arrangements for interviews. The researcher made sure that the participants were willing to spend enough time to participate in the interviews (Greeff 2011:40). Data collection means gaining permission, employing a good qualitative sampling strategy, developing a means for recording data both digitally and on paper, storing the data, and anticipating ethical issues that may arise (Creswell 2013:145). Prior to conducting the interview, the researcher obtained permission from the DSD management as gatekeepers. The purpose of data preparation is to gain access to and establish a rapport with the participants so that they will contribute good data (Creswell 2013:147). The researcher explained the purpose and procedures of the study to the prospective participants and assured them that their participation would be entirely voluntarily and that they would not be judged or discriminated against should they decide not to participate in the study. They were given the assurance that their decisions would be respected. The researcher requested that those who agreed to participate in the study sign a consent form as confirmation that they understood and agreed to its contents (Addendum C).

The initial step in data collection is to prepare the potential participants for data collection. This requires gaining access to the potential participants and establishing a good working relationship with them (Creswell 2013:147; Rubin & Babbie

2010:228). In qualitative research, Creswell (2015:210) suggests that gaining approval to conduct research may involve obtaining permission on numerous levels from individuals, organisations, the site, and practice and review boards. In gaining access to potential participants the researcher might be requested to compile a research proposal that can be reviewed by human subjects and review boards to ensure that the participants will be protected from potential harm. As a master's student, a detailed research proposal was reviewed and approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at UNISA.

Researchers have a moral and ethical obligation to engage in research in a transparent manner. Singh and Wassenaar (2016:42) refer to the importance of seeking permission to conduct the research from the gatekeepers, i.e. those individuals who have control over permitting or denying access to information, institutions, organisations, spaces, and services.

3.6.1 Accessing gatekeepers

The gatekeepers refer the researcher to potential participants, but the researcher should take responsibility for making sure that participants do not feel coerced into participating (Ogletree & Kawulich 2012:65). The researcher clarified her relationship with the gatekeepers and provided clear details about the study for the participants to make an informed decision about their participation (Ogletree & Kawulich 2012:65; Babbie & Benaquisto 2010:316). A gatekeeper is defined as someone who controls access to an organisation or an institution (Singh & Wassenaar 2016:42). The researcher sought permission from the DSD management to conduct the research. The researcher wrote a letter to the DSD management (Johannesburg Metro Region), namely social work manager Ms Mosia and the director Ms Mhlongo, requesting their permission to carry out the research study involving database information of foster care cases whose foster parents are grandmothers. The letter outlined the purpose of the research study, the role and responsibilities of the researcher (De Vos, Fouché, Delpont & Strydom 2011:94), the possible value of the study, and what the research project aimed to achieve. The researcher sought permission from her colleagues to use their database (Addendum A).

3.6.2 Preparation of participants

A crucial aspect of data collection is gaining access to the field where the researcher wants to conduct the study (Flick 2018:161). Creswell (2013:147) states that the first step in collecting data is to prepare the participants. The researcher gained access to potential participants and established a good relationship with them. The researcher began the process of data collection by conducting home visits to grandmother-headed families whose foster children are receiving the Foster Child Grant. The researcher explained the purpose and goal of the study and the participants were informed that their participation is voluntary. She also reassured them that the researcher did not judge or discriminate against participants.

The researcher requested that those who agreed to participate in the study sign a consent form as an assurance that they understand and agree to the contents thereof (Addendum C). The participants were informed that their participation is voluntary. The informed consent also specifies the participants' right to withdraw from the study without a penalty. The consent form also included the aim of the study, the research procedures, the ethical considerations, and potential risks (Creswell 2013:153). Gaining access is a process of acquiring consent to access, observe, and talk to the research participants (Glesne 2011:57). The researcher also requested permission to use the audio recordings of the interviews.

3.6.3 Interviewing skills

The researcher utilised the following skills and techniques to gather information from the participants:

- **Establishing a rapport:** At the beginning of the interview, the researcher established a rapport with the participants for them to feel valued, free, safe, and comfortable enough to share their feelings and perspectives (Hennink et al 2011:113; Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011:105). Simple and non-threatening questions which were related to the study were asked at the beginning of the interview (Monette et al 2011:183). The researcher commenced the interview with the biographical questions, which enabled the participants to relax and established a rapport between the researcher and the participants.

- **Logical order:** During the interview, questions were asked to avoid confusing the participants and followed the natural flow of topics as outlined in the interview guide. The interview guide also helped the researcher to keep track of the questions (Hennink et al 2011:116-17). The researcher, guided by the interview guide, followed up with probes for clarification.
- **Active listening:** Active listening entails that the researcher has good listening and observation skills that focus on the participants' narratives, as well as non-verbal communication (Dejonckheere & Vaughn 2019:6). The researcher demonstrated active listening to the participants by using eye contact, gestures, and facial expressions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011:105). To understand the participants' worlds, perceptions, realities, and self, the researcher listened carefully to what the participants were experiencing and how they were experiencing it (Grobler, Schenck & Mbedzi 2013:490). Attentive listening is another aspect of non-verbal communication and can be defined as the ability to hear and comprehend what is being said (Sekudu 2015:115).
- **Empathy:** Empathy is the ability to enter into and understand the world of another person and to communicate this understanding to him or her. Empathy involves asking what the real message is that is being expressed at a particular point (Lishman 2009:43). Empathy means being able to see what a participant's world is like to him/her and how the participant sees himself/herself. This means that a facilitator must temporarily set aside his/her own frame of reference (Grobler et al 2013:54). Grandmothers encounter numerous challenges during the process of the FCAP, which is the reason the researcher took into consideration the feelings and meanings grandmothers attach to their different challenges.
- **Recording:** The primary benefit of recording an interview is that it allows the interviewer to concentrate on the interview, rather than writing notes. Recording interviews allows the interviewee and interviewer to develop a better relationship (Rohman & Rita 2013:9). As it might be a challenge for the

researcher to make notes of all the information simultaneously and to be attentive to the participants, the researcher, with the permission of the participants, used voice-recording equipment for accurate transcription during data analysis (Flick 2018:82). The researcher reviewed the interview notes, listened to the recordings, and transcribed the interviews as soon as possible to identify areas for improvement, emerging topics, and points for further exploration (Glesne 2011:117).

- **Language:** Language is a medium of communication and people use language to carry across their views and opinions. People convey their communication to fulfil everyday needs (Rao 2019:66). The interviews were conducted in a language which was easily understandable by participants and translated into English for the transcripts.

3.6.4 Interview schedule/guide

An interview schedule or guide contains a written guide for the interviews in a research study (Fouché & Schurink 2011:319). An interview guide gives an introductory question relating to the matter to be discussed with the interviewee, and the interviewer is expected to probe to formulate questions and also provide guidelines for probing (Emans 2005:10). The researcher used open-ended questions to allow participants to express their attitudes, emotions, ideas, sentiments, suggestions, or opinions in their own words. The researcher read the questions to the grandmothers individually during the face-to-face interviews and waited for their responses (Delpont & Roestenburg 2011:186) (see Addendum D).

The semi-structured questions below were used to obtain information from grandmother foster parents who are staying with their foster children.

Section A: Biographical information

1. How old are you?
2. How many foster children are currently in your care as foster parent?
3. How long have you been a foster parent?
4. Are you currently employed? (Yes/No)

5. How many foster care awareness/training sessions have you attended?

Section B: Open-ended questions

1. Share with me your understanding of the foster care awareness programme. What does it mean to you?
2. Tell me about the positive and negative sides of the foster care awareness programme.
3. Share with me how the foster care awareness programme has worked for you generally.
4. Which section(s) of the activities of the foster care awareness programme assisted you the most as a caregiver and why?
5. Tell me how you have practically utilised the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the foster care awareness programme sessions or training.
6. How, in your view, did the foster care awareness programme sessions help the foster children and your family members?
7. In your view, what part of the foster care awareness programme needs to be improved to further support grandmother foster parents and their families?
8. What suggestions do you have for social workers and the role they play in the rendering of the foster care awareness programme sessions?

3.7 PILOT TEST

Pilot testing is defined as a pre-test of a questionnaire or other types of survey on a small number of cases to test the procedures and responses (Walliman 2011:81). A pilot test is the purposeful exercise which is conducted by the researcher to test and improve the research methods and questions (Glesne 2011:56). A pilot test was conducted before the actual data collection process began. Pilot testing is defined as a process for testing and certifying a procedure by applying it to a small group of participants from the proposed test population. However, the group participating in the pilot test should not be included in the main study (Strydom, in De Vos et al 2011:237). A pilot study asks whether something can be done or helps to determine whether the researcher should proceed with the research. The pilot study has a specific design feature; it is conducted on a smaller scale than a full-scale study. It is important for the improvement of the quality and efficiency of the main study. It is

conducted in order to assess the safety of a treatment or intervention and recruitment potentials (In 2017:601). Pilot tests are designed to determine whether the intervention will work. Pilot tests are implemented in settings convenient for the researcher and somewhat like the ones that will be used for the main study (Strydom, in De Vos et al 2011:101). Once the researcher is confident with the pilot testing, the process of data collection can begin with the sample population (Bhattacharjee 2012:23).

In conducting the pilot test, the researcher utilised the purposive sampling method. The researcher clarified to the two participants the purposes and procedures of the pilot test. The face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted in isiZulu, Tshivenda, Sepedi, or Setswana and based on a list of open-ended questions included in an interview guide. The interviews were audio recorded after permission was obtained from the participants and later transcribed. The participants were able to answer all the questions and the researcher had an opportunity to become familiar with the research questions and practise her interviewing skills.

The list of questions prepared to guide the interviewer was found to be appropriate and relevant to grandmother-headed families. The researcher ensured that no offensive language was contained in the interview guide. The researcher also assessed the clarity of the questions for the participants. The explanation of the purpose of the research was clear and acceptable to participants. The participants were requested to provide input on the nature of the questions contained in the interview guide and the manner in which they were posed. They all expressed their satisfaction with this tool and that no amendments were needed. They found the questions to be clear and logical.

Through the pilot study, the researcher was able to test the research tool/questions contained in the interview guide. There were no errors in the administration of questions from the interview guide and, as a result, no amendments were made.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis refers to the process of organising and interpreting field notes and interview transcriptions, aiming to make sense out of the material and answer the research question (Remler & Van Ryzin 2011:75). Data analysis has various aims that may include describing and explaining a phenomenon or developing a theory of the phenomenon (Flick 2018:420). This involves reducing the data into themes through the process of coding, condensing the codes, and looking for themes that can describe the central phenomenon under study (Creswell 2013:180). In qualitative research, the focus is not on the numerical data, but rather it is on interpreting textual data to understand the phenomenon under study from the participants' perceptions and experiences (Hennink et al 2011:14). The researcher made use of the eight steps of thematic analysis suggested by Creswell (2002) and Clarke et al (2015:230-245):

1. The researcher organised and prepared the data for analysis. The researcher transcribed interviews by writing down the exact words used by the participants in the voice recordings.
2. The researcher read and reread the transcripts, listened to the audio recordings, and looked at all the data.
3. The researcher coded all the data by writing a word representing a category in the margins of the transcripts.
4. The researcher utilised coding to generate themes or categories for the study.
5. The researcher wrote and presented the themes of each participant through conveying descriptive information about each participant.
6. The researcher conducted data verification and evaluation and interpreted the findings.
7. The researcher assembled the data belonging to each category and conducted a preliminary analysis.
8. The researcher wrote a report on the research findings.

Grinnell and Unrau (2007:448) state that the purpose of analysing data in qualitative studies is "to sift and organize the mass of data acquired during data collection in such a way that the themes and interpretations that emerge from the process,

address the primary research problems identified.” Through this process the researcher gathered data that addressed the primary identified research problems. Following the eight steps of Tesch, the researcher identified the common aims of the data collected from grandmother-headed families in relation to the FCAP. The data was used to understand the experiences and challenges of grandmother-headed families in relation to the FCAP.

In addition, the expertise of an independent coder was sought to analyse the data. The analyst was able to code the data by means of free or open coding, in which codes are inductively assigned to the quotations from the interview transcripts and notes (Friese 2014:14).

3.9 VERIFICATION OF DATA

In qualitative research, data verification relates to a process in which the researcher utilises validation strategies to demonstrate ways of claiming that the research was conducted in a rigorous manner and that the findings are trustworthy (Creswell 2013:251). Data verification is a resource-intensive method of quality assurance frequently used in the qualitative research method (Tudur Smith et al 2012:1). A study conducted in the absence of trustworthiness and accuracy can merely be viewed as a good emotional story (Carey & Asbury 2012:21). Due to its impact on resource allocation and policy change, these authors indicate that research must be credible and must have rigour. In search of a trustworthy study, the researcher implemented verification strategies according to Guba’s model and the criteria that were considered during the study are discussed below (Shenton 2004:64).

3.9.1 Credibility of the findings

Credibility involves the process of establishing that the results of the research are believable. It was anticipated that the different techniques used in this study for data collection would ensure credibility and also improve the ‘richness’ of the data gathered. This is often more important than the amount of data collected (Moser & Korstjens 2018:10). Mertens (2019:269) refers to credibility as a prolonged and persistent engagement. Claims should be made based on sufficient data to support them and the processes of analysis and interpretation should be made visible.

Credibility deals with the question 'how congruent are the findings with reality?' (Niewenhuis 2016:40). When a researcher establishes credibility, he/she is stating that the study results are believable or credible. In this study, the researcher achieved credibility by ensuring that during transcription and while making field notes every piece of data was represented to ensure that the data is credible and reflects the view of the participants.

The researcher should ensure that the natural setting does not change as a result of the contact made. Hence, creating a safe and non-threatening environment through establishing an open, trustworthy, and relaxed relationship becomes critical in authenticating the findings (Niewenhuis & Smith 2012:137). The researcher upheld the ethical considerations of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and management of information related to the study. The researcher provided the participants with all the relevant information related to the study and the research procedures that were to be followed. The interviews took place in a safe and non-threatening environment determined by the participants.

3.9.2 Transferability of the findings

Mertens (2019:271) identifies transferability as the concepts that enable readers of the research to make judgments based on similarities and differences when comparing the research situation to their own. Transferability does not involve generalised claims, but invites readers of the research to make connections between elements of a study and their own experience or research (Niewenhuis 2016:42). Generalising the meanings or findings constructed in qualitative research is not necessarily the goal of the research. Identifying and explaining the phenomena under study and the findings can, however, enable researchers to understand the many perspectives that define the problem and its relevance to other contexts (Moon, Brewer, Januchoski-Harty, Adams & Blackman 2016:20). Transferability is nothing more than attempting to demonstrate that your research is applicable in another context (Terrell 2015:179). In this research study, the researcher was able to provide enough information about the research study to the participants. To establish transferability, the research details were described in detail to allow the reader to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn could be transferable to other settings, times, situations, or people (Amankwaa 2016:124).

Detailed information was provided on how the research unfolded, with a clear outline of the step-by-step processes followed to allow for transferability.

3.9.3 Dependability of the findings

Dependability relates to whether the process of the study is consistent across researchers and research methods, hence another researcher should reach the same conclusions with the use of the researcher's perspective, data, and situation (Miles et al 2014:312). In order to address the dependability issue in qualitative research, the researcher should demonstrate consistency and accuracy in data collection, coding, and analysis, thus creating an audit trail which will enable another researcher to repeat the process (Thomas & Magilvy 2011:153). Dependability of the findings can be improved when the responses are stable to multiple coders of data. This can be achieved when individuals code the data separately, examine and compare the codes, and reach consensus on the codes (Creswell 2013:253). The researcher and an independent coder coded the data independently and reached similar conclusions on the findings. Thus, consensus was reached on the codes, themes, sub-themes, and categories.

3.9.4 Confirmability of the findings

Confirmability is based on the researcher's relative neutrality and reasonable detachment from bias (Miles et al 2014:311). Confirmability refers to the aspects of the collected data, as the data needs to support the findings of the study and may not be shaped by the researcher's motivations (Creswell & Creswell 2018:259-261). The researcher is employed by the DSD, Johannesburg Metro Region, as a social worker in the field of child care and protection. The researcher was true to her own experience and her roles within the DSD.

To address bias the researcher made use of reflexivity, which relates to being thoughtful and sensitive about the possible impact of one's personal views and understanding when interacting with the participants and interpreting their experiences (Doyle 2013:252-253). Utilising reflexivity enables the researcher to be open to the unexpected, thus maintaining focus on the research purpose (Doyle 2013:253). The researcher made an effort to remain neutral and used probes to gather more information on their unique experiences.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter Three explored the application of the qualitative research methodology in realising the aims and objectives of the study. The researcher utilised a qualitative research method to explore, describe, and contextualise the experiences and challenges of grandmother-headed families in relation to the FCAP. The purposive sampling method was utilised to select participants that represent the characteristics of the population. Data was collected by way of semi-structured interviews that were recorded and the data was analysed utilising the eight steps as proposed by Tesch. The themes, sub-themes, and categories identified were coded and verified according to Guba's Model. Chapter Four covers the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The goal of this research study is to have an in-depth understanding of the experiences and challenges of grandmothers in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy. This qualitative study utilised the exploratory, descriptive, contextual, phenomenological, and collective case study designs. The sample was obtained through non-probability purposive sampling techniques. Therefore, the researcher utilised the qualitative research approach. The semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from grandmother-headed families. The following research objectives were formulated:

- To explore and describe the experiences and challenges of grandmothers in Diepsloot in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy.
- To contextualise findings made from the collected data on the grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations from the findings on the experiences and challenges of grandmothers in Diepsloot in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy.

This chapter focuses on the findings of the study. The findings are based on comparing and contrasting the storylines of 10 participants from the grandmother-headed families.

The participants were asked two sets of questions: one set to elicit biographical information and another set containing the open-ended research questions. Data was analysed following the six steps of thematic data analysis suggested by Creswell (2002) and Clarke et al (2015:230-245). The services of an independent coder were used to do the coding. After analysing the data collected from the grandmother-headed families, eight themes, 26 sub-themes, and four categories

emerged. The relevant literature control including the strengths-based perspective and the social development approach were utilised to support the findings from the study.

The next section will present the biographical profile of the participants.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

In Table 4.1 the researcher presents the biographical profiles of the participants. In utilising the purposive sampling technique, the researcher selected participants from the database of the DSD, Gauteng Province, in the Diepsloot community. Prior to data collection the researcher determined the criteria for inclusion and exclusion of the grandmother-headed families. Table 4.1 reflects the demographic data of participants showing their age and gender, the number of children in their care, how long they have been fostering children as foster parents, their occupations, and the number of FCAPs they have attended. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, alphabetical codes were used instead of the names of the participants to protect their identities. Therefore, Table 4.1 below outlines the overall demographic particulars of the research participants in the study.

Table 4.1: Biographical profile of the participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Number of foster children in their care	Years of experience as foster parent	Occupation	Number of FCAPs attended
A	60	Female	1	3	Domestic worker	1
B	62	Female	2	13	Unemployed	2
C	72	Female	1	4	Unemployed	2
D	60	Female	2	13	Domestic worker	3
E	61	Female	1	4	Unemployed	3
F	64	Female	2	5	Unemployed	3
G	64	Female	2	13	Unemployed	1
H	66	Female	1	11	Unemployed	4
I	61	Female	2	3	Unemployed	2
J	63	Female	1	4	Unemployed	2

4.2.1 Participants' age distribution

Ageing represents the most prominent change in the global demographic profile of the world. Ageing populations with scarce resources are presently a major problem to care for, especially because of the continued increase of the ageing populations (Verdejo & Calvo 2014:110). The ages of the participants in this study ranged from 60 to 72 years. Seven participants were over 60, two were 60 years old, and one was 72 years old at the time of the study. Drawing from Glaser et al (2013:60), a grandmother is a female grandparent providing child care to her young grandchildren. According to the Older Persons Act 13 of 2006 (South Africa 2006b), an older person is a male who is 65 years of age or older or a female who is 60 years of age or older. Therefore, the participants in this study fall under the category of older persons. They qualify to apply for the Older Person's Grant. McLeod (2023) states that as we grow older and become senior citizens, we tend to slow down our productivity and explore life as a retired person. Hence it is easy for the grandmothers to start exploring the need to fully support their foster care children, as they are retiring from full-time employment.

The participants in this study can also be referred to as grandparents. They are grandparents as they are taking care of their own grandchildren. Komp and Johansson (2015:30) explain that grandparenthood relates to a life course. In addition, Noy and Taubman Ben-Ari (2016:23) outline that the transition to grandparenthood is associated with a change in status, roles, and identities which vary greatly in different contexts.

4.2.2 Gender distribution of participants

The research participants in this study are all women. They are therefore referred to as grandmothers. Traditionally the role of caregiving is the responsibility of women and grandmothers, who are perceived as knowledgeable in giving guidance and able to positively influence their grandchildren (Mtshali 2016:369). Aibel (2012:19) explains that grandmothers, more especially in African countries, are essential to the survival of millions of children orphaned by the AIDS pandemic. The author further states that orphanages are not part of African culture. Without grandmothers who look after 40% to 60% of these children, children would be left to take care of themselves. In support of this view, Hayslip and Smith (2013:41)

state that grandmothers play an important role in families, especially in African families. The grandmothers are therefore the major providers of child care, due to ongoing changes and issues in families and communities. Grandmothers are more likely to be co-resident with their grandchildren and are therefore easier to identify as grandparents (Statistics SA 2018:19). Harnett et al (2014:411) also explain that it is becoming more and more common that grandmothers are asked to become foster parents and provide social support for their grandchildren. They also play a major role in child development.

4.2.3 Duration of being foster parent

In this study the duration of participants being foster parents ranged from three to 13 years. Three of the grandmothers have been caring for foster children for three years, while three managed to do this work for 13 years. Two of the participants have been foster parents for four years, while one has been a foster parent for five years. One grandmother has been doing this work for 11 years. Therefore, the experiences and duration of the participants in taking care of the foster children differs from one grandmother to another.

Vanderfaellie, Van Holen, Vanschoonlandt, Robberrechts and Stroobants (2013:587) explain that foster parents are full-time temporary figures providing a safe shelter for children within the foster care system. Foster parents take on the responsibility of caring for and supporting their foster children. According to the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006a), "foster parent" refers to a person who has the right to offer foster care to a child by order of the Children's Court. This includes an active member of an organisation operating a cluster foster care scheme and who has been assigned the responsibility for the foster care of a child. The years allocated to a foster parent to care for the children differ from situation to situation. Some of the participants took care of their grandchildren when they were of a tender age and others have older grandchildren who they started caring for many years ago.

As indicated above, the children are placed with grandmothers as foster care parents through a Children's Court order. The social workers have the responsibility for placing the children and have to do an assessment of the family before the

children's placement is approved by the Children's Court. As Delany and Jehoma (2016:60) explain, the children can be placed under the care of their grandparents, in particular grandmothers.

4.2.4 Participants' employment status

The study was conducted with grandmother foster parents who are staying with their foster children in the Diepsloot community. As indicated above, all participants in this study are aged 60 years and above. They therefore qualify to apply for and receive the Older Person's Grant. However, two of the participants work part time as domestic workers in Fourways, their neighbouring suburb, even though they receive the grant. The Older Person's Grant is the main source of income for the elderly in South Africa (South Africa 2006b). They also receive the Foster Child Grant for the children they are fostering. According to the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004 (South Africa 2004), a foster parent qualifies to apply for the Foster Child Grant as long as the foster child requires care. The Foster Child Grant is usually paid out until the child turns 18 years old. It stops when the child leaves school or is earning an income above the stipulated means test (South Africa 2006a). All grant applications are administered by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA).

In this study, in terms of their employment status, since the participants are all 60 years and above, they classify as pensioners even though two of them still do part-time domestic work to earn an extra income.

4.2.5 Number of foster care awareness programmes attended

In 2015, the DSD Johannesburg Metro Region established the FCAP as an intervention strategy for grandmothers. The FCAP is facilitated by social workers in Diepsloot. It is a programme that helps the grandmothers as a collective to share their experiences and learn from one another through group activities. The purpose of the FCAP is to share knowledge and skills with the foster caregivers in a participatory process. The aim is to provide support and to encourage foster parents to provide high-quality foster care to their foster children. The FCAP activities are outlined in Chapter Two. They are structured and facilitated to engage the grandmothers in their role as foster parents. In this study the participants attended

different or the same sessions, depending on the date they started with the group. These are open sessions, as the members join in as they are invited by social workers depending on their needs.

Two participants attended one FCAP, while four participants attended two FCAPs and three participants attended three FCAPs. Lastly, one participant attended four FCAPs. The programme covers issues related to communication, savings and financial literacy, parenting, and dealing with difficult children. The grandmothers are expected to communicate with their foster children and understand their needs and challenges. They are also encouraged to know how to parent children of different ages. They are supported with parenting skills so that they can handle the behaviours of their foster children.

4.2.6 The number of foster children in the grandmothers' care

Some of the grandmothers care for several children. Five participants are fostering two foster children each; their foster children ranged from seven to 15 years of age. Five other participants are fostering one child each and their foster children ranged from four to 18 years of age. Two foster children are not yet in school, one foster child dropped out of school, while 12 foster children are still in school. All participants fostered their grandchildren whose biological parents have passed away (related foster care placement). To foster a child is to bring up, nurture, cultivate and encourage, or give parental care through related or non-related blood ties. A lot of nurturing, cultivating, and encouragement goes hand-in-hand with raising a foster child. The children are placed in foster care for different reasons, which include abuse, death of the biological parents, neglect, and exploitation (Bergström 2020:5).

4.3 DISCUSSION ON THE THEMES, SUB-THEMES, AND CATEGORIES

In this section the various themes, sub-themes, and categories that emerged from the data analysis will be presented and contrasted with available literature. To maximise the credibility of the findings, the researcher and an independent coder analysed the qualitative data. As part of the plan to ensure a full consultative process, the researcher worked with both the supervisor and the coder. Therefore, the final discussion on the outcome of the analysis was held with the supervisor,

coder, and researcher in order to reach a consensus on the themes, sub-themes, and categories that emerged. This chapter will outline the eight themes, 26 sub-themes, and four categories that emerged from the qualitative data presented in Table 4.2 below. This overview encapsulates the themes, sub-themes, and categories that emerged from the interviews with the grandmothers who have foster children in their care.

Table 4.2: Overview: themes, sub-themes, and categories

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	CATEGORIES
Theme 1: Grandmothers' description of their understanding of the foster care awareness programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A gathering of grandmothers and social workers to share experiences and wisdom • The programme where the foster parents receive guidance and learn how to care for and love their foster children • The programme where you learn that foster children are like all other children 	
Theme 2: Grandmothers' explanations of the positive and negative sides of the foster care awareness programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The positive side of the FCAP • Negative side of the FCAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists with caring for and managing children • Foster parents joining the FCAP to learn more about how to care for foster children • Programme where foster parents learn to accept the situation with their foster children and share experiences • No foster children are involved in the FCAP. The grandmother-headed families attend the FCAP without the children joining them
Theme 3: Grandmothers' descriptions of the challenges they experience with their foster children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of drugs by foster children • School challenges and lack of understanding or lack of respect 	
Theme 4: Grandmothers' accounts of the foster care awareness programme and how it helped them and their	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to discipline and talk to foster children • What to teach children and how to love them as they are • The need to save money for 	

families	<p>the future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to look after oneself and accept the situation • The opportunity to learn together, network, and share experiences 	
Theme 5: Grandmothers' explanations of how they have practically used the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the foster care awareness programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share all the information from the programme • Setting boundaries and disciplining the child • Talking and resolving issues 	
Theme 6: Grandmothers' descriptions of how the foster care awareness programme helped the foster children and their own family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruitful discussion on the ability to discipline and buy basic necessities for foster children • Valuable information about the difference between foster children and participants' own biological children • Discussions about love and whether the foster children are happy 	
Theme 7: Grandmothers' opinions on what part of the foster care awareness programme needs to be improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More communication regarding the FCAP • Regular site visits should be arranged timeously • Foster children to be included in the FCAP • The request for the government to increase the Foster Child Grant 	
Theme 8: Grandmothers' suggestions for social workers and the role they play in the foster care awareness programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No suggestions; the programme should continue as it is • The need for support with food parcels • The need to assist with checks on the foster children's school progress • Social workers to conduct regular home visits 	

In this section the researcher will outline the findings of the study and capture the participants' input on the different themes, sub-themes, and categories. There are eight themes, 26 sub-themes, and four categories. The discussion will utilise the literature control to support the findings as captured in the themes and sub-themes.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Grandmothers' description of their understanding of the foster care awareness programme

Theme 1 will cover a total of three sub-themes. There are no categories in this section. This theme focuses on the meaning of the FCAP as described and understood by grandmother foster parents who were participants in the study. This theme emerged from the responses of the grandmothers to the first question, in which the researcher asked to them to share their understanding of the FCAP and what it meant to them. Their responses are given in three sub-themes, namely:

- 1.1 A gathering of grandmothers and social workers to share experiences and wisdom.
- 1.2 The programme where the foster parents receive guidance and learn how to care for and love their foster children.
- 1.3 The programme where you learn that foster children are like all other children.

As outlined above, the FCAP addresses the special needs of the grandmothers. Grandmothers who raise grandchildren are confronted with a myriad of challenges which may affect their health, both physical and emotional (Kelley et al 2019:143). In addressing the challenges that come with foster care parenting, the FCAP does incorporate different aspects that are comprehensive to help grandmothers to cope under any circumstances. The activities range from discussions about finances, schooling and educational matters, to parenting and discipline, spirituality, health and physical matters, stages of development, relationship building, and emotional issues for parents and foster children.

Therefore, the FCAP as facilitated by social workers within the DSD does help to create a suitable conducive environment for grandmothers to share their experiences in a group setting and learn together. Androff (2016:33) states that human rights provide policy and practice to develop different strategies, especially for those social workers who are engaged in the mucky work of transforming human misery into its highest potential of freedom, compassion, and healing. As the participants share their experiences and feelings regarding the FCAP, the following excerpts demonstrate their lived experiences about how they benefited from engaging in the FCAP:

“Foster care awareness programme provide us with guidance on how to live with the orphans and vulnerable children. How to treat them and take care of them and raise them well.”

“During the foster care awareness programme sessions, the social workers guide us on how to take care of the children. They make us realise that foster children need to attend school and not stay home doing nothing or their own things.”

“I think it helps you to know and see how life is difficult amongst the people; there are others who are going through more difficult situations than what you are going through. It is a matter of understanding that people experience different challenges.”

The participants expressed their views that the FCAP provided them with the guidance to take care of the orphaned children. It further assisted them as a group to learn from one another, as learning took place through group sessions. The grandmothers took courage from realising that life is difficult for many people. The FCAP is a sharing platform for the group members and the professionals facilitate the interaction and ensure that lessons learnt are applied in their families.

4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: A gathering of grandmothers and social workers to share experiences and wisdom

Some of the participants expressed the view that the FCAP is a gathering of grandmothers and social workers where experiences and wisdom are shared. The aims of the FCAP are to strengthen families and encourage parents to take responsibility for raising their children (Swart 2012). When families are strengthened, their condition and problem-solving skills improve and then the children will be safe in the care of their parents (Strydom 2011:220). When collaborating with grandmother-headed families, a social worker needs to believe that these grandmothers and their families have strengths, resources, and the abilities to recover from diversity. The strengths-based perspective allows social workers to see opportunities, hope, and solutions, rather than just problems. Social

development also ensures that such opportunities are recognised and implemented in such a way that they will help generate income and improve the well-being of communities.

Social development is a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development. Lombard and Wairire (2010:98) assert that social workers can help to attain the Millennium Developmental Goals, which are now referred to as the Sustainable Developmental Goals, 2030. Social development can be used as a strategy to promote sustainable development in a community. Elliott (2011:104) argues that social development offers a progressive social work model in practice, intending to achieve social justice for the empowerment of oppressed, marginalised, and excluded populations.

The FCAP helps to develop communities, because it is aimed at addressing the challenges faced by the grandmothers in Diepsloot. It also protects children from being neglected, violated, or abused and helps to maintain order in families and communities at large. In rendering the FCAP and supervision, the social worker must ensure that grandmothers are empowered and educated on their rights and responsibilities in terms of the placement of foster children. This theory fits with the study, because the social development approach is about social workers applying a developmental approach to address the socio-economic status of the grandmothers as foster parents.

The following excerpts illustrate the participants' views on the FCAP as a gathering of foster grandmothers and social workers:

“Foster care awareness is a gathering of grandmothers who are raising their foster children. We share personal wisdom when we meet together. We talk about how children need to go to school, eat well, and do good all the time.”

“It’s a gathering where we get to learn a lot. We talk about how to treat children that don’t have parents. We are empowered on how to communicate with our foster children and families.”

“We talk about problems; we comfort and help one another. When we come back, our stress levels are lower. Because you will say you’re living this way and find another person telling you their problems. You come back healed from all the stress, yes, having accepted all things. You will hear another grandmother say ‘my foster child is doing this and that’ then you will realise that all children are like yours. Yes, you come back feeling much better and well. We talk about our foster children’s behaviour. You as a parent you should accept the children as they are.”

The findings confirm that the FCAP is facilitated by social workers through group supervision workshops. Foster parents participate fully and do engage with one another. Sims et al (2014:360) state that social workers should be supportive to enable vulnerable people to use their own abilities to maintain control over their lives.

4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: The programme where the foster parents receive guidance and learn how to care for and love their foster children

Some of the grandmothers highlighted that to them the FCAP means that they receive guidance and learn how to care for their foster children. The participants mentioned that the FCAP is about guidance and knowledge about how to live with orphans and vulnerable children and how to care for them. Guidance and support during the FCAP come in the form of structured and organised activities. The social worker works out the plan and engages the participants once they have identified which areas they need support with. Then the programme is worked out jointly and the social worker as the facilitator will identify resources for each activity and engage the foster parents in a participatory manner, so that they can also give their input. Saleebey (2013:15) states that through difficult and problematic life experiences, families develop skills and coping strategies that they can utilise to alleviate problematic situations. The FCAP does address participant identified needs. Loving and caring for the foster children can be challenging, so the programme gives foster

parents time to reflect while in the group with others. This is part of the parenting skills that they need. Through the facilitation process the social worker engages them to find solutions. In some instances, if they lack critical parenting skills as a group, the social worker will get formal support for them. The social worker will invite different experts to provide training on parenting and how to love and communicate better with foster children.

As outlined by Connolly et al (2017:94), the kinship care programme, which is similar to the FCAP, uses the life course approach. This is the model the DSD social workers follow. It consists of the different courses and activities that are structured to support the grandparents and relatives as they deal with children who are at different stages of development. The FCAP is established on the same model as the kinship care programme outlined in Chapter Two of this report. The FCAP addresses issues related to parenting and family relationships. It is a programme that looks at maintaining positive family relationships, because this is important to the child's long-term interests and well-being. Caregivers need to know that emotional support in a relationship is about encouragement, love, acceptance, and reassurance. The caregivers are supported on how to build strong family relationships with other family members and one another. This training is done through activities and demonstrations.

Nichols (2019:v) states that the aim of the FCAP is to explore the general knowledge of the foster care system and motivate the foster carers to take care of their children. Gilkes (2015:5) maintains that the FCAP increased the awareness of the needs of the grandmothers. FCAPs are substantial and their focus is on strengthening families and keeping family members together, as well as encouraging the grandparent foster parents to take responsibility for their grandchildren (Swart 2012). They can identify solutions and the social worker summarises their input and makes changes to the FCAP to ensure that there is full support and that the foster parents show love to their children, despite their challenges. The participants further shared the following views regarding how the FCAP supports them on how to practically love and care for foster children:

“Foster care awareness programme is about guidance. Yes, we get guidance and knowledge on how to live with orphans and then how to treat them, how to raise them. To give them love. The kind of love that they must not think of the past when they live with you, thinking of their deceased parents. They must realise that the love they receive is the same as the love they were supposed to be receiving from their deceased parents.”

“To be able to take care of a child you live with, you’re not supposed to talk to them by shouting at them. You must not be loud too. When you plan to talk to them, you must see to it that you know you’re addressing a child and not an adult...”

“It’s to give advice. We give each other advice on how we can raise the children.”

Children need to be cared for in a way that promotes their ability to thrive and ensures their survival. Safety needs are important for all children. Children rely on parents and other primary caregivers inside and outside the home to act on their behalf, to keep them safe, and to help them develop (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies 2015:3).

Improving the grandmothers’ parenting competency is an integral component of FCAP promotion. Parenting interventions are defined as having a central focus on parenting (N’zi, Stevens & Eyberg 2016:82). Grandmother-headed families receive guidance and support during the FCAP sessions on how to care for and love their children. To take care of the children refers to the protection of the children from emotional, physical, and sexual harm. Child protection is a worldwide concern. Children’s rights must be promoted. Professionals play a vital role in both the primary and secondary prevention of child abuse (Kelvin 2022).

From these excerpts it is clear that grandmother foster parents received guidance and learnt more about how to care for and love their children at the FCAP.

4.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: The programme where you learn that foster children are like all other children

Foster children are minor children placed in state custody. Foster children are placed with state-licensed adults that care for the children, rather than a guardian or parent. Youth may enter the foster care system for many reasons, but the most common include abuse, neglect, death of the biological parents, or being in an unsafe home environment (Administration for Children and Families 2020). Foster children are those children whose birth parents are unable to care for them. They therefore need someone to care for them for a week, a month, a year, or permanently. Some children have been abused or neglected, but others have birth parents who simply need time to get back on their feet (Lind, Bernard, Yarger & Dozier 2020:563).

In this study the participants shared how sometimes the children may feel like they are different from the other children, because they are referred to as foster children. The aim of the FCAP is to assist the grandmothers who are foster parents to also not treat the foster children differently from other children.

The participants reported that during the FCAP they share ideas on how to live with foster children in their different homes. They discuss the issues related to their own challenges with foster children. The participants share ideas and learn from one another on how to treat foster care children so that they do not feel that they are orphans. In one of the discussions, they talked about not referring to the foster children who have lost their parents as orphans. The participants explained that a foster child must be treated like other children in the family. The foster children must not look at themselves and think that they are different from others. The following are some of the storylines that participants shared about this matter:

“He must be like other children. He must not look at himself and think that he’s different from the others that they are dressed well and he’s not. He will miss his mother and father yes. He must not feel like if he had parents, all of this wouldn’t be there.”

“A foster child can tell herself that ‘I don’t have a mom, I live with my grandmother, she can’t do nothing to me’. So, we fight for them to know that they are like any other child with a mother and a father.”

“During foster care awareness programme we share that where the children live should be okay, right? They should not feel that they are orphans, they should not call themselves orphans. When they walk around people, people are not supposed to see that they’re orphans.”

Children in foster care are like other children. Children in foster care need continuity of the relationships with their birth family members if they are still alive. Sibling contact must be encouraged. During the FCAP sessions the participants are guided on how to encourage foster children to have good relationships with their family members. As McBeath et al (2014:10) explain, siblings are important as they have lived in the same circumstances and had similar experiences. Bell, Romano and Flynn (2015:103) indicate that establishing caring and supportive relationships with the foster family is considered a crucial need of children.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Grandmothers’ explanations of the positive and negative sides of the foster care awareness programme

After sharing what they understand about the FCAP, the researcher asked the grandmothers to explain the positive and the negative sides of the FCAP they had attended. Their responses are given under two sub-themes, namely:

- 2.1 The positive side of the FCAP.
- 2.2 The negative side of the FCAP.

The participants described their positive perceptions of the FCAP. Most participants have positive views about the FCAP. The participants stated that the FCAP assisted them to learn how to care for, manage, and support their children.

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: The positive side of the FCAP

All the grandmothers were able to identify and explain the positive side of the FCAP. Their responses are given under three categories, namely:

- a) Assists with caring for and managing children.

- b) Foster parents joining the FCAP to learn more about how to care for foster children.
- c) Programme where foster parents learn to accept the situation with their foster children and share experiences.

a) Assists with caring for and managing children

As outlined above, the FCAP is a family support system which assisted the participants to be able to care for and manage the foster children. One of the important aspects of the FCAP is to strengthen families and encourage grandmothers to take responsibility for raising their foster children (Swart 2012). The family is a crucial setting for preventative interventions to achieve children's health and reduce the risk of illness, injury, and death. Families are the primary vehicle of socialisation (Riesch, Brown, Anderson, Wang, Canty-Mitchell & Johnson 2012:340).

Most of the grandmothers explained how the FCAP assists them with caring for and managing their foster children. Participants explained that social workers facilitated sessions whereby the participants learnt how to care for and support their foster children at different developmental stages. Through the process they were also able to share their parenting experiences. The participants described how they implemented what they learnt in the groups at home. Through the engagement at the FCAP, some participants reported that their foster children are now able to go to school and not misbehave. Others shared that their children can now manage the family finances, as they opened banking accounts for their grandchildren.

Through the FCAP the grandmother foster parents learnt that they can save money for their children's tertiary education. Some participants shared that their foster children are different from them, as they have the opportunity to learn and study further. Therefore, they believe that these children will contribute to society as they can follow their chosen career path. The following excerpts demonstrate this point:

“The foster care awareness programme helps us. If the child cannot understand, you can go to the foster care awareness programme and share your challenges, then they will help you. You ask advice from other grandmothers: ‘I need your assistance; the child is out of line’. They will assist you on how to handle the situation.”

“It’s about advice on how to take care of children. How I should take care of them. I teach them that they should go to school and not do their own thing. That they may be good children in life. We also need to open the bank account for our grandchildren and also save the money for their tertiary education.”

“The foster care awareness programme gives us wisdom, the wisdom to be able to live with these children and tell them what kind of life they should live. Our children must know that school comes first, education is light. Yes, that is what they give us so that we can be able to guide these children. They should not be like us; we are not educated... And that you must do what is right for the children from time to time. We don’t deny them to go to their friends, [but] they should have a set time to come back home.”

The social workers, through the FCAP, expose the grandmothers to parenting skills activities. The parenting skills programme is defined as the programme where grandmothers are assisted with parenting skills and developing positive interaction with their foster children (Hohlfeld, Harty & Engel 2018:12). The parenting programme was used widely with foster parents, school-aged children, and adolescents, as well as parents of children with disabilities. According to Weihrauch, Schäfer and Franz (2014:139), parenting programmes produce desirable changes. It is the best learning environment for parents and it also assists the grandmothers to understand their foster children much better. Britto et al (2015:3) explain that parenting skills strongly influence a child’s life experiences and can improve their cognitive, emotional, and behavioural development across their life course. Substantial evidence suggests that parenting intervention, often based on social learning principles,

can be effective in improving parental mental health and psychological functioning (Barlow et al 2014:41).

When the participants are assisted with caring for and managing children, this can lead to strengthening their own families. The strengthening of the families is about family resiliency. The term resiliency is used to describe the process by which people manage their life not only to endure hardships, but also to create and sustain lives that have meaning and contribute to those around them. Resiliency involves the process of becoming successful in life despite exposure to high risks, as well as the ability to recover successfully from trauma (Van Hook 2019:1).

b) Foster parents joining the FCAP to learn more about how to care for foster children

Support and education are two elements of group interventions. Support groups are not expensive and are easy to set up. To respond to the problems raised by grandparents, various educational components are adapted to their needs (Chan, Chen, Lo, Chen, Kelly & Ip 2019:607). Support groups can enhance interpersonal learning and provide a safe environment for participants to share issues and provide information that links with other service providers (Kirby & Sanders 2014:41).

In this study the grandmothers indicated in various ways that an important positive side of attending the FCAP was that they can share and learn from others. The group setting was conducive for sharing and learning. It was an environment where they accepted one another and were guided by the social workers. The participants reported that the FCAP assisted them to understand how to care for, support, and manage their foster children. Others indicated how they learnt to discipline their children. Some indicated that the group helped them to guide their children on how to do house chores; to clean, cook, wash laundry, and many other activities.

The participants shared their experiences with others, they corrected each other, and gave one another appropriate advice. Some participants stated that

the FCAP is positive because it changed their attitudes and perceptions towards the difficult children in their families. They shared that children go through different stages of development and experience different emotions as per the stages they are in. They are now aware that each child is different and that they need to understand each child as an individual person and not compare them.

The following storylines capture the grandmothers' feelings regarding the support system within the FCAP:

“It’s alright, because the foster care awareness programme sessions helped us as members to know what we must do to the child. We must wash clothes for the child to be clean, cook food for the child to eat, and do these activities with them so that they can become responsible. We learn from one another about how to discipline our foster children.”

“When we meet with the others, we can correct each other, we give each other advice. Yes, just like if I say I want my child home by 10. They would say ‘no parent, a child must come back home at 7 or 8 so that they can do all their house chores and schoolwork’.”

“It’s positive because we get education on how to take care of these children. Yes, that is the good thing. Yes, you give us wisdom on how to raise our foster children. We teach each other to love these children. We should be satisfied loving them, because if we are not satisfied, it means that we cannot be able to love these children.”

Children rely on parents and other primary caregivers inside and outside the home to act on their behalf to ensure their safety and healthy development (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies 2015:3). Improving the grandmothers' parenting competency is an integral component of FCAP promotion. Parenting interventions are defined as having a central focus on parenting (N'zi et al 2016:82). The foster children

need to be cared for in a way that promotes their ability to thrive and to ensure their survival. Safety needs are important for all children.

The DSD developed the FCAP as an intervention strategy to support the grandparents who are foster carers. Social workers have a responsibility to strengthen the FCAP as a strategy to improve the lives of grandmother foster parents who are caring for their grandchildren. The programme is facilitated and conducted by social workers through group supervision workshops.

c) Programme where foster parents learn to accept the situation with their foster children and share experiences

A child's death is one of life's most difficult experiences. Bereaved parents experience more intense grief than adults who experience other losses. Parental grief is profound, regardless of the number of years since the loss, the age of the child, or the cause of death (Boyden, Kavanaugh, Issel, Eldeirawi & Meert 2014:374). Research has shown that some of the grandmothers became caregivers when their children passed away. HIV causes many deaths in South Africa (Phetlhu & Watson 2014). Studies reveal that AIDS has been a major contributing aspect in the increase in the number of grandparent-caregivers.

Some of the grandmothers described how attending the FCAP and talking to others in a group context assisted them to accept the situation of their children who had passed on. Some of the participants are foster parents due to the death of their children and they now take care of their grandchildren. These foster parents shared how the passing of their children affected them as parents and how life has become so difficult. However, attending the FCAP did make them realise that they are not alone, as others have gone through the same pain.

In this study a number of the participants lost their children due to HIV and AIDS. Some had even lost four or five children. So, the parents shared the same pain and opened up for group support and counselling. The social workers also assisted with grief therapy to help those who needed special

attention. Family counselling was conducted before joining the FCAP. The participants stated that if you sit down with others and talk to them, you will see that what matters is for one to move on with one's life. Others shared how they were comforted when they learnt how to mourn. They were supported through bereavement and grief sessions. FCAP activities served as therapeutic sessions, because they were able to confront the pain of loss and grief through working with others in a group setting.

“My child passed on, now life is becoming difficult. When we are sharing in the group about this pain of loss, you find that other group members have similar problems like yours. The members have gone through difficult circumstances. Sometimes you realise that your life is better than the other person and you realise they're not the same. You'll realise that the other person has four or five children that have passed away... Your life is not ruined because you lost only one child. You are not like other group members who have experienced many deaths in their families and [are] caring for four to five orphans in one family...”

“But if you sit down with others and talk to them... You will see that what matters is for life to go on. You will be able to take care of the children just like others and move forward. There's nowhere to go back to... I have accepted [that]; I don't stress anymore.”

“In attending foster care awareness programme, I was assisted to accept the loss I experienced with the passing of my daughter. I have healed and my foster children also learnt to accept and forget about the death of their parents. It was not easy as it took time before we could all accept this but listening to others and the social workers also assisted us to go through the different stages of mourning and grief before we joined the group. It was helpful to join the group for more support.”

The researcher's observation is that many of the families in Diepsloot have lost their children due to HIV and AIDS. Eight percent of the grandmothers who care for foster children are caring for their own grandchildren from their families. As the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) (2012:2) outlined, in Africa the Sub-Saharan region remains the area most affected by HIV and AIDS. As outlined in this study, the participants reported that the FCAP assisted them to learn to accept their situation about the death of their children. Group therapy was what worked for them after undergoing different family counselling sessions and they were encouraged to also attend the FCAP sessions. This was helpful for the grandmothers who lost their children to HIV and AIDS or other causes of death.

4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Negative side of the FCAP

The participants described that the negative side of the FCAP as follows:

a) No Foster children are involved in the FCAP. The grandmother-headed families attend the FCAP without the children joining them

Family refers to a group of two or more people who share a common goal, similar values, and have a long-term commitment to one another. Family can refer to a mother, a father, their children, uncles, and grandmothers (Dan 2019). Observing family interactions in homes and other settings can also provide significant information about family processes. Such observations often involve prolonged contact with families (Lester 2013:3). Family is a group of people living in one household because of blood relations, marriage, or other bonds. They interact with each other, have their own roles, and create and maintain a culture (Roostin 2018:12).

The family is one of several key social institutions and units of socialisation. Relationships need to be closely investigated to better understand the family dynamics. Family is the original cell of social life; it is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values (Crossman 2019). One of the challenges of working with the grandmothers for group therapy is to not include their children in group sessions. The social worker works with different

individual families and then refers the grandmothers to the FCAP. The foster children were not supported in the group setting, except during family therapy. This was reflected as a negative experience of the FCAP. Not engaging the foster children in the group sessions was outlined in the discussion with grandmothers as a negative experience. The group work process involves an awareness of what is happening at two levels: first, the individual within the group, and second, the group itself. It includes considering the stages through which the group passes and the relationships and communication that forms within. Group work offers different functions, including social control, social action, education, and therapy (Doel 2013:369). The researcher proposes that support groups, therapeutic groups, and educational groups should be established for foster care children. The database of the DSD should be used to identify children with the same needs and ages. This will determine what kind of groups can be established.

The foster care support groups will help the children with common needs to be supported by the social workers and, if possible, social auxiliary workers within the DSD. The establishment of groups for foster children will facilitate and build a participatory approach for children with common needs. Toseland and Rivas (2017:35) define social group work as a goal-directed activity with small treatment and task groups aimed at meeting socio-emotional needs and accomplishing tasks.

The social workers are looking at establishing different children's groups to strengthen the support they give to the grandmothers through the FCAP. This plan still needs to be fully analysed within the DSD, as children come from different family settings. To help establish different groups for the foster care children, the case load must be studied and analysed to start support groups for foster care children.

In responding about the negative side of the FCAP, the grandmothers shared their storylines as follows:

“There are those with problems that are bigger than mine. What we need is for us to engage our children and the children of other members who have the same challenges to be guided together in the same group so that they can get help.”

“It will be good if our foster children are included in the foster care awareness programme.”

As outlined above, the grandmothers expressed the need for the DSD to strengthen the group work methods within the department. Toseland and Rivas (2012:1) define group work “as a goal-directed activity” with lesser treatment and task groups “aimed at meeting socio-emotional needs and accomplishing tasks”. This activity is directed “towards individual members of a group and towards a group as a whole within a system of service delivery.” Lindsay and Orton (2012:7) state that group work is a method of social work that “aims, in an informed way, through purposeful group experiences, to help individuals and group needs, and to influence and change personal, group, organisational and community problems.”

The FCAP is structured to assist the grandmothers. A similar model needs to be created to support the foster care children and to establish a linkage with the grandmothers’ support group for families to learn from one another. This is a proposal that is being discussed within the DSD setting.

If the DSD implements group work, it will benefit both grandmothers and the foster care children. It needs to be supported by DSD social workers.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Grandmothers’ descriptions of the challenges they experience with their foster children

Although the researcher did not directly ask the grandmothers to explain the challenges they experience with their foster children, some of the grandmothers felt that it is necessary to share their feelings about the challenges they experience with their foster children. The focus of the study, as outlined above, is on the FCAP activities that may not have fully satisfied the needs of the grandmothers and this

was the platform to outline some of the challenges that still need to be addressed going forward. The responses to these challenges were captured under two sub-themes, namely:

- 3.1 The use of drugs by foster children.
- 3.2 School challenges and lack of understanding or respect.

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: The use of drugs by foster children

Substance abuse is a pattern of harmful use of any substance for mood-altering purposes. It is a very difficult phenomenon to deal with, especially by grandmothers who are old and parenting grandchildren. Substance abuse is the harmful or hazardous use of psychotic substances that can lead to dependence syndrome (WHO 2014:1). Adolescent substance abuse is a major public health problem worldwide (Whiteford et al 2013:1575). Substance abuse is any substance that alters the state of consciousness or emotions when consumed (UK Parliament 2016). “Substances” include alcohol and other drugs (illegal or not), as well as some substances that are not drugs at all (Buddy 2022).

The issue of the use of drugs came from some of the grandmothers whose foster children use drugs. They shared their experiences. The participants explained that their grandchildren are under the influence of substances most of the time. They smoke drugs and marijuana and drink alcohol. These substances further affect their health. Some lose weight, while others are affected mentally. These substances change their moods and behaviours. The participants’ concern is the lack of cooperation from their children when they are under the influence of these drugs. This does affect the entire family, as their behaviours lead to arguments and fighting among siblings. The use of drugs is never an easy matter for the families, as it affects the functionality of a normal household setting.

The participants opened up and shared the following storylines about their concerns regarding their foster children’s use of drugs:

“My foster child is smoking drugs... I don’t want to be embarrassed by her... She was a chubby kid, but when she started these things, she even failed Grade 10. In 2019, she showed me who she really is...”

“He [foster child] walks around with older men with families... These men have wives, some of them even have children... They drink alcohol and smoke weed [marijuana]. Do you see how thin he is? It’s the weed... it means it’s not good for him. Because [another foster child] smokes, but he doesn’t change. It’s not good for that one, but he smokes it. There is nothing I can do; I have talked and I am tired.”

From these excerpts it is clear that the participants find it difficult to cope with the fact that their grandchildren are abusing substances. Grandchildren who abuse substances display changed behaviour. The grandmothers see changes in their children’s character and see unfamiliar behaviours due to the use of drugs. These behaviours affect the grandmothers negatively. As Masombuka (2013:45) explain, grandmothers struggle to cope with their children when they use drugs, as these substances change their behaviours. Substance abuse threatens the grandmothers’ safety and users’ own lives. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020), an estimated 88 000 people (approximately 62 000 men and 26 000 women) die annually from alcohol-related causes in the USA. Social factors that contribute to an increased risk for adolescent use include bullying and association with a gang (Whitesell, Bachand, Peel & Brown 2013:6). Drug abuse can cause physical and mental deterioration, such as lung and cardiovascular disease, stroke, cancer, HIV/AIDS, depression, brain damage, and mood changes (Dorwart 2022).

4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: School challenges and lack of understanding or respect

Foster children’s poor school performance often results from the challenges they face in their lives, as well as the limited support they receive from the government (Oyedele, Chikwature & Manyange 2016:41). The lack of psychological support from individuals, communities, government, and NGOs contributes to the poor academic performance of foster children (Gilo 2017:18). The poor academic performance of foster children is not restricted to South Africa, but is a worldwide phenomenon. However, countries like Tanzania and Kenya have programmes in place to improve the academic performance of foster children (Maulaga 2014:93).

In this study some of the grandmothers described how they experience challenges related to schooling and lack of understanding or respect between them and their foster children. Some of the participants shared that their foster children do not want to go to school. A few participants indicated that their foster children are difficult, as they fight with other learners at school and this has led to them being expelled. Other participants shared that their foster children fail, as they do not study. The following storylines reflect how participants experience challenges caused by the behaviours of their foster children:

“My foster child doesn’t want to go to school, [but] he should be in school. He’s difficult. He fight with other students at school and they expelled him. I couldn’t see him. He’d bath in the morning, get dressed, and go and sit somewhere. Later when the school is out, he came back. I didn’t know anything ...and the next year he would go back to school. He dropped out in the middle of the year.”

“...The problem I have is that they’re not studying, they don’t have time. When they come back from school, they go to the feeding scheme. Instead of staying home after feeding scheme, they’re gone. I have even stopped them from going to play soccer; soccer does nothing good for you. Sit down and study. But it remains the same...”

“The child cannot share with me. I would bring up an argument between me and her. So, she told me that she will no longer be able to share with me, because after sharing with me I tell her uncles... The uncles are the ones that can help me with the problem.”

The educational challenges of foster children are caused by constantly being moved from one foster care placement to another, which led to them having to change schools. This disruption in school enrolment has been noted as one of the barriers to foster children completing their studies on time (Morton 2015:73). The foster children tend to perform poorly at school when compared to non-foster children. They also demonstrate a lack of concentration and an inability to carry out their schoolwork (Magampa 2014:34).

The participants experienced challenges due to their grandchildren having behavioural problems. Behaviour is the observable response to our internal and external experiences and how one processes information from the environment, emotions, thoughts, and intentions (Delahooke 2020:16). Some foster children are characterised by problematic psychosocial functioning and their problems do not always disappear during their stay in foster care (Goemans, Van Geel & Vedder 2015:121). The research shows that children in foster care placements experience poor performance and disciplinary actions in school more frequently than those who are in non-foster care placements (Blankenship 2018:36). This might be due to placement changes, foster children moving from one foster parent to another, or frequently changing schools (Pecora 2012:1121).

4.3.4 Theme 4: Grandmothers' accounts of the foster care awareness programme and how it helped them and their families

The researcher asked the participating grandmothers what helped them the most when participating in the FCAP. From the grandmothers' responses, five sub-themes emerged. These sub-themes are:

- 4.1 How to discipline and talk to foster children.
- 4.2 What to teach children and how to love them as they are.
- 4.3 The need to save money for the future.
- 4.4 The need to look after oneself and accept the situation.
- 4.5 The opportunity to learn together, network, and share experiences.

4.3.4.1 Sub-theme 4.1: How to discipline and talk to foster children

The term discipline refers to a state of orderly conduct of an individual which is gained through training in self-control and in habits of obedience to socially approved standards of thought and action. Discipline is very important in life (Kashyap 2015:9). The word "discipline" is derived from the Latin word "*disciplinare*", meaning to teach or train. Effective disciplinary strategies, appropriate to a child's age and development, teach the child to regulate his/her own behaviour; keep him/her from harm; enhance his/her cognitive, socio-emotional, and executive functioning skills; and reinforce the child's parents and caregivers (Sege, Siegel,

Council on Child Abuse and Neglect & Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health 2018:8).

In this study some of the grandmothers shared what part of the FCAP has helped them the most. They learnt how to discipline and talk to their children. The participants explained that the FCAP worked for them because they now know how to discipline their foster children. For example, one of the topics that was discussed in the FCAP was about curfew and discipline around the time their children must be allowed to stay out with friends. In this discussion the members shared that children must be home around 8pm. This was debated and many of them and they shared their family values when it comes to supporting children and guiding them about relationships and having good and bad friends.

The participants explained that the FCAP helped them to deal with the issue of how to discipline their foster children. The issue of how to communicate with the children was part of the discussion. The members shared how different age groups should be reprimanded and how to best respect the children to make choices and when to advise them about good and bad friends. The following excerpts demonstrate how the issues of discipline and communication were captured during interviews:

“Foster care awareness programme worked for me... because I now know how to discipline my foster child. When it’s late, he should know that it’s time to go home. Old as I am, as a mother, as a grandmother, a child who stays outside until 9pm is not good. A child gets the rules here at home, isn’t it? He gets the guidance and discipline at home.”

“The issue of how to discipline our foster children. When he started misbehaving, I didn’t bother taking a whip to beat him up. I sought advice from the social workers and the group members during group sessions. Through consultation with social workers and group members I was assisted to understand how to best communicate with my children.”

“The foster children don’t even show that they don’t have parents. I do everything for them, but I used to beat them up. I would beat them up so

much using this cable... I have injured this one already using a cable, she has a scar... During foster care awareness programme I learnt that we need to communicate politely with our foster children and we need to teach them how to do things for themselves.”

“Since I started attending foster care awareness programme, I stopped beating up my children, because I used to beat up my child... I now give them pocket money and guide them about life.”

Effective communication requires an understanding between the grandmother foster parents and their foster children. Parents must understand the needs of their children for them to provide proper care and support. They need to know their children very well. Communication skills training is an effective way to reduce the conflict. The FCAP exposed and guided the participants to understand their grandchildren much better, especially with the pressures that the children have in this modern time (Kourkouta & Papathanasiou 2014:65).

4.3.4.2 Sub-theme 4.2: What to teach children and how to love them as they are

The grandmothers indicated that what had been most helpful for them from the FCAP was that they had learnt about what to teach the foster children and how to love them. Some of the participants reported that they learnt that they must teach their foster children to be able to do things for themselves. The participants shared that they learnt to let go of wrong parenting and they have acquired good parenting skills through the FCAP. As grandparents they are able to love and care for their foster children and have changed their approach to parenting.

“...we must teach them so that they can be able to do things for themselves in the future. They must be able to bath and wash... When you show them how life should be lived, that’s what helps a lot when we are at foster care awareness programme meeting. Because sometimes you raise a child without teaching him how to do the dishes and washing clothes. You say that you will do it for him. The time God remembers you, that child will be totally lost. Yes, because you must teach him how to live

life. And teach him what's right without feeling sorry for himself, because he doesn't have a mother."

"I let go of what I used to have and use what you have guided me on parenting skills. I used to feel like these children are giving me a hard time. When I got there you told me to love them. You told me that the main thing is to love them. Because if you don't love them, they will keep saying 'our mothers are not there, that is why they are doing this to us'... It's the education you gave to us, it's hard to raise orphans... It's not child's play when you see someone raising them... Seriously, raising these children needs someone who has got faith."

Participants stated that the FCAP helped them to guide and discipline their grandchildren. They were taught how to have good behaviour and to love the foster children. The social workers provided parenting skills to the participants. The parenting programme is defined as a programme where grandmothers are trained in parenting skills and how to develop positive interactions with their foster children (Holfed et al 2018:12). The parenting programme has been used widely with foster parents, school-aged children, and adolescents, as well as parents of children with disabilities. The parenting programme produces desirable changes. It is the best learning environment for parents. It teaches grandmothers to understand their foster children (Louse 2021:13). Parenting skills strongly influence a child's life experiences and improve their cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and social development across their life course (Britto et al 2015:3). Substantial evidence suggests that parenting interventions are often based on social learning principles. The parenting programme can be effective in improving parental mental health and psychological functioning (Barlow et al 2014:41).

Traditionally the role of caregiving was the responsibility of women. The grandmothers are perceived as knowledgeable in providing guidance and are able to positively influence their grandchildren's lives. The role of grandmothers has been entrenched in gender and socio-cultural practices (Mtshali 2016:365). The children are positively influenced by their grandparents in different ways. The grandparents transfer their cultural values and practices to their grandchildren (Ezenweke

2015:143). They provide guidance, love, and support to their grandchildren. They attend to their grandchildren's educational, financial, physical, health, and safety needs (Dolbin-MacNab & Yancura 2018:30).

4.3.4.3 Sub-theme 4.3: The need to save the money for the future

Having funds for higher education tuition fees is a lot easier when you start saving early (Farrington 2021). Individuals are more responsible for their personal finances than ever before. With life expectations, rising pensions, and social problems, grandparents strive for financial well-being (Lusardi 2019:16). Some of the participants in this study stated that what had helped them the most was that they learnt how to save money. These participants shared that during the FCAP they learnt how to save money. Even though the situation was difficult in the beginning, through facilitation and support they started to save funds little by little. The participants explained how they opened bank accounts for their grandchildren and were able to save money for the future, especially for their grandchildren's tertiary education. One participant illustrated how during the FCAP sessions social workers showed the grandmothers how to save the money. The participants indicated that by saving the Foster Child Grant money, they are able to pay for many other family activities that are important for family survival. These excerpts capture how participants felt about the issue of savings:

"I have also learnt how to save the money. The situation was difficult, but I forced [myself] to save a little bit for them [foster children]. When you save, it helps in case you're stranded you wouldn't go to the loan sharks."

"...we also need to open bank account for our grandchildren and also save the money for their tertiary education. It has helped me, because in December time I'm able to take the money and go to the shops to buy them clothes."

"During [the] foster care awareness programme session, social workers guided and demonstrated to us on how to save the money. I was grateful that day. Yes, we save money for the children for tertiary education so that it can help them."

The participants explained that saving the money helped them the most, as they are able to withdraw funds when the foster children need money for different activities. Some grandmothers also get support from their employers (Phetlhu & Watson 2014:348). The importance of saving money is simple. It allows you to enjoy greater security in your life. If money is set aside for emergencies, one can be able to fall back on it should something unexpected happen. One should not neglect saving money for education. Higher education may improve career prospects (Caldwell 2022). Saving the money for higher education is the right decision to make and it is not as hard as people make it out to be. From these findings some of the grandmothers managed to save the Foster Child Grant to prepare their grandchildren for the future.

4.3.4.4 Sub-theme 4.4: The need to look after oneself and accept the situation

Another response that emerged from the grandmothers' interviews is that what helped them was realising they need to look after themselves and accept the situation. The participants mentioned that the FCAP helped them, because during the sessions they learnt that they need to take care of themselves physically and exercise so that they can be healthy. The participants shared that while they were sharing during the FCAP it gave them the feeling that they are accepting the challenges that they are experiencing with their foster children. Even though they experience hardship and many challenges, life must go on. They all strive towards raising awesome children instead of crying over the ones that have passed away. Some of the participants described that the FCAP helped them because they used to blame themselves when things were not fine in the family.

The participants illustrated that the FCAP helped them to develop coping skills and mechanisms to survive pain and grief:

"...they also told us [at the foster care awareness programme] that we need to take care of ourselves, and we need to exercise so that we will be healthy."

“It gave me acceptance that life must go on. I should strive to raise the child instead of crying over the one that has passed away. I told myself that the one who died is gone; I failed to protect her. I felt like I failed to protect her, but right now when those people were talking, the way they were talking I found myself helped and able to move forward with life.”

“The programme has helped. It helped me to realise that losing a child does not mean that my life has come to an end. It made me see how I can raise that child. I no longer have a problem. That’s where I see that it has helped, and indeed, I am raising the child because I no longer have a problem of remembering that I have an orphan in the house. She is mine.”

Acceptance is closely linked with the concept of mindfulness. To accept one’s circumstances, feelings, and thoughts, one must be fully aware of one’s thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Mindfulness allows us to pause, take a step back, and notice our experience (Rodriguez 2022). Grandmothers are forced to place the needs of their grandchildren before their own. It is difficult to focus on themselves. Grandmothers have to deal with the adjustment of grandchildren having lost their parents and adapting to a family structure (Lee & Blitz 2016:381). Grandparents who are raising their orphaned grandchildren have little time for other activities.

Participants explained that the part of the FCAP that helped them the most was learning to look after themselves and accept the situation. “Grandmothers need more information about how to take care of themselves, because neglecting their own needs might lead to health problems” (Langosch 2012:163).

4.3.4.5 Sub-theme 4.5: The opportunity to learn together, network, and share experiences

The grandmothers also said that the part of the FCAP that helped them the most was the opportunity it afforded them to share with and learn from one another. Some of the participants explained that the FCAP helped them by affording them the opportunity to meet with other parents. The participants stated that the opportunity to share with and learn from other parents assisted them, because they learnt that

if you sit down with others and talk to them, you will see that what matters is for life to continue and you will be able to take care of your grandchildren and move forward. Another participant illustrated that the FCAP worked for her because when she got there and met with other grandmothers who are raising their foster children, they shared their challenges and experiences and she realised that she is not alone. She ended up accepting her problems and focused on the future.

“When we meet as parents there, we give each other all sorts of advice. The problems you have are not the same. One would say ‘okay, I have had this type of problem’. Another one would say ‘no mama, I did 1, 2, 3, 4 to solve it. My child used to do this, and I did 1, 2, 3, 4 [and] my child is alright now’.”

“But if you sit down with others and talk to them and be able to touch on that issue, you will see that what matters is for life to go on. You will be able to take care of the children just like others and move forward. There’s nowhere to go back [to].”

“Foster care awareness programmes worked for me because when we get there and meet with other grandmothers who are raising their foster children, we share our challenges and experiences and through sharing you realise that you are not only the one who have problems. Is how life is and you end up accepting your problems and focus on [the] future.”

The purpose of the FCAP is to give caregivers support, skills, knowledge, and tools to provide high-quality foster care for foster children. The Children’s Bureau (2019:5) outlines that the USA honours the FCAP as a support for children in foster care, foster parents, and biological families and as a path towards healing. Understanding the experiences of grandmothers is fundamental to the delivery of services. Participants described that the FCAP empowered them to play an active role in developing themselves (Institute for Healthcare Improvement 2017:11). The opportunity to share with and learn from others helps the participants to preserve family relationships and maintain family connections, which is beneficial for the children’s safety and stability (Crossman 2020:5).

The opportunity for social support and learning from others is necessary to refine their understanding of concepts. Having the opportunity to learn with others may have implications for equity (Surr, Zeiser & Kendziora 2018). Sharing experiences changes the dynamic; instead of judging, you are sharing your story. You can talk freely about what you have done in the past and how it may be relevant to someone else. You are not telling them what to do; rather you are telling a story and providing an opportunity for them to learn from your experiences (Miller 2012).

4.3.5 Theme 5: Grandmothers' explanations of how they have practically used the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the foster care awareness programme

After the participants described what part of the FCAP had assisted them the most, the researcher asked the grandmothers to explain how they had practically used the advice, skills, and knowledge they had acquired during the FCAP. The grandmothers' responses to this question led to three sub-themes, namely:

- 5.1 Share all the information from the programme.
- 5.2 Setting boundaries and disciplining the child.
- 5.3 Talking and resolving issues.

4.3.5.1 Sub-theme 5.1: Share all the information from the programme

Several participating grandmothers responded that they shared all the information they receive at the FCAP with their families and the foster children. Some of the participants reported that they practically used the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the FCAP by sharing the information that they received with their grandchildren. The participants explained that they used the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the FCAP. In sharing the information, the grandmothers and the children were practically working together to develop family values and plans. This helps to strengthen their relationship. These are some of the excerpts that capture the unity in learning:

“All the information that I received from foster care awareness programme session, I shared with my children and my grandchildren/foster children.”

“I could say the knowledge I got there, I share it with these children so that they know that we’ve been talking about this. They must learn to work at home, they must wash the dishes, they must know how to do their own laundry, because I won’t be with them throughout their whole life. We can’t say death is for the young or the old. No, it might happen that I leave before them. I share with the children what we have been discussing throughout the day.”

“I also share the information with my own children. It helps their relationship to be right, it builds the relationships and the family relationship. We can get along. When their aunt that side says ‘Thabo?’, they respond by saying ‘Ma?’ They can no longer say aunt so, it makes us to get along in the house.”

Custodian grandparents and grandchildren who are living together often feel close to each other. Grandparents address the concerns of their grandchildren, sharing their life experiences and maintaining a constructive perspective, which contribute to their grandchildren’s personal development (Nguyen 2018:47). Grandparents may have a direct influence on grandchildren and their children through their interactions with them. For example, when grandchildren have contact with their grandparents and confide in them, or are close to them, the grandparents could provide benefits by serving as role models and discussing appropriate behaviour, encouraging academic or other success, and providing advice and emotional support (Dunifon & Bajracharya 2012:1168). Grandmothers, as foster parents of their grandchildren, become the primary educators of those children. The grandchild learns valuable life lessons from their grandmothers. Parental involvement has shown to be important to the grandmothers. It is expected of grandmothers to educate and transfer cultural norms and traditions to the younger generations, to instil a sense of cultural pride in their grandchildren and their children (Plaatjies 2013:26).

4.3.5.2 Sub-theme 5.2: Setting boundaries and disciplining the child

A few of the grandmothers spoke about setting boundaries and not beating the children as examples of how they have practically used the advice, skills, and knowledge they had acquired from the FCAP. Some of the participants explained that they practically used the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the FCAP by setting boundaries, such as time to be with friends and deciding on a curfew for their foster children. Setting boundaries helps to protect them, as there are incidences of night crime in the Diepsloot community. Some participants shared that before joining the FCAP they used the old methods of reprimanding the children and did not set boundaries. The FCAP assisted them to have regular open discussions with their foster children and talk about the need for boundaries and discipline. The storylines below capture how the participants discussed the boundaries with their family members:

“After attending the foster care awareness programme sessions, I discussed with my foster children why the girl child should be in the house by six o’clock. So, we set the house rules that we agreed upon, that the house doors will locked at nine o’clock. If she is not home, then the doors will be closed.”

“The advice we shared among ourselves during the foster care awareness programme was on why we do not need to beat our children up. I used to beat them up, when they don’t obey the house rules. I no longer do that, because I learnt that when you beat the child up, you’re making her/him stubborn.”

Personal boundaries or the act of setting boundaries is a life skill that has been popularised by self-help. It is the practice of openly communication and asserting personal values. Effective boundaries keep relationships strong and healthy. Boundaries refer to limits that you put in place to protect your well-being (Coppock c2023). The grandmothers see themselves as more effective in setting boundaries with their grandchildren after the FCAP sessions because they are more patient, having greater experience and investing more time into their grandchildren. They have more boundary clarity and are more sensitive to their grandchildren’s needs

(Kelley et al 2019:141). Grandmothers shifted from a negative to a positive outlook for themselves and their grandchildren. Grandmothers engaged in advocacy for other grandmother-headed families. They manage stress by accessing emotional support and instrumental assistance from friends and family (Taylor et al 2016:937). Kelley et al (2019:142) state that grandmothers unite families, maintain effective communication with their grandchildren, set boundaries for their grandchildren, and provide socio-emotional support. These traditional parenting strategies enable their grandchildren to become productive adults.

4.3.5.3 Sub-theme 5.3: Talking and resolving issues

Some of the grandmothers from this study shared that they practically implemented what they learnt in the FCAP sessions. They outlined how having discussions and resolving issues with their foster children helped them, which relates to talking to the children and resolving disagreements, rather than punishing the foster children. Some of the participants explained how they no longer shout at their children, but talk to them in a nice and friendly way. The grandparents learnt practically at the FCAP how to communicate well, instead of just being angry and shouting. The participants explained that they took the lessons learnt from the FCAP very seriously and applied them in their families. These are some of the excerpts from the participants:

“No, I no longer have that thing of shouting at a person. I just talk to them nicely, I just talk to them. We would sit down here and talk: ‘I don’t like what you are doing’. It has worked for me.” She added that if the foster child did not do her homework, she would take away all the candy: *“There won’t be sweets. I know she loves sweets, [but then] the sweets are not there.”*

“When I see something that I don’t like from another person, we can sit down and fix it. I did not like what you did here, this one is not right.”

“I no longer have a temper of beating up a child. I talk to my child using my mouth. That’s where it has helped me.”

According to Van Ruler (2018:367), communication is the process of sending and receiving messages through verbal or nonverbal means, including speech or oral communication. “Communication is said to be the creation and exchange of meaning” (Nordquist 2019). Some participants shared that when they experience challenges with their grandchildren, they acknowledge that a difficult situation exists with them. They therefore allow their grandchildren to express their feelings and together they can find a common solution for the problem. Myatt (2012) states that while one tries to avoid conflict, one cannot escape conflict. It will find a person whether that person looks for it or not. One needs to have the ability to recognise conflict, understand the nature of conflict, and come up with solution.

The findings of this study show that the participants practically used the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the FCAP. They were able to talk and resolve matters with their foster children. They learnt that if there are misunderstandings between themselves and their grandchildren, they must immediately communicate the problem and resolve the matter.

4.3.6 Theme 6: Grandmothers’ descriptions of how the foster care awareness programme helped the foster children and their own family

After the participants explained how they have practically used what they have learnt from the FCAP, the researcher asked the grandmothers how the programme has helped the foster children and their own family. The grandmothers’ responses are given under three sub-themes, namely:

- 6.1 Fruitful discussion on the ability to discipline and buy basic necessities for foster children.
- 6.2 Valuable information about the difference between foster children and participants’ own biological children.
- 6.3 Discussions about love and whether the foster children are happy.

4.3.6.1 Sub-theme 6.1: Fruitful discussions on the ability to discipline and buy basic necessities for foster children

Responses from the grandmothers were that attending the FCAP helped the foster children. They also discussed how they are able to exercise discipline and buy basic necessities for their foster children. Some of the participants shared how the FCAP

helped them to be able to correct other family members if they are doing the wrong thing. There is harmony in the family. They are able to plan activities together as a family. Grandmothers now sit and discuss with their grandchildren what to buy with the Foster Child Grant. This means children are allowed to make contributions and decisions on family groceries, clothing, and other household needs. Joint planning is now practised in the family.

As outlined above, the participants are able to save the money from the Foster Child Grant for tertiary education. The grandmothers are also making contributions with their Older Person's Grant. The participants shared how the FCAP helped them, as their families are able to budget and manage their finances. This is how some participants shared about the family setting and communication:

"Foster care awareness programme helped me because when I came back home, I sit down with my daughter and my foster child and explained to them what other grandmothers and social workers were saying. I am now able to correct other family members if they are doing wrong thing. I am able to show them the right way."

"I can say they got helped at home because my foster child is no longer coming home late; he is now behaving well. He is doing his homework."

"Foster care awareness programme has helped me. I am able to buy them food, I am able to draw the budget for myself. I bought her cosmetics. I don't want the child to not have things to apply on the body. But I give her a card, then she goes and buys."

Participants explained that after attending the FCAP, they are now able to discipline their grandchildren and also take good care of them. Participants are now using positive disciplinary methods, rather than punishment. Positive discipline is based on praise and encouragement. Instead of focusing on punishment, parents make discipline about teaching. Positive discipline uses family meetings and addresses behavioural problems. It focuses on preventing problems (Morin 2022). Parents and guardians are encouraged to manage the children's behaviour, including using

disciplinary strategies to teach appropriate behaviour and protect their children from the diverse effects of challenging behaviour. Disciplinary strategies such as corporal punishment and yelling at or shaming children are minimally effective in the long term and lead to an increased risk of negative behavioural, cognitive, psychosocial, and emotional outcomes for children (Sege et al 2018:10).

4.3.6.2 Sub-theme 6.2: Valuable information about the difference between foster children and participants' own biological children

The grandmothers again emphasised that they received valuable information about the difference between foster children and their own biological children from attending the FCAP. The participants stated that the FCAP helped the foster children and their own family members. They stated that at the FCAP they had learnt that foster children are like all other children. They are like their own children; there is no difference. This has changed the behaviour of the foster grandmothers and they are now treating their foster children the same as their own children. The participants illustrated that the FCAP helped their foster children and family members, because they now know that orphaned children need love and care, just like all other children.

The following excerpts illustrate the valuable information the participants received about the difference between foster children and the participants' own biological children:

“When I come back from foster care awareness programme, I have learnt that foster children are like my own children, are like all other children. There is no difference.”

“Orphaned children need love and care. There is no difference between my children and my foster children, [they] are all the same.”

Foster children are children who are temporarily under the care of someone other than their parents, by order of the government. Children can be placed in foster care for a number of different reasons. As a general rule, fostering is regarded as a short-term solution which is intended to provide immediate care for the child until a long-

term solution which is in the best interests of the child can be determined (McMahon 2023). Foster children are put under the temporary care of a foster family through the direction of a government agency when the children in question lack parental/guardian support and/or protection (Ferguson 2022). A biological child is a child born to his/her parents. Such a child is genetically related to his/her parents. Any child conceived rather than adopted by a specific parent, and therefore carrying genes from the parent, is that parent's biological child (Siegel 2017:167). Legal parents have a family relationship to the child by law, but do not need to be related by blood, for example in the case of an adopted child (South Africa 2006a). Children need stability in their lives in order to form trusting, loving, and supportive relationships (Farragher 2019:48). Children in foster care are able to make a positive developmental turn when growing up in a secure and nurturing environment (McLaughlin, Zeanah, Fox & Nelson 2012:50). Whenever foster parents have a warm and positive relationship with the children they are caring for, children are more likely to remain living with them in the long-term. Foster parents are often asked how they feel about the children they are caring for and whether they are treated the same as their own biological children in the family. Many foster parents stated that they feel that they have to give more attention, affection, and time to their foster children than their own children (Rock, Michelson, Thomson & Day 2015:178).

4.3.6.3 Sub-theme 6.3: Discussions about love and whether the foster children are happy

Children who are staying with their grandmothers have emotional closeness with their grandmothers and maintain the relationship throughout life. The factors influencing this bond include personal, environmental, and relationship factors (Duflos, Giraudeau & Ferrand 2022:762). Sciplino and Kinshott (2019:135) state that the relationship between grandchildren and grandparents is usually close and satisfying, rather than conflictual, and is also considered positive and important by both generations. When these grandchildren look back on the relationship with their grandparents when they are older, they remember the love, support, contact, and emotions. Support provided to the children by their grandparents is reported as being more practical, such as caregiving and help with education.

Some of the grandmothers highlighted how the FCAP had exposed them to learning how to love and care for their children. This has also helped the foster children and brought happiness to the family. The participants described how the changes made a difference in the family setting, as the overall mood changed; the family adopted a good family support system rather than complaining and arguing all the time. One participant explained that the FCAP helped her foster children and her own family to realise that they need to love and cherish one another and do away with mourning and fighting about everything. The family now recognises that they can do things together and strengthen each other. The FCAP has assisted the participants' families to unite in pain and to appreciate the strengths of each family member. Resources are utilised to help strengthen families.

“They got helped because you have strengthened me there [at the FCAP]. It’s not that I didn’t love them. You strengthened me to truly love them, so that they can let go of the issue of their mothers not being there. They should say ‘even if our mothers have passed on, our grandmother loves us regardless’. Yes, I have strengthened love on them so that even if there is a problem with them, I will be able to go down and humble myself before them. I am saving their lives so that the things outside will not reach them.”

“They must realise that the love they receive is the same as the love they were supposed to be receiving from their deceased parents.”

“Foster care awareness programme taught us love.”

“They [the foster children and her own family] also don’t have problems. They no longer have problems. Yes, everyone is happy.”

Participants stated how the FCAP helped the foster children and their own family members. Grandmothers shared that their grandchildren and their family members have love and are happy. Love is an intense feeling of deep affection. It is the act of caring for and giving to someone else, as well as having someone’s best interest and well-being as a priority in your life. Love is an act of caring for someone else

deeply and unconditionally. Love is being motivated to be the best version of yourself that you can possibly be, because you are so passionate about others (Mitchell 2000:102). The number of children living with grandmothers has increased in recent years. Grandmothers are associated with child well-being. Grandchildren living with their grandmothers experience more happiness (Duflos et al 2020:762).

4.3.7 Theme 7: Grandmothers' opinions on what part of the foster care awareness programme needs to be improved

After the participants described the positive aspects of the FCAP, the researcher asked the grandmothers what part of the programme needs to be improved. From their responses, the following sub-themes emerged:

- 7.1 More communication regarding the FCAP.
- 7.2 Regular site visits should be arranged timeously.
- 7.3 Foster children to be included in the FCAP.
- 7.4 The request for the government to increase the Foster Child Grant.

Each sub-theme will be discussed with appropriate storylines from the interviews and a literature control.

4.3.7.1 Sub-theme 7.1: More communication regarding the FCAP

Social work services are required to empower, educate, and assist grandmother-headed families to live in their communities (Mtiya-Thimla 2015:5). It is essential for social workers to understand the multiple factors influencing the development of communities and their members, and advocate for vulnerable individuals like grandmothers in the community. Therefore, it is important that social workers take the lead in understanding the multiple factors in communities that may negatively influence the promotion of safety and proper care for grandmothers. A social worker is a social services practitioner who is registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). The Social Work Amendment Act 102 of 1998 (South Africa 1998: section 3) states that the purpose of the SACSSP is to protect and promote the interests of the professions in respect which professional boards have been registered and established and to enhance the status and dignity of the profession.

4.3.7.2 Sub-theme 7.2: Regular site visits should be arranged timeously

Some of the grandmothers believed that the part of the FCAP that needs to be improved is that they should receive notifications of any sessions or visits timeously. They should not be informed about a site visit on the same day or morning when they are not ready for such visits. They requested that the planning be done in advance to allow them to prepare for the day of the visit by the social worker. They voiced the following as being critical: social workers need to prepare grandmothers for activities to be conducted and the time thereof, because sometimes the social workers call the grandmothers to invite them with less than 24 hours' notice. The proposed suggestions need to be done in advance and organised planning must be in place from both sides. The social workers must consult the members in advance and together they can plan the activities of the FCAP and site visits. The participants explained that if social workers need anything from them, they need to arrange with them on time.

These are some of the laments from the participants:

“When you invited us to attend foster care awareness programme, prepare us on time. Do not say ‘tomorrow I want you’. What if I am not at Diepsloot, I am at Rustenburg? When will I go to Diepsloot and prepare myself? Tomorrow you want me and you call around two o’clock. Those are the things.”

“If social workers need anything from me, they need to arrange with me because some they do not arrange. They may want to come over to see me. They will have to tell me on time, because sometimes they just come without an arrangement. What if I am not available at home?”

The participants mentioned that social workers who are providing the FCAP need to always visit the families of grandmothers who are staying with their grandchildren. The social worker's role should be supportive, to enable vulnerable people to use their own abilities to maintain control over their own lives (Sims et al 2014:371).

Social work as a profession has four fundamental values, which are respect for the worth and inherent dignity of humans, empowerment, self-determination, and confidentiality. Social workers do not impose their values but embrace the values of people. Social workers focus on the self or identity of the person, group, or community (Grobler et al 2013:39). Social workers need to apply systems theory in social work practice, because it is empowerment-based, as it seeks to consider the client system within the context of the larger surrounding structures and environment and then reduce and/or eliminate any barriers that change the ability of individuals to have power and maintain control over their lives. Social workers and clients should work in collaboration, viewing the client as the expert of his/her own situations (Teater 2019:35). Social workers offer individuals or clients opportunities to discover new pathways to health and well-being and to experience self-improvement, because this allows individuals or clients to change out of a desire for life exploration and not because of an ailment. Social workers enable individuals or clients to assist one another through the group agreement, to reach a fuller potential. Social workers utilise members' strengths as a tool of mutual aid (Pelech, Basso, Lee & Gandarilla 2016:57).

4.3.7.3 Sub-theme 7.3: Foster children to be included in the FCAP

Many of the grandmothers were of the opinion that it would be an improvement to the FCAP if the children were included as well. Some of the participants shared their opinions on what needs to be improved in the FCAP. The issues discussed in this section were briefly outlined in Theme 2 as part of the negative experiences that participants expressed. The participants shared their views as follows:

- During FCAP sessions, foster children should be invited to join their parents in sessions.
- Foster children should outline their own programme and the support they need as young people.
- Foster children to set the agenda on the topic to be discussed with parents and social workers.
- Foster children to engage with the social workers and other foster children for their own sessions without the parents.

Even though some of the participants explained how the FCAP can be conducted with the foster children, it is still the duty of the social workers to understand how to consult and facilitate discussions with the young people according to their age group so that this process can be participatory and not top down. The participants have made their proposal and it is now the researcher's responsibility to take the proposal to the DSD for further engagement.

The participants expressed their concerns as follows:

"It would have been nice that during foster care awareness programme sessions our foster children be included so that they can also have an information of what we're talking about and also if they do have experience, challenges, they can be able to share their challenges... Telling the social worker the way we are treating them. They should be part of the programme so that while I'm talking, they'd say 'no mama. social worker, this woman is not talking in the right manner, she's treating me 1, 2, 3', you see."

"...I think our foster children need to be invited to attend foster care awareness programme along with us, so that they can hear what we are talking about. It will be helpful."

"Our foster children need to be included during foster care awareness programme sessions so that they can be able to hear for themselves how they can change and be better people. Another thing is that these meetings take place while they are still at school... This other day, I can't remember what I said to him, he said 'granny I will tell the social workers that you are troubling me'. I said I will end up beating you up, threatening him to stop refusing when I send him to do something. He said 'no grandmother, I will call the social workers, I have their number. I will call them'. I laughed and said you're now threatening me to tell the social workers."

Participants outlined the need for their foster children to be included in the FCAP so that they can also learn with them. The foster parents are concerned about the learning process that is happening with them while no provision is made to help the foster children directly or in their sessions. This is an area of concern, as they indicated in many sessions that they need help with their foster children.

4.3.7.4 Sub-theme 7.4: The request for the government to increase the Foster Child Grant

Participants stated that the Foster Child Grant and their Older Person's Grant is not enough to cater for the needs of their grandchildren and their family. They proposed that the grant be increased. The participants stated that they receive the Older Person's Grant and Foster Child Grant, however, the money is not enough to buy groceries, food, and other basic necessities for the family.

The following are their pleas for support:

"I receives [the] old age grant and I am also receiving [the] Foster Child Grant. However, the money is not enough to buy grocery. Everything is up these days."

"It is difficult these days. Even though I am receiving grants from [the] government, life is expensive. Can [the] government increase [the] social grant, because everything is up?"

"My grant cannot support us and buy clothes for them."

People who qualify for the SASSA Older Person's Grant need to meet certain criteria. There is a set of requirements that the person needs to pass in order to receive the grant. Currently, people who qualify will get between R1 890 and R1 910, depending on their age. The Older Person's Grant was received by 92 145 781 beneficiaries in 2019 (National Treasury 2020). To qualify for the Older Person's Grant, the applicant must be a South African citizen, a permanent resident, or a refugee; must not be less than 60 years old; and should not be in receipt of another social grant. In conformity with its constitutional obligation, the state promulgated

the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004, which provides a range of social grants for vulnerable groups of people, namely the aged and people in social distress (South Africa 2004).

The grandmother-headed families receive the Foster Child Grant in respect of their grandchildren to care for the needs of the children. Foster parents qualify to receive a Foster Child Grant, including grandmother-headed families (South Africa 2006a: section 150). As stated above, foster care in South Africa is regulated by the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006a), following the recommendation by designated social workers indicating that these children need care and protection. Foster care is a long-term placement for children who are unable to stay with their parents due to different reasons. Foster care placement should always be in the best interest of the child/children concerned (South Africa 2006a: section 7).

The DSD provides protection services and leads government efforts to forge partners. SASSA is the custodian of the system that manages the payment of the Foster Child Grant. Section 158 of Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006a) permits the Children's Court to review the foster care order every two years. However, the Magistrate's Court may extend the court order until the child/children reach 18 years of age (DSD 2021:8). President Cyril Ramaphosa said that the right to social security is essential to other rights, including the right to dignity (*The Citizen* 2023). In 1999, just over 2.5 million people were receiving social grants in South Africa and that number has increased to over 18 million people. President Cyril Ramaphosa confirmed that the social grant will increase in order to cushion the poor against rising inflation (*The Citizen* 2023). According to Godongwana's budget speech, the SASSA grant will increase in 2023 and expenditure on social grants will increase from R233 billion in 2022/2023 to R248.4 billion in 2025/2026 due to increases in the number of recipients and the value of the grants (*Current Affairs ZA* 2023).

4.3.8 Theme 8: Grandmothers' suggestions for social workers and the role they play in the foster care awareness programme

The final question that the researcher posed to the grandmothers was to ask them what suggestions they had for social workers and the role they play in the FCAP. Their responses to this question are given under four sub-themes, namely:

- 8.1 No suggestions; the programme should continue as it is.
- 8.2 The need for support with food parcels.
- 8.3 The need to assist with checks on the children's school progress.
- 8.4 Social workers to conduct regular home visits.

These sub-themes will be discussed with appropriate storylines and a literature control.

4.3.8.1 Sub-theme 8.1: No suggestions; the programme should continue as it is

A few of the grandmothers responded to the question about their suggestions for social workers and the role they play in the FCAP by stating that they had no suggestions. They were satisfied with the programme and the social workers and proposed that the programme should just continue as it is. The participants stated that the social workers should continue to do their work and they should increase their strengths. The participants reported that they are thankful for the work of the social workers. They are encouraged, as they find the FCAP useful in meeting their needs. The following are their comments:

"I would say they should continue to work like they do in all sessions. They should increase the work, as they give us more strength. The only thing is just for me to thank you them, seriously. At the bottom of my heart, I ask that God blesses you."

"I say I am thankful for all that you are doing, calling us so that we can talk about the children... it's beautiful... Our children have left, we are left behind, you see. It's really encouraging to go to the foster care awareness programme and meet with the others and the social workers."

“You have worked with us, you have worked well with us, I am thankful for the work that social workers are doing. You have helped us.”

“If it was not for social workers, we wouldn’t be getting foster care. We thank [you for] the advice and the teachings. You teach us on how to raise the children. I say thank you for everything.”

Social workers around the world have a long history of working for the achievement of human rights, human dignity, participation, transparency, and accountability (Mapp, McPherson, Androff & Gabel 2019:259). Social work addresses social problems such as poverty, mental illness, addictions, homelessness, and child abuse. Social workers are bound to deliver high-quality services (Proctor 2017:335). This theme focuses on the grandmothers’ suggestions for social workers and the role they play in the FCAP. A few participants stated that social workers need to keep up with the good work that they are doing; they do not have any suggestions for changes to the FCAP.

The majority indicated that they would be happy if social workers provided the grandmothers with food parcels during the FCAP and also requested that the social workers conduct visits at home and at school, as they need their support in all areas. The needs of this group are covered in the next sub-sections.

4.3.8.2 Sub-theme 8.2: The need for support with food parcels

The participants in this study shared their views about how the social workers should provide them with food parcels as part of the FCAP. The participants stated that they are receiving the Older Person’s Grant and the Foster Child Grant, however, according to them it is not enough to cater for their family’s needs. They therefore proposed that they should be supported with food parcels during the FCAP. The following excerpts outline how they stressed the need for food parcels:

“I am receiving old age grant and Foster Child Grant, [but it] is not enough to cater for our family needs. Can your office please provide us with food parcels during foster care awareness programme sessions?”

“The government must give us food parcels, because Foster Child Grant is too little. They must help us with the children who are still in school. They don’t have clothes; they outgrow them. I can’t afford child uniform with this grant. I want food parcels... please help us with food parcels... we will be able to do something...”

“I think it will be best if we are provided with extra support for the foster children, such as food parcels. The package can add soap... maize meal... vegetables, including school uniform in the beginning of the year.”

Grandparents, in providing for their grandchildren, put themselves under financial strain and often they can no longer provide for themselves (Mokone 2014:27). UNICEF (2007) states that in many poor countries, elderly women are among the most vulnerable and marginalised members of society. Unemployment is the major source of challenges for women and grandmothers. Grandmothers as caregivers experience economic difficulties. Grandmothers as caregivers are at an elevated risk for financial strain (Bertera & Crewe 2013:178). The economic demands of custodian grandparenting can cause problems with the already compromised health of grandparents, as economic support from social services agencies is frequently difficult to access (Yancura 2013:473). Nhedz and Makofane (2015:354) state that social workers do not have the time to assist grandmothers to draw up a budget, hence in the FCAP the social workers engage the grandmothers in programmes that deal with financial management and savings. Most grandparents rely on the Older Person’s Grant. These grandparents are experiencing more financial constraints than those who have provision from their retirement funds (Mokone 2014:194).

The findings from this study revealed that most of the grandmothers experienced financial problems and they need food parcels from the social workers. Due to the fact that most of them are no longer working, they are depending on their Older Person’s Grant which is not enough to provide for the entire family. Participants described that they are receiving the Older Person’s Grant and Foster Child Grant, however, the money is not enough to buy groceries because everything is expensive these days.

4.3.8.3 Sub-theme 8.3: The need to assist with checks on the foster children's school progress.

Some of the grandmothers suggested that the social workers should check on their foster children's progress at school as part of the FCAP. The participants stated that social workers need to go to school to check how foster children are doing at school and how their school progress is going, as well as to see how the foster children are behaving at school. Some of the participants indicated the need for the social workers to go to school and to know the foster children's teachers. Some felt that if it is possible, the school should be used as part of therapy for the children. This could be a good group work setting and the engagement with teachers is seen as part of strengthening families.

This is an integrated approach where the social worker works with the parents and the school or other significant others. Participants are looking for comprehensive support for their families. Interdisciplinary collaboration is also an important aspect of social work. This occurs when a team of specialists from different helping disciplines, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, teachers, and public health professionals, join the social workers to provide services to a client. Specialists may have the authority to perform tasks outside the social workers' qualifications. It is necessary for service delivery (National Association of Social Workers 2021:2). Social support refers to the experience of being valued and cared for by other people and it may come in the form of information, tangible assistance, or emotional validation (Ariss & Fairbairn 2020:526).

"If the social workers can go to school to check how our foster children are doing: how they are doing in schools, how the school progress is going, how the child is behaving at school."

"They must also go into the school, know the children's teachers, sit down with them, talk, and ask if these learners are performing in school, to know how they are doing and know if they are satisfied when they are being taught... I don't know the things that they are doing now. Foster care awareness programme needs to be done also at schools. Yes, because right now, you will find that the child is getting paid Foster Child

Grant, but they don't have the right school uniform. He lives with his grandmother. Maybe the grandmother drinks alcohol with that money. But a child must dress and show that the child gets paid [the] Foster Child Grant."

Participants explained that social workers should check on children's school progress. School provides a formative experience for children. School can be a haven or a horrible, dreaded place, depending on a child's experiences. Peer interactions with other students can be a source of pleasure or alienation. Many children cannot respond effectively to the school environment because of the stress in their home and family lives (Openshaw 2012:2). Social workers provide counselling and guidance for students. They assist students with academic and personal problems to help them succeed in school (Openshaw 2012:4).

Social workers work with children at all grade levels. In assisting students who are struggling academically, one needs to look at the behaviour of the children. The social workers may consult with parents, teachers, and other support staff to find solutions for struggling children (Kemp 2014:35). Social workers do provide mental health programmes for the students at school. They are required to take into account the intersection of home and school community effect on the behaviour and academic achievement of the students (Sweifach & LaPorte 2013:130). Social workers act to assist students to realise their potential within an educational environment (Sweifach & LaPorte 2013:130). Social workers provide proactive preventative services for general education and also assist special students (Peckover, Golding & Cooling 2013:33).

4.3.8.4 Sub-theme 8.4: Social workers to conduct regular home visits

Home visits are part of the integral plan for providing family counselling and therapy. The social workers have to assess whether the family lives in good conditions and to do this they must observe them at home. With the FCAP it will also be good to learn and hear how they are implementing what they have learnt from the sessions. Family therapy sessions need to be planned and be well coordinated to find all members at home. A home visit is the process by which a professional provides help to a family in their own house. This help focuses on social, emotional, cognitive,

educational, and/or health needs and often takes place over an extended period of time. It is an invaluable asset in the social work field. Home visits foster good engagement with clients and offer a broad yet intimate view of the client's life. Home visits by social workers is a key aspect of providing family counselling. Social workers need to observe the client's living conditions, household members' health, and household members' activities (Cook & Zschomler 2020:402).

Social workers need to create a safe space during home visit sessions for the clients to feel free to share their experiences. People who confront harsh stress almost always develop some ideas, capacities, qualities, and defences that may ultimately stand them in good stead as they confront life's challenges (Dulmus, Sowers & Colby 2013:163). When social workers conduct home visits, they need to utilise the strength-based approach because it focuses less on managing risk and what people lack, and more on their innate ability to grow and develop by building their strengths. Individuals, families, groups, and communities all have strengths. Trauma and diversity can provide opportunities and become a source of strength. Critically, the strength-based approach work towards solving problems now while building resources and skills for the future (Rogers & Cooper 2020:259).

The participants shared their views on how the social workers need to conduct home visits to check on both grandmothers and their foster children. They need a planned schedule and feedback on sessions with the family members. Their recommendation is about participatory processes, not a top-down approach where the social workers decide on their own without consulting the client and the groups. Planning needs to be structured and discussed in an open meeting. Social workers need to conduct home visits regularly to check if everything is going well.

"It shouldn't end there [the FCAP sessions]; they [the social workers] must come back into our home to check with me how the children are living. Are you satisfied or not? Yes, then I would also state my reasons that I am not satisfied with these children. But they are my children, there's nobody I can give them to. Whether they are doing the right things..."

“Right there what I would ask from the social worker is to visit our home. Yes, to come and see what the children eat, they bath and nourish their skin. I know we don’t like them telling us about the issue of food, but they must come here at home and see that the children eat.”

“Social workers need to conduct home visits regularly to check if everything is okay.”

Home visits by social workers can help to set goals of improving psychological well-being and increasing their access to resources and support. The management of foster care cases by social workers provides care needs assessments (Chan et al 2019:610). While social workers conducting home visits encounter families from different cultural backgrounds, they should be aware of their own cultural values and beliefs and how these may differ from the values of their clients. Social workers should reflect their knowledge of the cultural diversity of the community in which they practice (Kirby & Sanders 2014:35).

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the research findings. To achieve the goal and objectives of this study, the researcher conducted eight semi-structured interviews with grandmother-headed families who are taking care of their grandchildren (foster children). The experiences and perceptions of the participants were recorded, documented, and analysed. In the first section of the chapter, the researcher provided the biographical profiles and descriptions of the participants, followed by a discussion of eight themes, 26 sub-themes, and four categories which emerged during the data analysis processes.

The first theme focused on the grandmothers’ descriptions of their understanding of the FCAP. The second theme focused on the grandmothers’ explanations of the positive and negative sides of the FCAP. The third theme looked at grandmothers’ descriptions of the challenges they experience with their foster children. The fourth theme discussed the grandmothers’ accounts of what part of the FCAP helped them the most. The fifth theme focused on grandmothers’ explanations of how they have

practically used the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the FCAP. The sixth theme focused on the grandmothers' description of how the FCAP helped the foster children and their own family. The seventh theme discussed the grandmothers' opinions on what part of the FCAP needs to be improved. Finally, the eighth theme focused on grandmothers' suggestions for social workers and the role they play in the FCAP. The researcher quoted the storylines and compared the findings with the relevant literature.

The next chapter provides the summary, conclusions and recommendations from the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The goal of this research study is to have an in-depth understanding of the experiences and challenges of grandmother-headed families in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy in the Diepsloot community. This chapter provides a brief summary of the previous chapters, the qualitative research process followed, and the findings. The conclusions and recommendations are also presented as based on the qualitative research process and findings.

5.2 SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Chapter One provided a general introduction and orientation to the research study. The research questions, goal, and objectives which were linked to the topic were provided. The qualitative research method was briefly introduced. Informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and management of information as important ethical considerations that guided the researcher's conduct were explained. The key concepts used in the study were clarified.

Chapter Two outlined the relevant literature review related to the study. The concepts foster care, kinship care, and foster care awareness were defined. The literature reviewed based on the history of foster care locally and internationally was discussed. The DSD family support programmes and the legal framework related to foster care were outlined. An overview of the international, regional, and local foster care systems was provided. The two theoretical perspectives, namely the strengths-based perspective and social development approach, were explained as the relevant approaches for this study.

Chapter Three focused on a detailed application of the qualitative research method. The chapter looked at the research aims and objectives and the research design used to explore and describe the experiences and challenges of grandmothers in

Diepsloot in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy. Furthermore, the chapter outlined the process of recruiting and procuring a sample, preparing the participants for the semi-structured interviews and data collection, the data analysis process, and verification of the findings.

Chapter Four discussed the research findings with an overview of the data gathered from 10 participants. The findings were based on comparing and contrasting the storylines of all the participants and verified with a relevant literature control. The qualitative data was analysed by the researcher and an independent coder. Eight themes, 26 sub-themes, and four categories emerged from the participants. The social development approach and strengths-based approach was utilised for this study, because they offer a progressive social work model in practice, intending to achieve social justice and empowerment. The FCAP helps to bring development in communities and it is aimed at addressing the challenges faced by the grandmothers in Diepsloot.

Chapter Five will summarise the first four chapters of the research report. The chapter will also present the conclusions reached based on the qualitative research process and findings presented in the previous chapters. The researcher will conclude the chapter by making recommendations based on the key findings which emerged from the qualitative research process.

5.3 SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

This section is based on the summaries of the qualitative research process and the major findings, the conclusions reached, and recommendations for practice, policy, and future research.

5.3.1 Summary of the qualitative research process

A qualitative research approach was employed with the intent to answer the main research question in this study. To accomplish the goal for the study, a qualitative research method with the explorative, descriptive, contextual, phenomenological, and case study designs was employed. This process enabled the researcher to

gather rich information on the experiences and challenges of grandmother-headed families in relation to the FCAP in the Diepsloot community. The main research questions were as follows:

- What are the experiences of the families in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy?
- What are the challenges of the grandmother-headed families in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy?
- How is the FCAP utilised as an intervention strategy by grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot?

The research goal was to develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences and challenges of grandmothers in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy. The aim of the research study was attained, as rich information was gathered from the participants through semi-structured interviews and aided by an interview guide.

The research objectives for this study were as follows:

- To explore and describe the experiences and challenges of grandmothers in Diepsloot in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy.
- To contextualise findings made from the collected data on the grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations from the findings on the experiences and challenges of grandmothers in Diepsloot in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy.

The objectives enabled the researcher to follow a well-structured process to attain the set goal successfully. A qualitative study was conducted to develop an in-depth understanding of the challenges and experiences of grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy. The qualitative data was obtained from the 10 participants through semi-structured interviews. Analysis took place through the application of the eight steps by Tesch in Creswell (2002) and Clarke et al (2015:230-245). Eight themes, 26 sub-themes, and four categories

emerged from the data. Data verification was conducted following Guba's model (in Krefting 1991:214).

5.3.2 Conclusions relating to the qualitative research process

The qualitative research methodology utilised in this research study was suitable and appropriate, as it enabled the researcher to engage with participants and to gather in-depth information. The exploratory, descriptive, contextual, phenomenological, and case study approaches were used to gather the rich, valuable information on the experiences and challenges of the grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot in relation to the FCAP as a strategy for intervention.

The process started with connecting with the gatekeepers in the DSD to get permission and to get access to the database of foster parents in Diepsloot. A purposive sampling method was then used to select the sample for the study. The researcher was also able to recruit grandmother foster parents between the ages of 60 and 72 by visiting their homes. The questions used were contained in an interview guide for participants. In conducting the pilot study, the researcher was able to test the interview guide. The researcher ensured that no offensive language was contained in the interview guide. The interviews were audio recorded, with participants' permission. In preparing the participants for data collection, the researcher managed to establish a trustworthy relationship with them. The participants were willing to offer their time to participate in the study. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explore the phenomenon under study. The service of an independent coder was used to analyse the data. The themes, sub-themes, and categories that emerged from the data analysis provided the researcher with a broad description of the participants' experiences and challenges in relation to the FCAP as an intervention strategy. Guba's model (in Krefting 1991:214) of data verification was useful in the demonstration of the findings' trustworthiness. Throughout the study the researcher's conduct was guided by the ethical considerations as outlined in Chapter One.

5.3.3 Summary and conclusions based on the research findings

A brief summary of the eight themes, 26 sub-themes, and four categories that emerged from the qualitative data analysis, followed by the researcher's conclusions, will be presented in this sub-theme.

5.3.3.1 *Theme 1: Grandmothers' description of their understanding of the foster care awareness programme*

The grandmother-headed families highlighted that the FCAP is a gathering of grandmothers and social workers where they share experiences and wisdom. Both grandmothers and social workers have wisdom to share. The findings revealed that the FCAP conducted through the group supervision workshop that takes place in the Diepsloot community is working for them and their families. Different lessons and sessions that are shared with grandmothers during group supervision workshops are helping them to cope with many family challenges. Respondents indicated that the FCAP created a suitable space for learning. The respondents revealed that the FCAP provided them with an opportunity to receive guidance and taught them how to live with orphans and how to treat children and not shout at them.

5.3.3.2 *Theme 2: Grandmothers' explanations of the positive and negative sides of the foster care awareness programme*

The participants shared the positive and negative sides of the FCAP. All participants are in favour of the FCAP. The FCAP has therefore helped them with the following:

- Assisting them in caring for and managing the children and household matters.
- Sharing and learning about different subjects, such as discipline, saving money, and communication.
- Learning to develop coping mechanisms in order to continue to play the role of grandparents and manage different situations.

From the positive aspects mentioned by the participants, it can be concluded that the participants are happy with the outcomes of the FCAP. In responding to the question about the negative side of the FCAP, the participants all said that they had not experienced any negative issues except that they want their foster children to

be able to benefit from the programme too. They proposed that the foster children should be allowed to join the FCAP.

5.3.3.3 Theme 3: Grandmothers' descriptions of the challenges they experience with their foster children

The Diepsloot community is an informal settlement and is characterised by poverty, unemployment, violence, anti-government protests, drugs, crimes, domestic violence, and child abuse. Due to the Diepsloot setting and challenges, the findings of the study do reflect that some grandmothers are affected by the conditions their children live in. The foster children are exposed to substance abuse in the form of drugs and alcohol. These community challenges do affect the foster children, as some are using drugs. Based on the participants' narratives, it can be concluded that the participants are finding it difficult to cope with the fact that their grandchildren are abusing drugs. The findings showed that other grandmothers experience challenges related to schooling and a lack of understanding between the grandmothers and the foster children. Some of the foster children are not able to progress in school, as they fail and drop out of school, and this is a concern for their future.

5.3.3.4 Theme 4: Grandmothers' accounts of the foster care awareness programme and how it helped them and their families

The findings of the study reflect that there were a number of benefits that foster parents identified from their involvement with the FCAP. They learnt certain skills that they applied in their family settings. The following are some of the benefits highlighted:

- **How to discipline and talk to foster children**

Participants felt that attending the FCAP helped them to discipline and talk to the children. They now know the right approach and method to discipline their foster children. They are no longer focusing on their old ways of disciplining the children through shouting at them and beating them. Communication in the family has improved and more harmony prevails, even though raising kids can be challenging. Based on the participants' narratives, it can be concluded that the FCAP has made great changes in the lives of grandmother-headed

families. Parenting and family support was discussed in the FCAP, which allowed the participants to understand their grandchildren much better, especially with the pressures that the children have in this modern time.

- **What to teach children and how to love them as they are**

The findings of the study revealed that the participants changed their lives and family communication. The foster parents and children managed to bring harmony to their families by learning to communicate with and respect each other. The FCAP played a role in changing the attitude of parents to children and vice versa. The grandmother foster parents were able to teach their foster children respect and how to love through better ways of communicating than they had used in the past. This turned out to be positive, as they shared the lessons from the FCAP with their foster children to help them develop good behaviour.

- **The need to save money for the future**

The findings of the study showed that participants learnt a few skills, such as how to manage the household and sustain the family. The lessons learnt from the FCAP were shared with the foster children. Most of the participants outlined that what helped them most was the lessons on how to save money even if the situation was difficult. The findings showed that the lessons on how to save money for the future and how to draw up a family budget assisted the families to manage the Foster Child Grant and Older Person's Grant. Funds were saved for tertiary education and for month-to-month family groceries and other essentials. The foster children also learnt to live with what they have.

- **The need to look after oneself and accept the situation**

The findings showed that the part of the FCAP that helped the participants the most, was that they realised that they need to take care of themselves, for example by exercising so that they can be healthy. The findings showed that the participants are accepting their challenges, even though they are experiencing hardships. They have realised that life must go on. Participants developed coping and grieving mechanisms.

- **The opportunity to learn together, network, and share experiences**

This theme captured the findings of how the foster parents shared with and learnt from others. The grandmother-headed families felt that the FCAP gave them the opportunity to share with one another and learn as a collective. They also felt that the opportunity for social support and learning from others was necessary to refine their understanding of their role as foster parents and grandmothers. The opportunity to share with others and learn together helped the participants to preserve family relationships and connections, which is so beneficial for children's safety and stability. Based on the participants' narratives, it can be concluded that the FCAP empowered the participants to play an active role in developing themselves and using the opportunity to grow together through the FCAP.

5.3.3.5 Theme 5: Grandmothers' explanations of how they have practically used the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the foster care awareness programme

The study found that participants practically used the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the FCAP and were able to do the following:

- **Share all the information from the programme**

The findings showed that the participants used the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the FCAP by sharing the acquired information with their foster children. This led to family relationships being improved and new values being incorporated. Based on the participants' narratives, it is concluded that when grandmothers share all the information gathered from the FCAP, it contributes to their grandchildren's personal development.

- **Setting boundaries and disciplining the child**

The findings showed that the participants utilised the skills and knowledge obtained during the FCAP by setting boundaries. This assisted the children to learn what is expected from them at home. Based on the participants' stories, it is concluded that when grandmothers set boundaries for their foster children it assists their foster children to gain self-control, builds character, and helps

to regulate their behaviour. Based on the participants' narratives, it is concluded that the participants are now utilising new disciplinary methods, rather than physical punishment.

- **Talking and resolving issues**

The findings showed that participants used the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the FCAP by talking about and resolving issues. Talking and resolving issues help family relationship to become stronger. It also creates deeper trust and builds empathy, as well as helping children to see another person's perspective. Both the participants and their foster children know how to communicate better. This assists their foster children to learn how to negotiate and resolve problems.

5.3.3.6 *Theme 6: Grandmothers' descriptions of how the foster care awareness programme helped the foster children and their own family*

The grandmothers described how the FCAP helped the foster children and their own family, and their descriptions were presented under three sub-themes:

- **Fruitful discussions on the ability to discipline and buy basic necessities for foster children**

The fruitful discussions on the ability to discipline and buy basic necessities for their foster children led to deeper family relationships and smoother developmental progress. Caring for their foster children gives them the opportunity to be thankful for their lives. Based on participants' narratives, it was concluded that providing a supportive home environment and being positive role models to their foster children has brought joy to their family.

- **Valuable information about the difference between foster children and participants' own biological children**

The study found that the FCAP helped the foster children and their own family members. The participants acquired valuable information about the difference between foster children and the participants' own biological children. The study found that there is no difference between foster children and the participants'

own children; foster children are like other children. Information from the FCAP taught the participants' own biological children kindness and empathy towards the foster children. Based on the participants' stories, it was concluded that the participants are now able to offer stable homes for their foster children, which leads to family preservation.

- **Discussions about love and whether the foster children are happy**

Grandmothers felt that the FCAP empowered them to love their foster children and their own family members. Grandmothers felt that to love their foster children plays an important role in giving their foster children the opportunity to grow up in a family environment. Based on the participants' narratives, it can be concluded that the FCAP plays an important role in preventing children from ending up homeless or involved in crime.

5.3.3.7 Theme 7: Grandmothers' opinions on what part of the foster care awareness programme needs to be improved

From the participants' responses, the following are some of the things that need to be improved:

- **Communication regarding the FCAP**

Grandmothers were of the opinion that the part of the FCAP that needs to be improved is that social workers need to invite the participants to attend the FCAP in a timely manner. The same applied to home visits. If social workers need to conduct home visits, they need to arrange with the participants ahead of time. Based on the participants' stories, it was concluded that the participants need the social workers to notify them about any home visits or any events on time so that they can be part of planning and also prepare themselves for events and home visits.

- **Foster children to be included in the FCAP**

Grandmothers were of the opinion that it would be an improvement to the FCAP if their foster children were included during the sessions. Grandmothers felt that the FCAP builds self-confidence, provides a platform for children to

help others, and allows people to receive the support and encouragement of the other members of the group. Based on the participants' narratives, it is concluded that the FCAP can empower their foster children by providing a sense of control over their lives. Foster children can learn coping skills and practise new behaviour.

- **The request for the government to increase the Foster Child Grant**

This sub-theme captured the findings of grandmothers' opinions on what part of the FCAP needs to be improved. The findings showed that the participants are requesting that the government increase the Foster Child Grant. Based on the participants' narratives, it can be concluded that the money is not enough to cater for the participants' needs and those of their foster children. Participants need the government to increase the Foster Child Grant.

5.3.3.8 Theme 8: Grandmothers' suggestions for social workers and the role they play in the foster care awareness programme

The grandmothers made suggestions for social workers and the role they play in the FCAP, and these suggestions were given under four sub-themes:

- **No suggestions; the programme should continue as it is**

Grandmothers felt that social workers need to continue with the good work that they are rendering. They should increase their strengths and the government needs to provide them with resources. Based on the participants' narratives, it was concluded that social workers should continue with their important role of helping vulnerable members of society cope with their everyday challenges.

- **The need for support with food parcels**

The participants suggested that social workers need to provide them with food parcels during the FCAP. Food parcels will assist their families, because their families will be able to afford basic healthy food. Grandmothers expressed that they are receiving the Older Person's Grant and Foster Child Grant, however, it is not enough to cater for their needs. Grandmother caregivers are at an elevated risk for financial strain. Based on the participants' narratives, it was

concluded that the provision of food parcels will alleviate poverty in the underprivileged communities, such as Diepsloot.

- **The need to assist with checks on the foster children's school progress**
The participants suggested that social workers need to check on their children's school progress. Grandmothers felt that social workers' involvement in their foster children's education will encompass their involvement at school, because social workers will provide feedback from teachers to the participants. Based on the participants' stories, it was concluded that social workers' involvement with foster children's school progress will help to improve foster children's school performance, reduce absenteeism, and restore participants' confidence in their foster children.
- **Social workers to conduct regular home visits**
The findings confirmed that the participants suggested that social workers need to conduct regular home visits to their families. The participants felt that home visits by social workers will foster good engagement with the participants and offer a broad view of the families. Based on the participants' narratives, it was concluded that regular home visits by social workers will strengthen their families.

5.3.4 Recommendations based on the research findings

The researcher's recommendations for practice, policy, and further research, based on the research findings and research processes followed, will be discussed in this sub-section.

5.3.4.1 Recommendation for practice

The following are the researcher's recommendations for practice:

- **Revival of the social work methods to address the comprehensive needs of the foster parents and children**
From the findings of this study, the FCAP as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot is an initiative that proves that utilising group sessions can assist the grandmother-headed families to learn

and grow together. They can drive their own development through interacting with one another. The participants found this programme and group methods to be effective and helpful. The researcher's recommendation is that the DSD utilise the three methods of social work, namely, case work, group work, and community work. The group work and community work methods must be fully revived and re-introduced to support the families and communities as an integrated approach to development and sustainability. The families will be guided through community work and how to establish food gardens and economic activities and not to rely on handouts. The children will be assisted through group work to address common needs. The family group sessions can be introduced to help the families to work together towards a common goal.

- **Referral system and partnership with NGOs and CBOs**

The community of Diepsloot has several NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) that specialise in different fields of practice, such as substance abuse, crime prevention, and many others. The families that have children with other needs must be referred to support groups that are in the area. The DSD needs to introduce a mandatory family-centred approach which guides social workers to understand each family's goals, expectations, values, and everyday life. All families have strengths, and they learn and grow best when they use their strengths.

- **Social workers need to be guided on how to provide comprehensive services to the foster families**

The services the participants referred to are school and home visits to ensure that the children and families are supported at home and in school. Social workers need to refresh their social work skills and knowledge through continuing professional development to learn new ways of serving clients, families, and communities, instead of applying old ways throughout the years. The school support programme must be encouraged to support children and teachers to work together with social workers. An effective monitoring and evaluation tool should be developed and implemented by the DSD to determine the level of success of the FCAP.

5.3.4.2 Recommendations for policy

The policy makers should be realistic of the needs of foster parents when allocating grants. The need to increase the Older Person's Grant and Foster Child Grant was voiced by the participants; this can be revisited to support the FCAP. Policy makers need to research and review whether the Foster Child Grant is working or not for families. The DSD should develop a policy framework for dealing with the needs of grandmothers who are raising their foster children in South Africa in an effective way across various departments.

5.3.4.3 Recommendations for future research

The DSD should evaluate the FCAP as an initiative that is new and has been introduced to the Diepsloot informal settlement. A study can be conducted to look at the impact of the FCAP on families and whether this initiative needs to be extended to other areas. The model of supporting foster care programmes through learning from one another in group sessions and workshops has worked because it enhances interpersonal learning, provides a safe environment for grandmothers to share their daily experiences, and also empowers grandmothers to play an active role in developing themselves. The DSD team can conduct research to identify whether the saving schemes that the FCAP has introduced are suitable for families. The DSD should introduce research to identify NGOs and CBOs that can partner with them to work in the same areas that they operate in to provide holistic socio-economic activities that will engage the grandmothers in different activities to help them with income generation models.

In view of the fact that there is a shortage of research conducted on the FCAP as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families, the researcher recommends that future research should focus on the following:

- Evaluate and test the current FCAP for possible adaptation and rollout in other parts of the country.
- Conduct research in other geographical areas to determine good practices in the FCAP.

- Explore and develop guidelines for rendering the FCAP.

5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In conclusion, this final chapter has summarised the process of achieving the goal of the study through the qualitative research approach. Attention was given to the conclusions and the findings of the study as outlined in the different themes. The chapter captured the summaries and conclusions based on the themes, sub-themes, and categories. This was followed by the recommendations concerning policy, practice, and future research.

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ADDENDUM A: APPLICATION LETTER FOR RESEARCH TO BE CONDUCTED IN THE DEPARTMENT

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
JOHANNESBURG DECENTRALIZED OFFICE
PRIVATE BAG X 03
JOHANNESBURG
2000**

Enquiries : Ms MA Musetsho

Contact no : 076 383 1421/ 011 207 2681

Directorate : Statutory

Email : Mulalo.Musetsho@gauteng.gov.za

To : Mrs. Refilwe Mokapelo

Director : Research and Demography

Sub-directorate : Research and policy Co-ordination

Co : Development and Research

Tel : (011) 355-7678

Subject: An application Letter for a Researcher to be conducted in the Department

I Mulalo Abigail Musetsho, the undersigned, am a student social worker and a social worker in service of Gauteng Department of Social Development stationed Johannesburg, and a part-time Masters student in the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa. In the fulfillment of requirements for the Masters degree, I have to undertake a research project and have consequently decided to the following topic: "The foster care awareness as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families: a case of Diepsloot".

The research project originated as a result of the researcher practicing as a social worker in the Johannesburg working in the field of Child Care and Protection. The

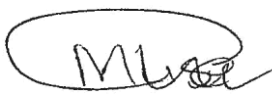
researcher develops an interest in understanding the foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families: a case of Diepsloot. The aim is to:

- To explore and describe the experiences and challenges of grandmothers in Diepsloot in relation to the foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy.
- To contextualize findings made from the collected data on the grandmother-headed families in Diepsloot in relation to the foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations from the findings on the foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy.

The information gathered from this study will contribute to family change and create an enabling environment which will ensure that foster parents are informed and know how to care for foster children. After the successful completion of my study I will provide the management of Department of Social Development, Johannesburg Metro Region, with a copy of my dissertation.

Thanking you in advance.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. L. ...', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

Signature of researcher

ADDENDUM B: A LETTER REQUESTING THE INDIVIDUAL'S PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY

Dear participant

I Mulalo Abigail Musetsho, the undersigned, student social worker and a social worker in service of Gauteng Department of Social Development stationed Johannesburg, and a part-time master's student in the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa. I have to undertake a research project and have consequently decided to focus on the following research topic: The foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families: a case of Diepsloot.

In view of the fact that you are well-informed about the topic, I hereby approach you with the request to participate in the study. For you to decide whether or not to participate in this study research project, I am going to give you information that will help you to understand the aims of the study and the reasons for a need for this particular study. Furthermore, you will be informed about what you will be asked, what you will be requested to do during the study, the risks and benefits involved by participating in this research, and your rights as a participant in this study.

This research project originated as a result of the of the researcher practicing as a social workers in the Department of Social Development Johannesburg Metro working in the field of Child Care and Protection. The researcher develops an interest in understanding the foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families: a case of Dipsloot. The research study will endeavour to fill the gap and contribute new knowledge on the field of social work and foster care system.

Should you agree to participate, you will be requested to participate in a face-to-face interview that will be conducted at a place and time that will be convenient to you. During the interview the following questions will be directed to you:

- Share with me your understanding of foster care awareness programme. What does it mean to you?

- Tell me about the positive and negative sides of foster care awareness programme?
- Share with me how foster foster care awareness programme has worked for you generally?
- Which section(s) of the activities of foster care awareness programme assisted you the most as a caregiver and why?
- Tell me how you have practically utilised the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the foster care awareness sessions or training?
- How in your view did the foster care awareness programme session(s) help the foster children and your family members?
- In your view, what part of the foster care awareness programme needs to be improved to further support grandmother foster parents and their families?
- What suggestions do you have for social workers and the role they play in the rendering foster care awareness programme?

With your permission, the interviews will be audio-recorded. The recorded interviews will be transcribed word-for-word. Your responses to the interview, both the audio-records and transcribed version will be kept strictly confidential. The audio-records will be coded to disguise any identifying information. The records will be stored in a locked office at the Department of Social Development and only I will have access to them. The transcripts will made available to my research supervisor an, an independent coder with the sole purpose of assisting and guiding me with the research undertaking. My research supervisor and independent coder will each sign an undertaking to treat the information shared by you in a confidential manner.

The audio-records and the transcripts of the interviews will be destroyed upon the completion of the study. Identifying information will be deleted or disguised in any subsequent publication and/or presentation of the research findings.

Please note that participation in the research is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part in the research. Your decision to participate, or not to participate, will not affect you in any way now or in the future and you will incur no penalty and/or loss to which you may otherwise be entitled.

Should you agree to participate and sign the information and informed consent document herewith, as proof of your willingness to participate, please note that you are not signing your rights away. If you agree to take part, you have the right to change your mind at any time during the study. You are free to withdraw this consent and discontinue participation without any loss of benefits. However, if you do withdraw from the study, you would be requested to grant me opportunity to engage in informal discussion with you so that the research partnership that was established can be terminated in an orderly manner.

As the researcher, I also have the right to dismiss you from the study without regard to your consent if you fail to follow the instructions or if the information you have to divulge is emotionally sensitive and upsets you to such an extent that it hinders you from functioning physically and emotionally in a proper manner. Furthermore, if participating in the study at any time jeopardises your safety in any way, you will be dismissed. Should I conclude that the information you have shared left you feeling emotionally upset, I am obliged to refer you to a counsellor for debriefing or counselling (should 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, contact (Mulalo Musetsho), the researcher on these numbers: cell phone number 079 894 2260 or Dr Sesoko, my supervisor on telephone number 012 429 3507.

Please note that this study has been approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at UNISA. 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 researcher, you are more than 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: Professor AH (Nicky) Alpaslan, telephone number: 012 429 6739, or email alpasah@unisa.ac.za.

If, after you have consulted the researcher, researcher's supervisor and Research and Ethics Committee in the Department of Social Work at UNISA, their answers were not satisfied you, you might direct your question/concerns/queries to the

Chairperson, Human Ethics Committee, College of Human Science, PO BOX 392,
UNISA,0003.

Based upon all the information provided to you above, and being aware of your rights, you are asked to give your written consent should you want to participate in this research study by signing and dating the information and consent form provided herewith and initialling each section to indicate that you understand and agree to the conditions.

Thank you for your participation.

Kind regards

Mulalo Musetsho

(Researcher)

Contact details:

079 894 2260

(011) 207-2681

42289750@mylife.unisa.ac.za

ADDENDUM C: INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of the research project

The foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families: a case of Diepsloot.

Reference number: 42289750

Researcher: Mrs Mulalo Musetsho

Address: 1035 Blue hills Extension 15
Midrand
1685

Contact cell phone number: 079 894 2260

DECLARATION BY THE PARTICIPANT	<u>Initial</u>
I, THE UNDERSIGNED, _____ (name), [ID no: _____] the participant of _____ (address)	
A. HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOW:	
1. I was invited to participate in the above research project which is being undertaken by Mulalo Musetsho of the Department of Social Work in the Social of Social science and Humanities at the University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.	
2. The following aspects have been explained to me:	<u>Initial</u>
2.1 Aim: The researcher is studying experiences and challenges of grandmother-headed families in relation to foster care awareness programme in Diepsloot.	

<p>2.2 The information will endeavour to fill the gap and contribute new knowledge on the field of social work and foster-care system.</p>	
<p>2.3.1 I understand that:</p> <p>The goal of the study, the need for the study and the benefits it will have for me, my work colleagues and other stakeholders.</p> <p>The reasons for being selected to participate in the study and that my participation is voluntary.</p> <p>I will participate in a face-to-face interview at a place and time convenient to me for a period not exceeding two hours.</p> <p>The information that I share will be audio-recorded and later on transcribed.</p> <p>The information that I will share will be made known to the public by means of a research report and might be used in subsequent scholarly presentations, printed publications or further research.</p> <p>I have the right to withdraw from the study at any point.</p> <p>I have the right to ask for classification or more information throughout the study.</p> <p>I may contact the relevant administrative person or body if I have any questions with regard to the researcher's conduct or procedures of the study.</p>	<p><u>Initial</u></p>
<p>2.4 Risk:</p> <p>I do not see any risk associated with this study</p>	<p><u>Initial</u></p>
<p>Possible benefits: As a result of my participation in this study, more information on the experiences and challenges of grandmother-</p>	<p><u>Initial</u></p>

headed families in relation to foster care awareness programmes in Diepsloot will be established and published.	
Confidentiality: My identify will not be revealed in any discussion, description, or scientific publications by the Investigators/researchers.	<u>Initial</u>
Access to findings: Any information/benefit that develops during the course of the study will be shared with me.	<u>Initial</u>
Voluntary participation/refusal/discontinuation: My participant is Voluntary. My decision whether or not to participate will in no way Affect me now or in the future.	<u>Initial</u>
3. The information above was explained to me by Mulalo Musetsho in English and I am in command of this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and all these questions were answered satisfactorily.	
4. No pressure was exerted on me to consent to participate and I understand that I may withdraw at any stage from the study without any penalty.	<u>Initial</u>
5. Participation in this study will not result in any additional cost to me.	<u>Initial</u>
<p>B. I HEREBY CONSENT VOLUNTARILY TO PARTICIPATE IN ABOVE PROJECT.</p> <p>Signed/confirmed at _____ on _____ 20__</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Signature of participant</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Signature of witness</p>	

ADDENDUM D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GRANDMOTHER FOSTER PARENT PARTICIPANTS

The following biographical questions were asked:

- Gender.
- How old are you?
- How many foster child(ren) currently in your care as foster parent?
- How long have you been a foster parent?
- Are you currently employed? Yes/No?
- How many foster care awareness programme/training sessions have you attended?

The following questions were used to gather information from grandmothers-headed families who are staying with their foster children.

- Share with me your understanding of foster care awareness programme. What does it mean to you?
- Tell me about the positive and negative sides of foster care awareness programme?
- Which section(s) of the activities of foster care awareness programme assisted you the most as a caregiver and why?
- Tell me how you have practically utilised the advice, skills, and knowledge acquired during the foster care awareness sessions/training?
- How in your view did the foster care awareness programme help the foster children and your family members?
- In your view, what part of foster care awareness programme needs to be improved to further support grandmothers foster parents and their families?
- What suggestions do you have for social workers and the role they play in the rendering of foster care awareness programme?

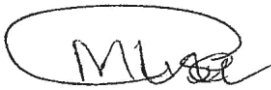
ADDENDUM E: LETTER REQUESTING THERAPEUTIC COUNSELLING TO BE OFFERED TO PARTICIPANTS

I Mulalo Abigail Musetsho, the undersigned, am a social workers in the service of the Gauteng Department of Social Development stationed in Johannesburg, and a part-time Masters student in the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa. In fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's degree, I have to undertake a research project and have consequently decided on the following research topic: The foster care awareness programme as an intervention strategy for grandmother-headed families: a case of Diepsloot.

I hereby approach you with the request to offer therapeutic sessions to participants if the information shared left them feeling emotionally upset.

Thanking you in advance

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MLA', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

(Signature of researcher)

ADDENDUM F: EDITOR'S STATEMENT

EDITOR'S STATEMENT

3 June 2023

I hereby declare that I have edited this dissertation entitled *The Foster Care Awareness Programme As An Intervention Strategy For Grandmother-Headed Families: A Case Of Diepsloot* by Mulalo Abigail Musetsho (student number 42289750). The edit entailed correcting spelling and grammar where necessary, and checking for consistencies in style and reference method used, according to guidelines provided by the student. I have not helped to write this document or altered the student's work in any significant way. I will not be held accountable for bad spelling or grammar or incorrect referencing where the student has rejected my editing, ignored my suggestions, or made changes after I had completed my edit.

It was not my responsibility to check for any instances of plagiarism and I will not be held accountable should the student commit plagiarism. I did not check the validity or factual accuracy of the student's statements/research/arguments. Lastly, I did not edit the student's addenda/annexures.



Lindi De Beer

Contact Details:

☎ 083 456 4358

✉ lindi@grammarsmith.co.za



GRAMMAR
SMITH

ADDENDUM G: TURN IT IN REPORT

CHAPTER 1 TO 5 COMBINED

ORIGINALITY REPORT

12% SIMILARITY INDEX	11% INTERNET SOURCES	1% PUBLICATIONS	7% STUDENT PAPERS
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PRIMARY SOURCES

1	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	6%
2	Submitted to University of South Africa Student Paper	3%
3	repository.up.ac.za Internet Source	2%
4	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	1%
5	ujcontent.uj.ac.za Internet Source	1%
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