

**Experiences, challenges and coping strategies of Unaccompanied  
Migrant Children in South Africa: Guidelines for Social Work.**

**by**

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## DECLARATION

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I declare that, *Experiences, challenges and coping strategies of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa: Guidelines for social work* is my own work and it has not been presented to any other University or Institution. Where the work of other people has been used, references have been fully provided.

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**SIGNATURE**

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**DATE**

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For the completion of this academic journey, I am highly indebted to several people for their support and care. This has been a memorable experience, and I would like to thank the following people who journeyed with me throughout my study:

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this work to all Unaccompanied Migrant Children who despite their adversities and torturous circumstances still voluntarily and willingly participated in this study.

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study was to investigate unaccompanied migrant children (UMC) experiences, challenges and coping strategies in South Africa as they navigate their lives with no parental care and protection in a foreign country. The continuous inflow of UMC remains a major challenge globally and more so in South Africa. The inflow resulted in unaccompanied migrant children facing adverse challenges such as exploitation, marginalisation, discrimination and violation of human rights. In response to this influx, the South African Government embarked on several commendable initiatives, notwithstanding the national guidelines by the Department of Social Development, which unfortunately could not provide adequate guidance for social workers, on how to respond effectively to challenges facing UMC. The study was qualitative guided by exploratory, descriptive, and contextual designs. A sample was drawn using purposive sampling. Participants sampled for data collection were UMC and social workers tending them, from two shelters; one in the Limpopo and one in the Gauteng provinces, respectively.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and analysed using Tesch's eight steps of data analysis in Creswell (2013). The findings confirmed that unaccompanied migrant children do not receive satisfactory services from social workers who are mandated by the Department of Social Development to look after all the vulnerable children in South Africa. In addition, the findings further confirmed the contradictions and misalignment of legal frameworks that make it difficult for social workers to provide effective services to the UMC, thus exposing the latter to a continued plethora of daily challenges. Despite the magnitude of challenges presented by the host country, it emerged that unaccompanied migrant children demonstrate a range of coping mechanisms to survive the challenges experienced within the borders of South Africa.

Prominent in the findings was the dissatisfaction of social workers regarding lack of clarity and inconsistencies in the current Social Development Guidelines on; Separated and Unaccompanied Children Outside their Country of Origin in South Africa. Based on these findings, recommendations are made for practice and additional guidelines were developed to enhance service delivery to the UMC.

**KEY TERMS:** Unaccompanied migrant children (UMC), social workers, migrant, experiences, coping, vulnerable, xenophobia, challenges, migration, children.

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

<b>ACRWC</b>	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
<b>ACMS</b>	African Centre for Migration and Society
<b>ACPF</b>	African child Policy Forum
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of Children
<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>CBO</b>	Community Based Organisation
<b>CoRMSA</b>	Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa
<b>CMW</b>	Centre for Men and Women
<b>CPB</b>	Customs and Border Protection
<b>DSD</b>	Department of Social Development
<b>DoL</b>	Department of Labour
<b>DHA</b>	Department of Home Affairs
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EAP</b>	Employee Assistance Programme
<b>FBO</b>	Faith Based Organisation
<b>HRC</b>	Human Rights Council
<b>HRW</b>	Human Rights Watch
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>ISS</b>	International Social Services
<b>ID</b>	Identity Document
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation for Migration
<b>IFSW</b>	International Federation of Social Workers
<b>IFCW</b>	The International Forum for Child Welfare
<b>LHR</b>	Lawyers for Human Rights
<b>MRC</b>	Medical Research Council
<b>MPI</b>	Migration Policy Institute

<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NASW</b>	National Association of Social Workers
<b>NRF</b>	National Research Foundation
<b>NIHSS</b>	National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences
<b>ORR</b>	Office of Refugee Resettlement
<b>OAU</b>	Organisation of African Unity
<b>OHRPP</b>	Office of the Human Research Protection Program
<b>PAN</b>	Policy Action Network
<b>PTSD</b>	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedure
<b>SASSA</b>	South African Social Security Agency
<b>SACSSP</b>	South African Council for Social Services Profession
<b>SASLU</b>	South African Strategic Litigation Unit
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SANDF</b>	South African National Defence Force
<b>SA</b>	South Africa
<b>UMC</b>	Unaccompanied Migrant Children
<b>UNISA</b>	University of South Africa
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNCRC</b>	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom

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# CHAPTER ONE

## GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction and Background

The movement of people, from one country to another, needs to be acknowledged as a serious issue in South Africa and globally. Migration is defined as the movement of people from one place in the world to another for the purpose of taking up permanent or semi-permanent residence, usually across a political boundary (SADC, 2012). Similarly, Valtonen (2008: 4) refers to migration as the movement of people from one settlement place to another. Two forms of migration are identified by Valtonen: voluntary and involuntary migration. Involuntary migrants comprise of that category of migrants or refugees who are distinguished by the circumstances of their arrival and the contextual push factors that precipitated their migration in the first place. Voluntary migration, on the other hand, includes individuals who leave their countries of origin owing to a lack of opportunity and economic conditions (Valtonen, 2008). Drawing from the above definitions, one is able to detect a thin line between these, which could easily be differentiated by the following: 'involuntary migration' refers to the push factors (which drive a person away) while 'voluntary migration' refers to the pull factors (which attract a person to the other country).

Reasoning from the above literature, it is worth mentioning that being a migrant does not refer only to adults. Circumstances also push and pull children to migrate to South Africa and other parts of the world, and they eventually find themselves being migrants with no parental control or any means of subsistence (Valtonen, 2008). Such children are referred to as 'unaccompanied migrant children' (UMC). According to Section 8 (5) of the 1996 Refugee Act (as amended), an unaccompanied minor is a child under the age of 18 years who has arrived at the frontiers of the State or entered the State and who is not in anyone's custody. Similarly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) regards an unaccompanied minor as a person under the age of 18 years who has crossed the international borders either alone or with another child, or who has found himself or herself living alone in a foreign country without an adult caregiver (UNHCR, 2015b). According to the Convention on the

Rights of the Child of 1989 (CRC, 1989), unaccompanied children (also called unaccompanied minors) are children, who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so. For Valtonen (2008: 4), the term 'migrant child' refers to an individual child who moves across national borders or to one who moves within national territory. Accordingly, the term 'unaccompanied migrant children' thus conveys the same meaning as 'unaccompanied minors', and for this reason, this thesis has used both terms interchangeably. However, for the purposes of this study, the focus was on those children who crossed borders alone, without any parent or guardian.

Between 2011 and 2014, the United States of America (USA) suffered a rapid increase in the number of unaccompanied children and parents travelling with young children, reaching a peak of 137,000 (Rosenblum, 2015b). The report compiled by US Customs and Border Protection unit (CBP, 2015) revealed that tens of thousands of children unaccompanied by parents or relatives were illegally flooding across the US border, forcing the USA administration and Congress to grapple with both a humanitarian crisis and a budget dilemma. The majority of these unaccompanied children originate from areas where high rates of violence, homicide and poor economic opportunity prevail (Rosenblum, 2015a). It is not only the escalating numbers of UMC that put a strain on the US government, but also the shortage of housing for these children. According to UNHCR (2014:1), children, as young as 3 years old, had already become so acute that an emergency shelter at a USA air-force base has been opened accommodating 1,000 UMC.

According to Kandel (2017:1), in the USA, year 2015 and 2016 saw a sharp increase in the number of UMC arrivals as compared to previous years. For example, while 39,970 were apprehended in 2015, a total of 59,757 were apprehended in the year 2016. The CBP argues that the US will continue to see increases in migration along the Southwest Border during the fiscal year 2017. However, no statistical figures were provided for the year 2017. According to Rosenblum (2015b), this influx challenges the capacity of this country to carry out its core immigration functions of preventing the admission of unauthorised immigrants, while also providing protection to those who cannot be safely returned to their home countries. For such children and

receiving governments, arrival in the US may signal the end of often perilous journeys, but also marks the beginning of a complex set of processing and integration challenges occurring against the backdrop of heated public debate (Rietig, 2015:1).

On a similar note, South Africa is equally confronted with the challenge of high numbers of UMC arriving daily in the country. Since its democratisation in 1994, it has attracted both legal and illegal immigrants from different parts of the world (Madue, 2015). According to the UNHCR global report (2013a), South Africa hosted over 65,000 refugees and 230,000 asylum seekers from Bangladesh, Democratic Congo, Somalia and Zimbabwe. Research conducted by the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA, 2010) also revealed that numbers of UMC coming into South Africa have increased.

Research by Fritch, Juska and Johnson (2010), furthermore indicated that Zimbabwean unaccompanied migrants comprised the majority of such children in South Africa. In 2009 and owing to the economic breakdown in Zimbabwe, the influx of unaccompanied children reached proportions that called for humanitarian assistance (Save the Children, 2009). This resulted in assistance being rendered to more than 800 children in the border town of Musina (Save the Children, 2009). Worth underlining is that in Africa, South Africa is regarded as the main recipient of asylum applications with more than 778,000 new applications being registered between 2008 and 2012, including an estimate of almost 400,000 children and adolescents (UNHCR, 2013a).

The research study conducted by the Southern African Development Community (SADC, 2012) revealed that South Africa houses the highest number of immigrants in Southern Africa. In support of the above, is a study conducted by UNHCR (2013a) in five South African municipalities: Musina, Thohoyandou, Makhado, Tzaneen and Polokwane, which identified a total number of 776 UMC children, of which 500 were boys and 58 below the age of 12. This is attributed to its stable economy as well as its political situation. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2012), migration in South Africa is motivated by the relatively high quality of life and strong business environment.

Of note is that many studies, such as those of Fritch et al., (2010); Schreier, (2011); and UNHCR (2014) have tried to capture the number of unaccompanied children currently living in South Africa; however, the lack of a proper registration and tracking system constrains the establishment of reliable statistics regarding this vulnerable population. Similarly, Sloth-Nielsen and Ackermann (2016) attest that the number, demographics and circumstances of unaccompanied and separated foreign children living in South Africa are unknown due to scarce and poorly maintained migration data.

Deducing from the above discussions, it is clear that the influx of people migrating from neighbouring countries (whether legally or illegally) has become a common phenomenon in South Africa. It is the researcher's point of view that people from neighbouring countries tend to view South Africa as a beacon of hope when situations become unfavourable in their countries. To them, migrating to this 'land of milk and honey' means employment opportunities and subsequently a better life. According to Save the Children (2009), many of these migrants are children who cross borders unaccompanied by families or adult caregivers. The same author further stipulates that numbers of UMC are difficult to estimate, owing to the fact that these children enter the country in an irregular fashion and are not registered at border crossings. According to Save the Children (2009), there are probably thousands of UMC in other locations across South Africa that are not known. Many of such children face considerable risks that are not being adequately addressed by current policy frameworks and practices because of being unknown (Save the Children, 2009).

Political and economic imbalances among African countries are a major driving force for migration, coupled with poverty, inequalities, gender-based discrimination, lack of opportunities, abuse, and violence (Doek, Van Loon and Vlaardingerbroek, 1996; UNHCR, 2013b). Given these circumstances, migration could be an important strategy for coping with the changing environmental conditions (Liehr, Drees and Hummel, 2016). One is then bound to argue that this influx is likely to create pressure on the Government and overburden the South African economy, infrastructure and its resources since South Africa is struggling to handle and meet the demands of its own citizens. For this reason, a solution-based approach is vitally important in which this



country devotes itself in setting up sustainable measures and systematic exit strategies of dealing with the influx of UMC.

Despite the fact that child labour is illegal in South Africa, many migrant children come to this country in search for work and end up working on farms, as domestic workers, running errands, and sometimes selling sex (CoRMSA, 2010). Based on this, one is bound to assume that the choices made by these children are mainly driven by the need to 'work in order to survive', thus compelling them to make abusive and exploitative choices that end up impacting negatively on their health and well-being. From a social work standpoint, provision of protection for children who have to work under these conditions is a matter of concern. The role of social workers is to protect and care for the vulnerable children and to strengthen their well-being. Indisputably, UMC are especially vulnerable and require specific care and protection, mainly from social workers who by virtue of their profession have the responsibility of caring for all vulnerable children as prescribed in the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 (as amended).

The International Social Services -ISS (2007) confirm that previous research findings, practice knowledge, and conventional wisdom all indicate that UMC face multiple challenges in their lives related to their pre-departure experiences, forced exile from home, armed conflict, and death of loved ones, as well as crime and oppressive circumstances in foreign countries (ISS, 2007:4). The absence of parental guidance, traumatic experiences, exploitation, and violence are additional key challenges, which the UMC encounter in a foreign country (Kidd, 2003). Such children find themselves exposed to substance abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking, and farm labour. Young girls are especially targeted for exploitation and sexual violence (Fritch et al., 2010).

In an effort to protect themselves upon their arrival in South Africa, some children seek asylum owing to a fear of persecution or any form of abuse (Lawyers for Human Rights-LHR, 2014). This has, however, not been an easy process for the UMC, since they have to deal with negative attitudes amongst some officials from the Department of Home Affairs and with certain officials demanding bribery in cash or kind from them in exchange for asylum (South Africa Strategic Litigation Unit (SASLU, 2004). This situation is compounded by experiences of discrimination, deportation, and detention,

which they encounter in the country from which they have sought protection (Clacherty, 2003). According to SASLU (2004), the situation and conditions at Lindela (a private repatriation centre located in Krugersdorp) where they are normally detained upon arrival in SA, also exacerbates the plight of the UMC.

When detained, these children are exposed to a plethora of challenges that might have a permanent effect on their social functioning. The main challenge is that they are mostly detained in the same cells as adults, thereby exposing them to sexual abuse and violence. SASLU (2004) identifies the overcrowding at this centre as another challenge for the children. Research on undocumented children clearly emphasises that unaccompanied foreign minors are not on trial or accused persons and that, therefore, they should not be accommodated along with those accused of criminal offences (Clacherty, 2003). Similarly, the South African Constitution [Section 28 (1) (g) (2009)] provides that 'Every child has the right not to be detained except as a measure of last resort, in which case, in addition to the rights a child enjoys under sections 12 and 35, the child may be detained only for the shortest appropriate period of time, and has the right to be: (i) kept separately from detained persons over the age of 18 years; and (ii) treated in a manner, and kept in conditions, that take account of the child's age'. Paradoxically, if they are not detained at Lindela, the legal protection of undocumented migrant children becomes a matter of concern because, without any legal authorisation to stay in the country, they continue to live in constant fear of deportation, maltreatment, and the deprivation of their human dignity (Sloth-Nielsen, 2002). This situation exposes them to perpetual violence, abuse, and hurdles in accessing basic rights such as the rights to education, social services, and shelter, which are enshrined in the South African Constitution.

The Department of Social Development (DSD), which is tasked with the responsibility of opening enquiries into the circumstances of UMC, has also failed to accomplish its task (SASLU, 2004). The researcher finds this disheartening because, social workers are custodians of the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 and are expected to implement the Act at all costs. Polzer (2010) supports this view in his statement that, although South Africa has devised policies aimed at protecting UMC, there is still a major gap in the practical implementation of these policies owing to the resistance of some officials, amongst whom are certain social workers. The United Nations Convention,

to which South Africa is signatory, clearly stipulates that the best interest of the child is paramount and strongly prohibits discrimination against children based on their nationality, ethnicity, or social status. It could, therefore, be argued that South Africa is contravening this convention. This view is strengthened by the study conducted by Save the Children (2006) which revealed that the fear of deportation inhibits the children's willingness to report the violence and abuse that they endure while within the borders of South Africa. Owing to threats posed to them, children opt to live with long-term psychological scars of abuse and intimidation (Save the Children UK, 2007). It is the researcher's opinion that, because crimes relating to the violation of rights of unaccompanied minors remain unreported, their maltreatment from different spheres of society is perpetuated. Section 28 (1) (d) of the South African Constitution (2009) stipulates that children should be protected against maltreatment, neglect, abuse, or degradation. This correlates with Chapter 2 of the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005, which clearly states that the best interest of the child should be of paramount importance. It would seem that the rights of migrant children in South Africa are not an urgent priority and that social workers feel too overwhelmed to prioritise the rights of foreign children in the face of the unsympathetic Department of Home Affairs (DHA). Notwithstanding the fact that these children entered the South African borders illegally, this does not exclude them from being protected by the South African Children's Act. Generally speaking, the fact that these children are 18 years and under, calls for social work intervention in order to protect them from any form of discrimination, danger and child trafficking. Internationally, South Africa is bound by the 1951 United Nations Convention (and 1967 Protocol) relating to the Status of Refugees, as well as the 1969 Organisation for African Unity (OAU) Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa (CoRMSA, 2010). These instruments prohibit the return of asylum seekers to countries where they may face persecution. The practice of turning away individuals at the border violates this principle. South Africa is therefore obliged by international laws to protect refugees and asylum seekers such as unaccompanied minors (CoRMSA, 2010).

Based on the above literature, it is evident that social workers are obliged to work in accordance with the above principles, taking into consideration that one of their roles is to look after the well-being of every child despite their status in the country. Nevertheless, as they attempt to exercise this mandate, they are confronted and

defeated by numerous challenges that exist within the South African system. It is the researcher's opinion, drawing from her experience, that the illegal status and a lack of documentation of UMC is a major deterrent factor as regards their gaining access to all basic services such as education, health, child support grants and social services that these UMC are entitled to.

A research study conducted by Araia, Kola and Polzer, (2010) revealed that the main reason for children crossing the borders into South Africa is the hope of accessing education. Although children's right to education is enshrined in both domestic (Section 29 of the South African Constitution) and international law, many migrant children are sometimes not able to attend school in South Africa (Polzer, 2010). The main barriers to school attendance are lack of identity documentation and finances to pay for school and the costs related to attendance (for instance, transport, uniforms, and stationery) (Polzer, 2010). All this is despite the South African Schools Act (1996b) which clearly states that no child may be prohibited from attending school because they cannot pay fees (Section 5 (3) (a) and that there may be no unfair discrimination in school admissions, irrespective of whether the child is a citizen or not. Polzer (2010) asserts that many migrants are not aware of this; neither are some school principals.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

From the literature, it is evident that almost half of the world's forcibly displaced people are children (UNHCR, 2015a). The research study by Fritch et al., (2010) into UMC in South Africa found approximately 1500 unaccompanied/migrant children in the Limpopo province alone, where 25% of these children were reported to have travelled alone. According to Fritch et al. (2010), 70% of the population of UMC comprises of boys while 30% are girls. The same authors, however, argue that it is difficult to verify the numbers of girls travelling alone into the country as most of them are absorbed into the domestic workers' industry. Similarly, the study undertaken by Save the Children (2010) confirmed that 76% of unaccompanied migrant children they interviewed were boys, presumably because most girls found refuge in domestic work, sex work, and other survival modes, thereby making it difficult to access them. Although South Africa has received large numbers of unaccompanied migrant children from different African countries, as intimated, Zimbabwean children are by far

in the majority (Fritch et al., 2010). Given the global inequalities, the influx of UMC is likely to continue.

Documented in the literature are a variety of reasons that compel these UMC to cross borders to South Africa (Sloth-Nielsen and Ackermann, 2016). However, it is important to reiterate that these UMC arrive in South Africa alone or unaccompanied (without any parental/adult guidance). As such, this exposes them to exploitation and mistreatment. Because of denied livelihood opportunities in their birth countries, the children move to South Africa, but upon arrival, they become confronted with daily survival challenges.

Although unaccompanied, according to the Children's Act, migrant children are considered children in need of care and should enjoy the same rights as South African ones. Evidence from a study conducted by Willie and Mfubu (2016) suggests that this group of children is still poorly taken care of, with their rights being overlooked and often violated. For example, UMC are not easily accommodated in public schools; face a plethora of challenges in accessing health care facilities (Mboyisa, 2014); are exploited by law enforcement officers; suffer child labour; most live on the streets and are subsequently exposed to different forms of abuse and neglect (Willie and Mfubu, 2016). Those accommodated in shelters suffer from overcrowding and a lack of essential facilities (International Organisation for Migration, 2014). These are a cause for concern for the country and for the social work profession. Social work is a profession with a responsibility to care and protect the vulnerable population groups including children. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every social worker to see to it that no child is compromised within its protection and care system. Notwithstanding the above, social workers fall short of protecting and caring for UMC due to UMC not having the required identification documents. Different studies such as those of Schreier, (2011); LHR, (2014); and Elphick and Amit, (2012) identified gaps relative to social workers' provision of services to unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa. According to the same authors, laws and regulations create stumbling blocks for social workers, thereby disabling them from effectively rendering services to the UMC and subsequently exposing them to different daily challenges. Notable gaps as identified by the above authors, as well as those cited previously, include poor access to welfare services, health care and

education, which are largely attributed to a lack of official identity documentation. Significantly, the latter hampers effective service provision and prevents UMC from achieving their rights as enshrined in the constitution of South Africa and the Children's Act. Under such circumstances, it is reasonable to argue that social workers as professionals are therefore placed in the predicament of acting against the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 which prescribes the protection of all children in South Africa.

In addition to the Children's Act, the Constitution and other domestic related pieces of legislation, it is necessary to acknowledge that South Africa is signatory to international treaties such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 1990). These international instruments are aimed at protecting the rights of all children and South Africa, being a signatory, becomes obligated to protect all the children within its territory including UMC. Yet it is ironic that South Africa fails to provide UMC with the adequate care and protection they deserve.

Despite the South African Government having bolstered its efforts towards securing the rights of the UMC through developing legal and policy frameworks, there are still several gaps that exist in terms of the implementation of such at grassroots level. The fragmentation, inconsistencies and gaps at policy level have prompted the researcher to explore the challenges, experiences and coping strategies of UMC within the South African context. It could be argued that there are numerous studies that have been undertaken with respect to the topic of UMC. However, there is dearth of knowledge about their experiences, challenges and coping strategies as well as about the voices of those social workers who are directly providing social services to the UMC.

### **1.3 Rationale and motivation for the study**

A rationale is the articulation of the reasons for using or conducting a study (Bouma and Ling, 2010). The researcher's interest to undertake this study was based on her two years of experience of direct involvement with UMC at the Department of Social Development from 2008-2010. During these years, the researcher observed that current social work practices did not fully cater, and provide services for UMC. From the researcher's experiential point of view, social workers are obligated to provide

social services to unaccompanied migrant children as prescribed in the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005. However, there were no clear guidelines specified for them on how to render services to UMC, thus leaving the latter exposed to different challenges. This triggered many unanswered questions to the researcher, such as: what are the experiences and challenges faced by UMC in South Africa? How do they cope with such challenges? How do they survive without any parental supervision or guidance? How do they manage to forge ahead in the midst of the hostile treatment they endure from the law enforcement officials. It is these unanswered questions that motivated the researcher to undertake this study.

In addition to the above, numerous authors, such as Kohli (2006b); Mitchell (2008); and Corona and Quinn (2009) have explored social work with asylum seekers, particularly with unaccompanied minors, while others have focused on social work with refugees and asylum seekers in general (Parker, 2000; Chand, 2005). Very few have focused on the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of UMC from a social work perspective. It is consequently the aim of this study to fill this knowledge gap with a view to adding to the international body of knowledge. The study provides insight into the participants' own perspectives, and enriches one's understanding of the varied UMC and social worker's individual experiences within the South African context. While the study provides an opportunity to unearth issues arising from social work interventions with UMC, it also identifies ways in which the plight of UMC could be addressed in order to curb the weaknesses in the current system. In so doing, it will offer guidance to policy makers as regards changes that need to be considered to underpin effective social work practice with particular reference to UMC.

In addition to providing guidance to policy makers, the study will enlighten them about the challenges faced by social workers rendering services to UMC, while also educating them concerning the possible measures that could be implemented to ensure full realisation of the rights of all the UMC. A fuller understanding of their experiences, challenges and coping strategies would aid policy makers and social workers to better understand the state of these children; and also help them develop more effective strategies of meeting their needs. This would ultimately improve the quality of life of unaccompanied child migrants and the implementation of policies protecting such groups in the country.

Although the South African Government has a legislative responsibility to extend the same protective measures to foreign children as it does to the South African child, evidence shows that social workers continue to face challenges in fulfilling this duty. It is therefore, anticipated that this study will inform the formulation of guidelines intended to aid social workers who render services to UMC. The relevance of this study to the social work profession is also linked to the mission and vision of social work, which is primarily to cater for the well-being of individuals, communities and vulnerable population groups such as children (International Federation for Social Workers -IFSW, 2014). Furthermore, because child migration is a global problem, the findings may well be used for benchmarking purposes in countries experiencing similar challenges.

The next sections focus on the research questions, goals and objectives of the study.

#### **1.4 The research questions**

According to Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2009:3), the concept 'research question' refers to what intrigues and causes the researcher to focus on; or what he/she is intending to study. These authors further elaborate that research questions are the guiding light that direct the researcher over months or even years of research in striving to find answers to the problem at hand. Sekaran and Bougie (2013: 39) are also of the view that research questions specify what the researcher wants to learn about the topic under study. In qualitative studies, the research question focuses on exploring the processes behind behaviour and gaining insight into perceptions, opinions, beliefs and feelings (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011:35).

For the purpose of this study, the following questions were asked:

- What are the challenges, experiences, and coping strategies of the UMC in South Africa?
- What are the challenges and experiences of social workers rendering services to the UMC?

#### **1.5 Goals and objectives**

A research goal is described as the central thrust of the study (De Vos, Strydom,



Fouché and Delpont, 2011:108). Similarly, and De Vos (2005) describe the research goal as a statement that provides the main goal or road map to the study. Creswell (2013) further stipulates that a goal has to be a more concrete, measurable, and more speedily attainable conception of such an end toward which effort or ambition is directed. From a researcher's point of view, a goal is an end product of the entire research intervention. Interpreting the above definitions, a goal could be articulated as a dream a person wishes to achieve, whereas objectives are the phases and steps that one takes in order to attain the said dream. Guided by the research question, the goal and objectives of the study are formulated to assist with the process of generating answers to the research question.

Based on the research questions above, the goals of this study are:

- To gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa.
- To develop an in-depth understanding of the challenges experienced by social workers in rendering services to the UMC.

The concept objectives denotes the necessary steps undertaken by the researcher in an effort to discover answers to research questions, or a specific list of tasks needed to accomplish the goals of the research project (De Vos et al., 2011:108). The authors also clarify that the objectives refer to the specific issues the researcher proposes to examine. From the researcher's point of view, objectives are intermediary steps towards achieving goals. Briefly, objectives and goals are intertwined concepts as they work hand in hand. One cannot talk about objectives without goals, while, in the process, goals inform the objectives.

To achieve the above goals, the following objectives are formulated below:

- To obtain a sample of UMC residing in South Africa.
- To obtain a sample of social workers who are working directly with UMC.
- To obtain data from the samples by means of conducting semi-structured interviews aided by open ended questions contained in the interview guide
- To explore and describe the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of UMC

- To identify and describe the challenges faced by social workers in rendering services to the UMC
- To sift, sort and analyse the data obtained from samples, by means of Tesch's 1992 framework (in Creswell, 2013), applicable to qualitative data analysis
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations relating to the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of unaccompanied migrant children
- To develop social work guidelines to enhance service provision to UMC.

The following discussions concern the researcher's overview of the research design and methodology of data collection.

## **1.6 Overview of the research design and methodology**

To investigate the topic, a qualitative approach was adopted. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), such an approach is a multi-perspectival one that attempts to understand participants in their natural setting. Therefore, based on the nature of the topic being investigated, a qualitative study, guided by exploratory, descriptive, and contextual research design was undertaken. The approach allows the researcher to identify factors involved in the problem under study to develop a complex picture of the problem and to report on multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2009:176). A sample of participants who took part in the study was drawn through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a type of sampling that is based on the judgment of the researcher and allows the researcher to select a sample that is representative of the population. The participants were drawn from two provinces, Limpopo and Gauteng, based on the inclusion criteria.

A semi-structured interview schedule was used as a research instrument to collect data from the research participants. Prior to being used, the instrument was pre-tested to measure its validity and its effectiveness in answering the research questions. Individual, face to face interviews were used to collect data from all the research participants. Such interviews afforded participants the freedom to speak with self-assurance and offered them the platform to share their lived experiences without any form of intimidation. The interviews were scheduled to last for at least 45 minutes.

A total number of seven social workers and a total of 32 UMC were interviewed. Data analysis was interpretive, involving interpreting the meaning of words and observations (Remler and Van Ryzin, 2011:57). The interpretive component implies that the researcher seeks to understand the participants' lived experiences from their perspective (Hennink et al., 2011:14).

A more detailed presentation on the application of the research methodology – the qualitative approach, research designs, method of data collection, analysis and verification of data – is provided in the Research Methodology Chapter three of this study.

## **1.7 Ethical considerations**

Ethical issues are a pre-requisite in all types of research, this one being no exception. Ethical principles governing research with children and vulnerable participants dictate that they must be protected and should be handled with sensitivity (Punch, 2005). Because UMC have previously been exposed to many traumatic situations, they need a high level of sensitivity. The purpose of this section is to discuss the ethical implications relevant to the study. Holloway and Jefferson (2000) are of the opinion that ethical issues in research should aim mainly at ensuring that the interests of the participants are safeguarded at all levels of the research. This point is affirmed by Maree (2009) who strongly argues that every researcher should be ethically sound in order to protect participants from any physical or psychological harm. Following the above lines of thought, the following ethical concerns were woven throughout all phases of the research study. It then follows that the following ethical issues considered as part of the research process included the following: informed consent, voluntary assent, confidentiality, management of information, and debriefing.

### **1.7.1 Informed consent**

One of the guiding principles for academic research involving people is for the researcher to demonstrate how consent was obtained from the participants prior to the commencement of the study. Creswell (2014) stipulates that a critical issue in social science research study is to obtain each participant's informed consent before participating in the study. Neumann (2009) also stresses the significance of voluntary participation in every research project by further emphasising that participants should

not participate in any research unwillingly. This kind of practice is considered unethical and will present particular problems when researching people with some levels of learning disability and also vulnerable population groups such as children, as is the case in this study (Creswell, 2014).

In this study, all the participants were provided with written necessary information relating to the study before they made any decision about participating in it. This was to make sure that their decision to participate was free of coercion and was voluntary. The researcher also informed the participants that should they wish to withdraw from the study, they could do so without any penalty. This enabled the participants to be aware of their rights regarding what they were becoming involved in. The information was given to the participants in a language which they understood. The researcher made it clear to them that the purpose of this study was strictly for research purposes. This was meant to address any other form of expectation that the participants might have. The researcher ensured that every participant (social workers and UMC) was given an opportunity to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. Interviews were conducted only after ascertaining that the participants understood the reason for the request for their information and that their participation was voluntary.

#### 1.7.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Neumann (2009:139) describes confidentiality as a safeguarding measure for those who are studied by keeping the research data confidential in such a way that this protects their identity. Creswell (2014) stresses that the anonymity of participants should be an integral feature of research involving people and should therefore be maintained throughout the research study. The same code of ethical conduct extends to emphasising the importance of respecting the anonymity of every research participant. That is to say, a researcher has to go to considerable lengths to protect the identities of the respondents.

With reference to this study, the researcher strongly adhered to this principle (confidentiality) by keeping all the information provided by the participants as private as possible. To uphold confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher made use of codes to identify participants and never used their actual names. This enabled

participant to respond openly during the data collection process without being fearful of any form of victimisation at a later stage. Electronic versions of research data and identifying names were stored on the researcher's personal computer which was password protected, whereas hard copies of interview transcripts and other confidential material were kept in a place to which only the researcher had access. The participants were, however, informed that anonymity could only be assured to outsiders, not the supervisor, as the supervisor would have complete access to the entire study.

The following measures were considered to minimise any possible threats to the principle of confidentiality and anonymity:

- The researcher protected the participants by not divulging their identifying particulars such as their names and addresses.
- The researcher used codes instead of names to protect participants from being linked to specific responses.
- Documents and the digital voice recorder containing information gathered from the participants were stored in a safe place where no other person other than the researcher could have access to them.
- The information would be accessible only to the researcher and the study supervisor.
- On completion of the study, information would be destroyed.

According to Wiles, Crow, Heath and Charles (2008), anonymity and confidentiality of participants are central to ethical research practice. Researchers are obliged to assure participants that the data they provide cannot be traced back to them in reports, presentations and other forms of dissemination.

### 1.7.3 Voluntary assent

According to the Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP), though children do not have the legal capacity to 'consent' to participate in research, they should be involved in the process if they are able to 'assent'. This can be done through explaining the study to them or by reading a simple form about the study, and then asking them to express their verbal choice about whether they want to participate or not (OHRPP, 2016).

When children or minors are involved in research, the regulations require the assent of the child or minor and the permission of the parent(s) in place of the consent of the participants. Morrow (2008) takes a similar stand by asserting that while children may be legally incapable of giving informed consent, they, nevertheless, may possess the ability to assent to or dissent from participation. Out of respect for children as developing persons, children should be asked whether they wish to participate in the research, particularly if they are required to sign an assent form.

All participants were psychologically competent to give assent and were informed of their right to withdraw from the investigation at any time they desired. Neumann (2009:137), buttressing this, mentions that parents/guardians and legal representatives should also grant their permission in cases where the participants, because of their age, may lack the complete freedom or awareness required to grant their voluntary assent to participate in the study.

## **1.8 Information Management**

As stipulated by Whyte and Tedds (2011), research data management concerns the organisation of data from its entry into the research cycle through to the dissemination and archiving of valuable results. Research data management is part of the research process, and aims to make the research process as efficient as possible to meet the expectations and requirements of the university, research funders, and legislation (Whyte and Tedds, 2011). It aims to ensure reliable verification of results and permits new and innovative research built on existing information (Whyte and Tedds, 2011). Pryor (2012) similarly emphasises that in any research that involves human subjects, a researcher needs to consider both his/her legal and ethical obligations regarding preserving data. He, further, points out that managing research data safeguards research integrity and replication and increases the researcher's efficiency.

In this study, the researcher maintained the integrity of the research and that of the profession by ensuring that data was preserved in an ethical manner. To recapitulate, documents and the digital voice recorder containing information gathered from the participants were to be stored in a safe place accessible only to the researcher. In addition, any disclosure of personal or sensitive data was accomplished through techniques ensuring anonymity such as the codification of participants' names. Notes

cribbled during interviews were encrypted or password protected to avoid unauthorised access. This is likely to prevent other people from making use of the data collected by the researcher. This is borne out of the thinking that proper management of research information ought to enhance data security and lessen the risk of data loss.

## **1.9 Debriefing**

Owing to the sensitive nature of the topic being researched, the research might cause feelings of discomfort and anxiety among the participants while they recall unpleasant experiences. The researcher, therefore, takes note that some questions might touch on very sensitive issues, which could have a negative impact on the health and well-being of the participants at a later stage. The researcher thus considered possible precautions to counteract any potential harm to the participants. As a result, arrangements were made by the researcher with a group of local social workers to render debriefing services to the participants should such a need arise. Of note is that although counselling services were available, none of the participants used these.

## **1.10 Clarification of key concepts**

In the context of this study:

### **Coping**

Refers to the process of managing demands (external or internal) that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person. It serves two distinct purposes: to do away with the problem (i.e. problem-focused coping); and to regulate emotional reactions (emotion-focused coping) (Cohen and Lazarus, 2009). King (2008) extends the idea of coping by describing it as the individual's effort to manage stressful circumstances, expending effort to solve encountered problems, and seeking to master or reduce stress. For the purpose of this study, coping will be described as encompassing the various ways used by different people to manage the varied stressful circumstances they encounter in their day- to -day living. This is based on the researcher's analogy that there is no structured way of coping; hence people devise varying ways of how to survive in each and every situation they face.

## **Child\Children**

The South African Children's Act 38 of 2005 describes a child as anyone under the age of 18 years (Children's Act 38 of 2005), while similarly United Nations Children's Fund-UNICEF (2012) defines a child as anyone who falls below the age of 18 years. This study will align itself with the definition of a child as prescribed within the South African constitution, by simply referring to a child as anyone who is below this age. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) likewise defines a child as a person younger than 18 years, unless the law applicable to the majority is attained earlier (UNCRC, 1989).

## **Experiences**

The term 'experience' refers to the sensation of change, or any process that a person is conscious of and is involved in as it happens (Diller, Shedroff and Rhea, 2006:18). According to Collins English Dictionary (2014), experience refers to the past events, knowledge, and feelings that make up someone's life or character. In this context, experience refers to both the UMC and social workers' broad lived circumstances they have encountered in different spheres.

## **Migrant**

The International Organization for Migration (2011:1) describes a migrant as any person who lived temporarily or permanently in a country where he or she was not born and has made choices about leaving their countries of origin, going into their current destination. Both are applicable in this proposed study, considering the fact that some of the UMC have voluntarily crossed the borders on their own and have made the choice of specifically coming to South Africa.

## **Migration**

Migration is the movement of people from one place in the world to another for the purpose of taking up permanent or semi-permanent residence, usually across a political boundary. Migration may be either 'voluntary migration' or being forced to move, 'involuntary migration', as illustrated by Crush (2008). The study by International Organization for Migration (2011), likewise, warns that migration is not a single act of crossing a border, but rather a lifelong process that affects all aspects of the lives of all those involved and could be voluntary or involuntary as people leave to



look for better opportunities in different parts of the world.

### **Unaccompanied Migrant Children**

A UMC is defined by Save the Children UK (2007: 8) as a child under 18 years who has crossed two borders of their own country, either alone or with another child. Such a child subsequently finds him or herself living in a foreign country without an adult caregiver.

Under section 8 (5) of the 1996 Refugee Act 9 (as amended), a UMC is described as 'an unaccompanied refugee minor'. Such a child would similarly be under the age of 18 years, and would have arrived at the frontiers of the State or entered another State without being in anyone's custody'.

According to UNHCR (1997), an unaccompanied refugee minor is thus separated from both parents, and is not being cared for by a guardian or any adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for him or her.

### **Social work**

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people (IFSW, 2014). Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to this profession. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (IFSW, 2014).

Social work is also defined as a professional activity that utilises values, knowledge, skills and processes to focus on issues, needs and problems that arise from the interaction between individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities. It is a service sanctioned by society to improve the social functioning of people, to empower them and to promote a mutually beneficial interaction between individual and society in order to improve the quality of life of everyone (Potgieter, 1998:35).

### **Social Worker**

A social worker is a professional person who helps others to resolve problems and obtain resources, provides support during crises and facilitates social responses to

needs (DuBois and Miley, 2011:3). As such, a social worker is a change agent in society and in the lives of the individuals, families and the communities, he or she serves (International Association of Schools of Social Work and International Federation of Social Workers, 2014). As a professional, a social worker has mastered the requisite knowledge base and skills and adheres to values and ethics of the social work profession (DuBois and Miley, 2011:3). In South Africa, a social worker is a person registered under Section 17 of the Social Service Professions Act (Act No.110) of 1978, as amended. For the purpose of this study, a social worker is thus defined as a registered professional person who renders empowerment services to individuals (including children) in an effort to help them resolve problems, access required resources in order to strengthen their social functioning.

### **Xenophobia**

Crush (2008) describes xenophobia as an excessive and irrational fear of anything foreign. This fear is most often of foreign people, places, or objects. The author claims that people who are xenophobic may display fear or even anger toward others who are foreign. This portrayal of fear of foreigners was evident in South Africa in 2008 when foreigners were beaten up by locals and one of the former was burnt to death (Crush, 2008). Similarly, IOM (2001:2) defines xenophobia as attitudes, prejudices and behaviour that exclude or reject persons based on the perceptions that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity.

### **Vulnerable**

This refers to the state of a human being when subjected to harm, physically or emotionally, due to her or his social status (Collins English Dictionary, 2014). As indicated, UMC and other children are vulnerable to mental and physical risks during their migration process.

## **1.11 Chapter division**

The report is divided into seven chapters as indicated below:

**Chapter one:**

Chapter one provides the introduction and the general orientation of the study, which comprise; the rationale and motivation for the study, the problem statement, the research questions, goals and objectives, an overview of the research design and methodology, ethical considerations, information management, and the clarification of key concepts.

**Chapter Two:**

The chapter contains the literature review on unaccompanied migrant children. A critical analysis of the literature reviewed is presented, and broadly broken into three interrelated sections; firstly, the introduction to the chapter, followed by discussions of key theoretical debates relating to UMC within the South African and global context, and the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study.

**Chapter Three:**

The chapter provides a detailed research methodology, which includes the application of the qualitative approach, research designs, techniques or methods of data collection, analysis and verification of data.

**Chapter four:**

The chapter comprise the presentation and discussions of the research findings – part one, obtained from sampled unaccompanied migrant children (UMC).

**Chapter five:**

This chapter also comprise the presentation and discussion of the findings gleaned from sampled social workers servicing the UMC - Part 2.

**Chapter six:**

The chapter contains summaries, conclusions and recommendations based on the major findings of the study.

## **Chapter seven:**

This chapter presents the proposed additional guidelines; suggested in both the topic and the objectives of this study.

### **1.12 Conclusion**

This chapter presented a general overview of this study, which included among other things, the introduction and background of the study; rationale of the study including the research methods followed in order to answer the research questions. Furthermore, the chapter also outlined the, the aim and the objectives of this study, ethical consideration followed in this study and clarified the key concepts used in this study. It also outlined the structure of this study together with the limitations and demarcations of the study. The purpose of this chapter was to acquaint the reader with the topic of the study, the theoretical framework underpinning this study, and what to expect of the next chapters.

The next chapter contains the literature review on unaccompanied migrant children (UMC), wherein the critical analysis of the literature reviewed, in line with the South African and global context is presented.

## CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW ON UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN

### 2.1 Introduction

The literature review provides an extensive theoretical framework within which findings regarding the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of UMC can be presented and discussed.

In this study, child migration is viewed not as an exclusive challenge to South Africa (SA) alone, but a global phenomenon. Globally, 250 million children are estimated to have embarked on migration journeys alone (UNHCR, 2015a). Subsequently, South Africa, like other countries, has been severely affected by the influx of unaccompanied migrant children (UMC). The intensification of continental and regional economic and safety pressures has led to an increase in the number of refugees and migrants crossing South Africa's borders from other African countries (Schreier, 2011). These children cross the borders alone in the absence of their families or adult caregivers, and for the purposes of this study, they are referred to as UMC. In South Africa, numbers of UMC are difficult to estimate because they do not use official points of entry to enter the country and are therefore not registered at the South African border crossings (Willie and Mfubu, 2016). While this severely limits the information available on them, on the other hand, it also exposes them to numerous risks and creates barriers for social workers to effectively protect their rights. These children are in search of survival, security, improved standards of living, education or protection from abuse (Abramovich, Cernadas and Morlachetti, 2011).

The motivations for migrating to SA are diverse and depend mainly on conditions in the country of origin; however, a common phenomenon shared by all UMC is the desire to find a better future. While SA has implemented a wide range of legislative and policy instruments that seek to protect and improve their well-being, such relief measures have proven to be inadequate; as UMC continue to face numerous challenges within the South African soil (Schreier, 2011). These challenges have

enormous long-term implications for the UMC, thereby necessitating the need to reformulate policies to holistically protect the rights of these children. Arguably, if neighbouring countries continue to suffer from economic instabilities, SA will continue to bear the brunt of receiving UMC (Palmary, 2009a).

This chapter therefore engages with key theoretical debates regarding the challenges, experiences and coping strategies of UMC in South Africa. An important point to underline is that SA has signed and ratified a number of international and regional treaties aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of all children within its borders (UNCRC, 1989). Contained in these treaties are laws that are legally binding for SA as signing these laws means that the country agrees to abide by its accord. Notably, both international and regional laws clearly state that a child's best interests should always be of paramount importance. The treaties stipulate that, as children, UMC should be afforded equal status to that of South African children. This includes access to social services such as social security, health, housing, and education, regardless of their nationality or immigration status. Reference is given here to the following legal documents:

The South African Constitution No. 108 of 1996, the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 (regional entities), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 1990). As specified in both regional and international treaties, protective measures for all children are put in place as an effort to afford protection to every child in SA including UMC. The South African legislations regulating migration issues related to UMC are briefly discussed below:

- **The UN Convention on the Rights of a Child of (UNCRC, 1989)** upholds equality for all children, regardless of their nationality. The UNCRC is an international treaty, which SA has signed and ratified. Being a signatory entail that SA has a responsibility to promote and uphold the rights specified in the treaty. Article (2) of the UNCRC (1989) demands that all children be granted protection in SA without any form of discrimination, whereas Article (3) endorses the principle that; the best interests of the child be of primary concern.

- **The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996a):** This one guarantees the rights of all children under the age of 18 years to equal enjoyment of the following rights: to life, dignity, access to information, citizenship, a name, nationality, a healthy environment, basic education, family and parental care, nutrition, shelter, basic health care services, social services, language and culture (SA, Constitution, 1996).
- **The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 1990:74)** is synonymous to the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child, and specifies that every child shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognised and guaranteed in the charter, irrespective of the child's or their parents' or legal guardians' "race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status".
- **The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside their Country of Origin** (UN Committee on The Rights of the Child, 2005) details procedures for the protection and care for the UMC children in the destination country.
- **The UN Guidelines for Alternative Care of Children** (UN, 2010) provides information on the care and management of USM children in the destination country in relation to tracing, reunification, durable arrangements, and pre-repatriation arrangements.
- **Refugee children: guidelines on protection and care** (UNHCR, 1994) realises that refugee children are children first, with a need for special care and assistance.
- **Guidelines on Policies and Procedures dealing with unaccompanied children seeking asylum** (UNHCR, 1997) details that effective protection and assistance should be delivered to unaccompanied children in a systematic, comprehensive and integrated manner.

Below follows the synopsis of the worldwide displacement of people with emphasis placed on the UMC.

## **2.2 Worldwide displacement of people including the UMC**

In this study, the statistics from USA, Europe, Southern Africa and South Africa respectively testify to the global displacement of people. In explaining the high numbers of UMC (UNHCR, 2014) indicates that: global forced displacement accelerated drastically, reaching unprecedented levels of 59.5 million individuals who were forcibly displaced world-wide, becoming the highest displacement on record so far. The year 2014 has seen continuing dramatic growth in mass displacement as a result of wars and conflict, persecution, generalised violence and human rights violations. In 2013, UNHCR announced that, worldwide, forced displacement numbers has reached 51.2 million, a level not previously seen in the post-World War II era. Children below 18 years of age constituted 51% of the refugee population in 2014, upping from 415 in 2009 and thus becoming the highest figure in more than a decade. Furthermore, the UNHCR global report fingers wars, conflict and persecution as causes that forced more people to flee their homes and seek refuge and safety elsewhere. The number of people forcibly displaced at the end of 2014 had risen to a staggering 59.5 million compared to 51.2 million a year earlier and 37.5 million a decade ago. The report further indicated that the situation was likely to worsen, highlighting that half of the displaced are children.

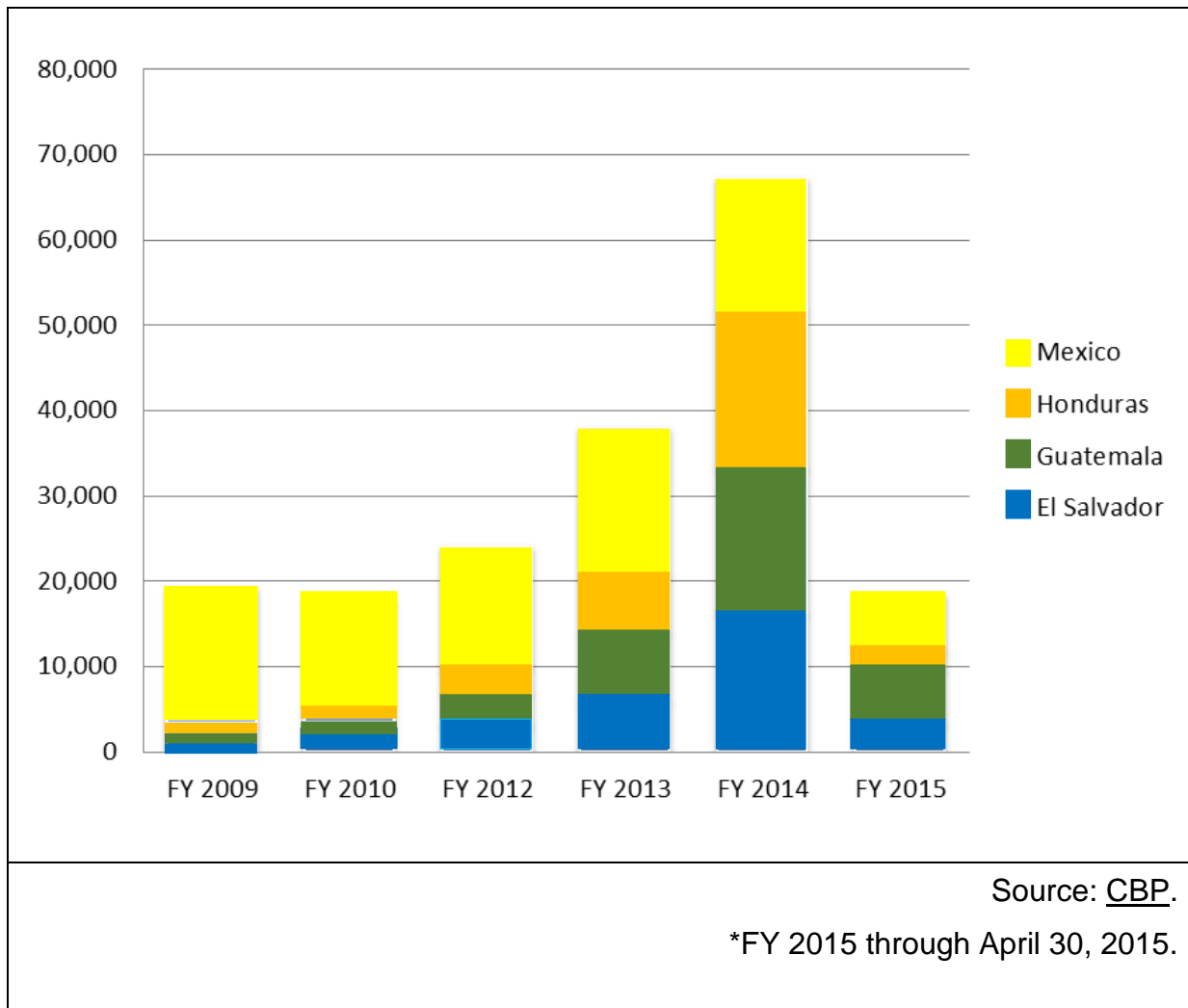
The report also declared 2015 as having the highest number of displaced people world-wide for the first time on record. This report further elaborated that one out of every 122 persons on earth has been forced to flee their home. While the report indicates a sharp upsurge of the world-wide displacement due to the number of factors such as conflict, poverty and persecution, the researcher emphasises with concern the importance of acceptance and tolerance towards these people who have lost their lives and stability, and even more importantly, the portrayal of love and care towards the UMC. While attention should be paid to the displaced people, it is imperative that attention also be focused on receiving countries as well, because they are expected to face massive challenges meeting the needs of migrants as well as those of the bona fide citizens.

What follows are discussions of the international literature pertaining to unaccompanied migrant children. The main focus placed on the United States of America, Europe and Africa.



### 2.2.1 The United States of America

Migration is not a problem limited only to South Africa: other countries are equally affected by children crossing over to seek better opportunities in other regions of the world, thus constituting it as a world-wide phenomenon. Murphey (2016) describes this trend as a global catastrophe to which many nations, including the USA, are struggling to respond. According to the Migration Policy Institute (Adair, 2015), USA is one of the countries that are confronted by an extraordinary magnitude of both adults and child migration. USA is a well-resourced, rich, stable, developed world and an economically sound country, and one of the world's largest and influential financial markets. One is therefore bound to reason that individuals from under-resourced and war torn countries migrate to the USA with a view to attaining a better life. Massive numbers of UMC have been seen flooding its borders. The table below depicts the number of UMC that have migrated from their countries of origin to the USA from 2009 until 2015.



**Figure 1: Unaccompanied migrant children in the United States of America**

The above table depicts thousands of unaccompanied children flooding into the United States of America illegally, forcing the country to grapple with both a humanitarian crisis as well as a budget dilemma (Adair, 2015). The same report further highlights an estimated amount of 60,000 UMC who poured into the United States from 2010-2011. The flow of UMC was projected to rise by 220 000 in the USA by 2015, which is coupled with an estimated budget cost of \$2 billion of the taxpayers' monies (Adair, 2015).

Although UMC may come from any other country, the above table illustrates that the vast majority arrive from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador; fleeing from violence in their countries (Adair, 2015). According to the United States (US) Customs and Border Protection (CBP), between October 1, 2013 and September 30, 2014, CBP encountered 67,339 unaccompanied children. From September 2013 to September 2014, about 68,000 unaccompanied minors were apprehended by U.S.

border patrols. That is a 77% increase from the nearly 39,000 detained in the previous year. About 75% came from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador; which are ranked among the most violent countries in the world (Office of Refugee Resettlement-ORR, 2015). However, the CPB argues that the US continues to see increases in migration along the Southwest Border during the fiscal year 2017. Hence no statistical figures were provided for the year 2017.

It is not only the escalating numbers of UMC that put strain on the USA government, but also the shortage of housing to accommodate them (Levinson, 2011). The arrival of children as young as 3 years, have already become prevalent, resulting in the opening of an emergency shelter at a USA air force base, accommodating thousands of UMC (UNHCR, 2014). Most of these 3-year-old children are abandoned by their parents upon arrival in the USA. The majority of the unaccompanied children are said to travel from areas where high rates of violence, homicide, and poor economic opportunities prevail (CPB, 2015). The above discussion highlights the following critical problems: the influx of UMC facing the USA, the cost of providing the new arrivals with appropriate forms of care and support, coupled with the difficulties involved in finding a solution to overcome the needs of the UMC. In the researcher's opinion, the arrival of UMC with their needy stance creates huge financial problems for the USA.

According to Levinson (2011), it is worth mentioning that while the USA is making an effort to handle the above mentioned challenges, through provision of humanitarian assistance to the UMC, the laws appear to be at odds with each other as this country struggles with whether to protect UMC on the basis that they are children or punish them because they crossed borders illegally. Ironically, the USA is the key holder and an advocate of human rights, especially those of children in general. It is rather surprising that the USA government would even hesitate to provide for these children when it is itself the implementer of such laws. This is a clear indication of the uncertainty as far as practical application of these laws comes into play as well as the risks the UMC become exposed to. Surely, if a service provider such as the USA is uncertain about whether the UMC should be accommodated despite their illegal status, one ought to wonder if they would be rendered satisfactory services by the very doubtful provider.

Similarly, proposals to establish special protective status for UMC have also generated considerable controversy within the USA and many countries in Europe. These controversies are based on the notion that if the UMC are granted a special permit allowing them to stay in the country, this move would attract more UMC into the USA (IOM, 2011). As much as this state is in conflict with itself, on the right decision to make, the UMC will bear all the suffering associated with all the uncertainties.

Although unaccompanied boy and girl children come to the United States from all over the world, it has been established that approximately 75% of them are boys from El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico (ORR, 2015). The study conducted by Levinson (2011) also revealed that the majority of these boys were between the ages of 15 and 18. This is indicative of two things; that boys usually begin working around these early ages, in search for a better future, and that travelling is alleged to be safer for boys than girls. While the biological make-up of boys possibly lessens their exposure to abuse, rape and sexual harassment, girls are more prone to these risks (Levinson, 2011). From the researcher's perspective, it should be acknowledged that probing the situation of UMC with a global relevance is complex, given the reality that children move within countries as well as increasingly across international borders or continents.

### 2.2.2 Europe

For undocumented migrants, seeking a better life in a foreign country often entails enormous risks (Rietig, 2015). While in Africa the migrants cross the deadly crocodile infested Limpopo river to reach South Africa, it is noted that in Europe, thousands of migrants including children have died attempting to enter the continent using unseaworthy boats. Tens of thousands of UMC are among the waves of migrants and asylum seekers fleeing conflict, persecution, and poverty in the Middle East, Africa, and Central Asia who arrived in Europe during the year 2015 (Rietig, 2015).

In 2013, three hundred people were reported dead after their boat capsized in Lampedusa near Italy (Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, 2015). The European statistics reveal that, from 2011 to 2014, the numbers of UMC who arrived in Europe were largely from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, and Somalia. The

numbers are said to have doubled from about 12,000 to more than 23,000, with the steep upward trend continuing in 2015. According to Eurostat (2015), during the year 2015 alone, 88 300 asylum seekers applying for international protection in the European Union (EU) were considered to be unaccompanied minors. While their number always stood between 11 000 and 13 000 in the EU over the period 2008-2013, it almost doubled in 2014 to reach slightly more than 23 000 persons, then nearly quadrupled in 2015. In 2015, a substantial majority of unaccompanied minors were males (91%) and over half were aged 16 to 17 (57%, or 50 500 persons), while those aged 14 to 15 accounted for 29% (25 800 persons) and those aged less than 14 for 13% (11 800 persons). Around half (51%) of asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied minors in the EU, in 2015, were Afghans. The above statistical analysis is a strong indication that the problem is growing in leaps and bounds.

Children are attracted to Europe for diverse reasons. It is known for its relative economic and political stability and many countries, with high rates of unemployment and poverty, lose their professionals and skilled labour force to this continent. Migration to Europe also includes UMC looking for a better life (M'jid 2005; Mougne, 2010) with only a limited number being political refugees fleeing from persecution and violence prone countries. It has also been observed that; physically exhausted UMC often needing medical or psychological support, have flooded Europe in unprecedented numbers (Eurostat, 2015).

The factors that drive children out of their countries to Europe range from insecurity to poverty (Murphey, 2016). The deterioration of the security situation and worsening economic conditions are among other factors which have facilitated the movement of Afghan children from their region of origin to Europe (Mougne, 2010). This has resulted in the growing numbers of unaccompanied and asylum-seeking children arriving in Europe from other war-torn and unstable countries, such as Somalia, Iraq and Eritrea (Eurostat, 2015). The journey to Europe involves long distances and numerous dangers, as well as family fragmentation (Mougne, 2010). According to the Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2012), key factors attracting Afghan children to Europe include an aspiration to live in a country that offers freedom, respect for human rights, as well as guaranteed work and education.

The majority of UMC interviewed by HRW (2012) are said to have spoken about their quest to study and become doctors, lawyers and teachers, in order to support their families or even bring their families to join them in Europe. In a nutshell, the decision for an Afghan child to leave for Europe contains two elements: a context and a trigger: The widespread poverty, economic hardship, political instability, physical insecurity and poor educational prospects are considered to be contextual issues while the rapidly declining hope for a brighter future is what triggers their move (UNHCR, 2014). According to the HRW (2012), Afghans constitute one of the largest groups of UMC who are currently making their way to Europe. In Europe and USA, these children are regarded as “*children on the move or unaccompanied asylum children*” whereas in South Africa they are called “*unaccompanied or undocumented migrant children or independent migrant children*”.

Although the study conducted by HRW focused on the movement of unaccompanied Afghanistan children in Europe, young Afghans are also said to be travelling to India, Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia. For this reason, the same report persuasively points out the impossibility of determining, with any precision, the numbers of Afghan children entering Europe (Mougne, 2010). A report on the Human Rights Dimension of Poverty in Afghanistan, by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, also noted with concern that dire poverty affects more than two-thirds of all Afghans. According to the same report, only 23% of the population has access to safe drinking water while three out of four Afghans, over the age of 15, are illiterate; in addition, dire poverty affects more than two-thirds of all Afghans.

According to Mougne (2010), some Afghan children leave for Europe without a clear idea of their final destination. Many, particularly the poor and uneducated, had never heard of individual countries in Europe before they began their journey. They leave with a vague hope of finding a better life, without warfare and poverty; where they will be able to live in safety, study, work, and earn money to support themselves and their families. They gradually pick up information about what awaits them along the way, from other migrants or from smugglers. Some of this information is accurate, some misleading and some totally wrong (Mougne, 2010). In certain cases, it appears that a final destination might well have been discussed and agreed upon between the parent (s) and the smuggler, before the journey began, without the

child's knowledge. According to Mougne (2010), some of the children become stranded along the route, while others express an interest to remain in countries such as Greece, Italy or France, in order to avoid continuing the dangerous journeys. However, they are generally motivated by smugglers, their parents and relatives to keep moving from one country to the other. Specific triggers for departure include family conflict, violent incidents, kidnapping, the death of a parent, or threats made against the family or individual family members (HRW, 2012). For the vast majority of young Afghans, Turkey is said to be the country of transit.

A growing number of Afghans are increasingly disillusioned and dispirited as the compact between the people, the government and its international partners is widely seen to have not delivered adequately on the most basic fundamentals, including security, justice, food, shelter, health, jobs and the prospect of a better future (Mougne, 2010). In such an environment, it is not surprising to see those adolescent boys shouldering a mounting sense of responsibility towards their families, particularly if their father is dead, and feeling this general hopelessness particularly strongly. For such children and receiving governments, arrival in Europe and the United States may signal the end of often perilous journeys, but also marks the beginning of a complex set of challenges (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2015).

### 2.2.3 Southern Africa

In the African context, the focus is limited to children from SADC countries, for example, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, DRC, Tanzania, Swaziland and Zambia; taking into consideration regional policies such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 1990).

As fighting, poverty and hunger intensify in different parts of Africa, a large number of UMC and people in general constantly flee their countries of origin, leading to massive congestion in the perceived peaceful and economically stable countries. Attesting to this view is UNICEF (2015) pinpointing the facts that, migration occurs all over the world, and that each region has its own particular patterns and context. UNICEF further points out that Southern Africa is experiencing a rise in child migration and this has become a growing concern. Both adult and child migration in

Africa are driven by a number of factors, namely, poor economic conditions, wars, hunger and poverty (World Migration Report, 2015).

Research and policy debates have identified the migration of children and youth as a new area of concern based on the fact that UMC are appearing more frequently among migrants travelling in mixed and irregular migration flows observed in Southern Africa (World Migration Report, 2015). It is acknowledged that South Africa experiences what is referred to as a mixed flow of migrants, which can be defined as a combination of different categories of migrants arriving in this country, each with different incentives and motivations for their migrations and each with varying levels of vulnerability (Schreier, 2011). According to the latest yearly report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 51.2 million individuals were forcibly displaced by the end of 2013, where 86% of this population is hosted by developing countries; and children below 18 years constituted 50% of the displaced populations (UNHCR, 2015b).

The above insights bring to the fore that children are an integral part of the displaced populations as the numbers of unaccompanied minors are escalating rather than subsiding. Although child migration in the SADC region has been alarmingly high in recent years, with the UMC constituting the majority, the total numbers of UMC are unknown due to the irregular nature of their movement and poor record keeping by immigration officials (UNHCR, 2015a). Political volatilities, poverty, and socio-economic challenges have forced many of these young people to leave their communities and countries to search for a better life, safety and security in other countries (Ong'ayo, 2008; Clacherty, 2003; Save the Children UK, 2007).

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), migration in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region dates back to the pre-colonisation period in Africa and particularly in South Africa (ILO, 2012). A research study conducted by the Community (SADC, 2012) revealed that South Africa houses the highest number of both adults and child immigrants from Southern African countries. This is clearly attributed to its strong business environment, high quality of life, respect for people's human rights and freedom. What could be derived from the above discussion is that, since South Africa has one of the best economies in the region, this entails that it will constantly be a recipient of people from different poor



neighbouring countries. Clearly, migrating to South Africa remains a survival and coping strategy for people from poor SADC countries.

According to UNHCR, as of January 2013, South Africa was hosting over 65,000 refugees and 230,000 asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2015a). The majority of refugees stem from Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Somalia whilst others from Southern African countries, mentioned above, tend to cross borders on a daily basis. This influx is blamed on the South African refugee and asylum legislation which is quite promising and attractive to migrants of all ages (CoRMSA, 2010). In addition, the South African constitution clearly sets out rights that are not exclusive to South African citizens alone, but applicable to all foreign nationals, including refugees, asylum seekers, and UMC. According to the United States Committee on Migration (2013), the non-encampment policy, right to work, study, and access to basic services has lured waves of migrants to SA. Because of all these rights and benefits, many migrants perceive SA to offer a higher degree of safety and greater economic opportunities than in their home countries.

The research conducted by the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA, 2010), also revealed that numbers of UMC coming into South Africa have increased. The research study conducted by Fritch, Johnson, Juska (2010), into UMC in SA, also established that there were 1500 unaccompanied/migrant minors in the Limpopo Province alone, and 25% of these children are said to have travelled on their own. Accordingly, Fritch et. al. (2010) claims 70% of the population of UMC in South Africa were boys while 30% were girls. The above scholars, however, further argue that, it is challenging to verify the numbers of girls travelling alone into the country as most of them are absorbed into the domestic workers' industry. Similarly, the study by Save the Children (2010) also confirm that 76% of UMC interviewed were boys, presumably because most girls found refuge in domestic work, sex work, and other hidden survival modes, making it difficult to access them.

Deducing from the above discussions, one may contend that socio-economic and political crises in the SADC region, exacerbated by the worldwide economic recession, have intensified child migration. Evidence suggests that this trend will continue over the next few decades as well, due to violent conflicts and violations of human rights that are witnessed around the African continent. What also seems

apparent is the fact that both adults and children leave their countries in search for better living conditions in other parts of the world. However, as already indicated, such an inflow poses numerous challenges for the host countries (UNHCR, 2015b). Clearly, the influx of people migrating from neighbouring countries (whether legally or illegally) has become a disturbing phenomenon in South Africa. It is the researcher's point of view that people from neighbouring countries tend to view this country as a symbol of hope when socio-political environments become hostile in their countries of origin. To them, migrating to the perceived 'land of milk and honey' means employment prospects and subsequently an improved quality of life. The movement of the UMC is often a clear reflection of the political disorders and conflicts prevailing across Africa that requires some severe international intervention.

According to UNHCR (2015a), the majority of refugees and asylum-seekers in South Africa, either fled the conflict in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the security situation in Somalia, or are individuals who claim to have faced persecution in Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. Estimations are that 2,500 children from Zimbabwe are deported from South Africa every month. The Mozambican children also make up a significant number of approximately 7,000 deportees as well (UNHCR, 2015b).

The results of the study by Fritch et al. (2010) into the situation of UMC in South Africa, also revealed that, South Africa received large numbers of UMC from different African countries, of which Zimbabwean children form the majority (Palmary, 2009a). This is attributed to the year 2008 episode which was marked by a huge shift in Zimbabwe's economic situation provoked by a combination of hostile political and economic factors (Chiguvare, 2011). Similarly, same factors could be attributed to Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland respectively. Beitbridge seems to be the popular border post, for migrants from northern countries, which include the DRC, Sudan, and Ethiopia, to enter South Africa (Elphick and Amit, 2012). As usual, political violence and civil war are often cited as the pushing factors for fleeing from countries of origin.

The above acknowledgements of the UMC presence, in South Africa, are said to have resulted in a huge influx of UMC, reaching proportions that called for the recognition of a humanitarian emergency (Save the Children, 2009). At the border

town of Musina, in the Limpopo province, Save the Children/UNICEF programme, assisted over 700 new arrivals, with an additional 800 plus children from Zimbabwe, assisted through the drop-in centres. On the other hand, in the same year, the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg, Gauteng Province, also accommodated approximately 150 unaccompanied Zimbabwean children (Save the Children, 2009).

Migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa further increased dramatically in 2010, some of the factors leading to this were hunger, poverty and political instability as factors behind the influx (UNHCR, 2013). This is confirmed by a study by the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA, 2010) which also reveal that numbers of UMC coming into South Africa have increased in recent years.

Worth underlining is that, in Africa, South Africa is regarded as the main recipient of asylum applications, with more than 778,000 new applications being registered between 2008 and 2012, including an estimate of almost 400,000 children and adolescents recorded (Save the Children, 2013). In 2013, South Africa hosted over 65,000 refugees and 230,000 asylum seekers from Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Zimbabwe (UNHCR, 2013). A study conducted by UNHCR (2013) in five South African municipalities: Musina, Thohoyandou, Makhado, Tzaneen and Polokwane, identified a total number of 776 UMC of which 500 were boys and 58 below the age of 12. Similar figures are reported by the research study conducted by the Southern African Development Community (SADC, 2012).

The above statistical analysis serves as an indication that child migration is a huge problem in South Africa, requiring appropriate strategies in dealing with the plight of UMC. Of note is that many studies, such as Fritch et al, (2010); Schreier (2011); and the UNHCR (2013, tried to capture the number of UMC currently living in South Africa. However, the lack of proper registration and tracking systems constrained the establishment of reliable statistics on this vulnerable population. But, as with earlier studies mentioned above, Sloth-Nielsen and Ackermann (2016) attest that the number demographics and circumstances of unaccompanied and separated foreign children living in South Africa are unknown due to scarce and poorly maintained migration data.

Due to restrictive border entry requirements in South Africa and a lack of travel documents, large numbers of women and children cross the borders into South Africa informally (Landau and Amit, 2014). It is interesting to highlight that although the South African border is patrolled by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), the same officials allow undocumented migrants to enter the country without maintaining any official records, which at times leads to requiring bribes (Landau and Amit, 2014). This basically means that, any undocumented person, whether a child or an adult, is able to negotiate entry to South Africa without producing any documentation. This brings to light the unethical conduct of the concerned SANDF officials as far as protecting the country's borders, from illegal infiltration, is concerned. One will agree with the researcher and others that such unlawful practices affect South Africa's statistics in capturing the reliable number of UMC and adults entering the country.

It is imperative to note that the flow of UMC entering South Africa is growing, rather than ebbing, with a huge number of women and children taking perilous journeys to South Africa (UNHCR, 2015). While it would be important to be conversant with the current statistics of UMC in South Africa, the report by Policy Action Network (PAN, 2014) emphasises, as do many other sources, that due to a lack of a proper registration and tracking system and poor record keeping, the precise number of UMC in South Africa is currently unknown. A further explanation is that UMC are not visible to the South African care and protection system due to fear of being deported, thereby making it difficult to capture their exact number (PAN, 2014).

What is clear from the above discussion is that there are sufficient large numbers of children crossing borders unaccompanied to South Africa, which warrant major concerns. Therefore, the following sections will discuss the challenges faced by UMC in South Africa followed by challenges faced by social workers rendering services to UMC in this country.

### **2.3 Challenges faced by UMC in South Africa**

The nightmares of unaccompanied children in accessing services start with documentation. The majority of the UMC do not have any form of documentation confirming their nationality. Without the identity documents, it is very difficult for these

children to earn a productive living, let alone be enrolled in school. To make ends meet, the children work in dangerous and unsanitary places which are not regulated by the state (Fritch et al, 2010). In addition to being exposed to harsh living conditions, they cannot seek legal assistance, should anything happen to them, since they are officially not recognised as South African nationals or refugees (PAN, 2014)

While these children portray a certain degree of autonomy, it is obvious that they still encounter various challenges in navigating the South African protection systems alone. This is in line with Fritsch et al. (2010) who contemplate that UMC face major challenges such as physical safety, life without a parent or guardian, social discrimination, constant struggle to find food, shelter, health care resources and employment. It is thus imperative to highlight that although UMC have rights under international and domestic laws, political and other factors become a hindrance to their survival, resulting in the following challenges amongst others: access to education, discrimination, documentation/illegal status, and trauma.

### 2.3.1 Access to education versus the right to education

Unaccompanied migrant children are entitled to education on the same terms as the South African children. Section 5 (1) of the SA Schools Act 84 of 1996b states the following: 'that public schools must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way'. In addition, paragraph 19 of the Admission Policy of Ordinary Government Schools declares that; the admission policy applies equally to those learners who are non-citizens. However, practice indicates that UMC are sometimes excluded from schools because of a lack of documentation regarding their status. A court order (dated 2005) submitted to the North Gauteng High Court based on the exclusion of UMC from attending schools in South Africa enabled a group of separated foreign children to access education. This resulted in an order that the Minister of Basic Education must review the Admission Policy to Ordinary Government Schools to make it clear that refugee and asylum-seeking UMC should be allowed access even when they do not have status documents, and that their status be clarified and dealt with by the Department of Home Affairs (PAN, 2014). At the time of researching and writing of this report, the Minister had not yet complied with prescripts of the above-mentioned court order. Nevertheless, all unaccompanied foreign migrant children should have access to

education regardless of their legal status for the duration of their displacement, because they are classified under children in need of care and protection, as prescribed in the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005.

Notwithstanding the above discourse, various studies reveal that UMC face considerable difficulties in accessing the South African educational system. This statement is confirmed by the study conducted by Crush and Tawodzera (2013a) whose findings exposed the lower school attendance rates amongst UMC. The study further highlighted the demand for study permits and birth certificates, as factors preventing UMC from attending school in South African (Crush and Tawodzera, 2013a). It is essential to note that under such circumstances, UMC are automatically excluded by the South African system as the majority of them are undocumented due to being illegals. In view of the above, the exclusion of migrant children from education contravenes South Africa's international human rights obligations as well as its own Bill of Rights and the Department of Education directives (Crush and Tawodzera, 2013b).

In support of the above point is a study conducted by Araia, Kola, and Polzer (2010) which revealed the hope of accessing education as one of the core reasons why children illegally cross borders to gain entry into South Africa. Polzer, (2010) notes with concern that, although children's right to education is enshrined in both domestic (Section 29 of the South African Constitution) and international laws, many migrant children still remain unable to attend school. The concern refers mostly to those UMC not accommodated in temporary shelters. Tawodzera (2011) further revealed that; those who are fortunate enough to have access to schooling still face challenges as they further encounter huge amounts of discrimination within the classroom setting. Expressing a similar view is Tanga (2009) whose opinion is that schools often turn away refugee children due to language difficulties, highlighting that schools' refusal to accept letters from churches or other faith-based/charity organisations to support applications where there is no proof of residence or parents' details, offer a major challenge (Tanga, 2009). While UMC are denied access to education, it is important to note that "Section 28 of the UN Convention" commits itself to recognising the right to education on the basis of equal opportunity. This section further stretches to

lobbying for free compulsory primary education for every child including refugee children.

Similarly, Article (2) of the UN Convention of Children's Rights (1) commits governments to respect and ensure that the rights in the Convention are applied to each child within their jurisdiction "without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's, or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status." Furthermore, Article 21(1) of the same Convention, commits governments to making special provision to ensure that all children who are refugees or seeking refugee status receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable Convention rights, including the right to education. While the Convention is very clear that rights should apply to all children in a country, regardless of their parents' or guardians' nationality or legal status, it is undeniable that this is far from being practised in the South African context, mainly looking at the influx of UMC, where as noted, the majority are denied access to the school system.

On the same note, the African Charter on the Rights of the Child, ratified by South Africa in 2000, extends the right to education in several ways. Article 11 notes that every child has the right to an education through the promotion and development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. It fosters respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; for preserving and strengthening of positive African morals, traditional values and cultures; and for preparing the child for responsible life in a free society "in the spirit of understanding others through tolerance, dialogue, mutual respect and friendship irrespective of their ethnicity, tribal or religious groupings". The above mentioned rights are for all children in the country. Hence the prescript: "Every child shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in (the) Charter irrespective of the child's or his/her parents' or legal guardians' race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other".

The National Education Policy Act of 1996, for example, aims for "the advancement and protection of the fundamental rights of every person guaranteed in terms of Chapter 2 of the Constitution, and in terms of international conventions ratified by

Parliament, and in particular the right of every person to be protected against unfair discrimination, within or by an education department or education institution on any ground whatsoever” (Section 4(1) (i) (Government of South Africa, 1996a).

Additional rights of access to education for refugees in South Africa are specifically provided for in the Refugees Act of 1998. Article 27(g) of this Act states that “refugees as well as refugee children are entitled to the same basic health services and basic primary education which the inhabitants of the republic receive from time to time” (Government of South Africa, 1998b). On the contrary, Section 2(1)(c) of the Immigration Act states categorically that the Department of Home Affairs is to “detect and deport illegal foreigners” and that it should “inspect institutions of learning to ensure that illegal foreigners are not enrolled therein” (Section (2) (b) (Government of South Africa, 2002). In addition to the above, Section 39 (1) notes that “no learning institution shall knowingly provide training or instruction to (a) an illegal foreigner; (b) a foreigner whose status does not authorize him or her to receive such training.” To compound the situation, Section 39 (2) states that “if an illegal foreigner is found on any premises where instruction or training is provided, it shall be presumed that such foreigner was receiving instruction or training from or allowed to receive instruction or training by, the person who has control over such premises; unless prima facie evidence to the contrary is adduced.”

Paradoxically, the Immigration Act makes schools responsible for ensuring that they do not admit pupils whose legal status in South Africa is unknown because they could be charged with aiding and abetting an “illegal foreigner” under Section 42(1). There is thus a fundamental contradiction between the Constitutional right to education for all children and the Immigration Act’s prohibition on training or instruction to certain categories of children (Polzer, 2007). School principals and boards, therefore, operate with conflicting mandates. The Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools notes that parents must complete an application form for admission and present the child’s official birth certificate to the principal; or that the learner be admitted conditionally until a copy of the birth certificate is obtained from the Department of Home Affairs within three months of conditional admission.

These conditions only apply to South African children for two reasons: first, it would be ridiculous to require children born outside the country, let alone UMC, to produce a



South African birth certificate; and second, the regulations contain a separate clause for admission of non-citizens. The Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools does state that persons classified as illegal aliens must, when they apply for admission for their children; or for themselves, show evidence that they have applied to the Department of Home Affairs to legalize their stay in the country in terms of the Aliens Control Act, 1991 (No. 96 of 1991). The implication seems to be that the children of “illegal aliens” cannot be admitted to schools unless they furnish proof that they have taken steps to regularise their status. Though the Aliens Control Act is no longer in force, the Immigration Act of 2002 still contains no provisions for regularisation. In any event, the point is a moot one since the Bill of Rights entitles all children to access education.

Polzer (2007) is concerned with the following: while school principals are supposed to uphold all children’s rights to education and ensure that all children in a community are in school, they are being asked to enforce the birth certificate or study permit requirement and exclude children on that basis. Although different pieces of legislation and policies are very clear on how UMC should be treated, there is still much that needs to be done to ensure the full functioning of these policies so that they meet the demands of the intended recipients (UMC). Any school setting should be a place for learning and growth. However, discrimination among UMC is also reported by various studies to be taking its toll in the South African schools. More of this assertion is clearly discussed below. In a nutshell, the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996b criminalises the non-enrolment of children of school-going age in a school. On the other hand, the Admission Policy to Ordinary Public Schools makes admission to public schools subject to producing status permits (PAN, 2014). Those UMC who are fortunate enough to become enrolled in South African schools still encounter discriminatory practices within the school environment, as intimated below.

### 2.3.2 Discrimination against UMC in South African schools

Fritsch et al (2010) are of the opinion that high levels of discrimination and powerlessness of UMC in South African schools constitute a cause for concern. Crush and Tawodzera (2013a) describe the South African school system as one of the major sites for xenophobic ostracism of foreign children. Tawodzera’s study revealed how the UMC are called different names such as ‘*amakwerekwere*’ and

'*amagrigamba*', which are derogatory names used to describe foreigners. Accordingly, they claim that UMC, irrespective of their immigration status in South Africa, confront the same kinds of obstacles when they access the public educational system. Teachers are also seen as doing nothing or very little to protect the UMC from such abuse. Furthermore, they argue that, there is significant evidence that schools themselves are not observing the children's rights guaranteed in international conventions and the South African Constitution. This kind of discrimination is likely to have a negative influence on the academic functioning of the child as it might lower the child's self-esteem, contributing to attainment of poor results.

### 2.3.3 Documentation versus illegal status

In general, any foreign national does not have the right to obtain South African identity, as they are not South African citizens. This principle applies to every foreigner including the UMC. Due to the UMC's illegal status in South Africa, access to identification documents becomes a major difficulty. Without any document that legalises their stay in the country, such children remain unrecognised in the country, and this becomes an automatic exclusion from other forms of rights, leaving them exposed to different forms of exploitation and abuse. In the context that they are illegal in the country, they are not in a position to freely report the abuse as this is equal to handing themselves over to the authorities (Neocosmos, 2010). Thus, they become exposed to arrest by police, followed by detention in hostile conditions for unspecified periods, in preparation for deportation back to the countries they ran away from (SASLU, 2004). This is notwithstanding the fact that the Child Care Act specifies that migrant children have the same rights awarded to any South African child, reality has proven otherwise.

It would seem that the illegal status of such children hinders them from protection by different policies and legislations. Though the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 specifies that children should not be detained together with adults, the fact that they are sometimes detained in the same conditions with adults for unspecified periods is proof enough that they are not protected. It is also clear that due to fear, UMC cannot exercise their rights as children. This kind of experience becomes very traumatic to a child who feels alone, lonely and deserted in a foreign country.

Non-documentation in the host country also deters UMC from receiving equal treatment on health, educational and social services sectors (Neocosmos, 2010). Fritsch, Johnson and Juska (2010) are of the opinion that while these minors may survive without any parents / guardians, some of them are not aware of their rights as children. As a result, this leads to constant exposure to all forms of harassment, abuse and exploitation. Female children are said to be often at the risk of being sexually abused while boys are exposed to assaults (Fritsch et al., 2010). Owing to their immigration status in the country, unaccompanied undocumented minors experience more difficulties than adults (Fritsch et al., 2010). Unaccompanied migrant children are more vulnerable than adult migrants, and are often regarded as potentially non-productive members of society by host countries (Levinson, 2011).

Those who wish to further their studies are often excluded from schools due to a lack of legal documentation and are not eligible to obtain national grants, which require a child to be a South African citizen and have valid documentation. Yet, the Children`s Act No. 38 of 2005 stipulates that a child who is declared to be in need of care and protection and has no means of feasible support is in fact eligible to receive a grant. When it comes to unaccompanied minors, the system excludes them and very little has been done financially, to help people who would like to foster unaccompanied minors, as lack of documentation betrays them. Although the immigration legislation in South Africa grants rights to minors, it seems that undocumented minors are also unable and are afraid to access these rights due to their immigration status (Fritsch et al., 2010: 629-631).

Corroborating the above views is the research by Gambaro, Kobayashi, Levy, Rasheed and Winkler (2008) which revealed that the situation of unaccompanied children in their countries of origin is closely linked with the situation in the receiving countries. This means that due to a lack of documentation, there is no difference between what they suffered while in their countries of origin and in the receiving country.

#### 2.3.4 Emotional and psychological distress

Unaccompanied migrant children are susceptible to emotional as well as psychological distress throughout the whole process of their migration from their

home countries to their chosen new countries (Harris, 2001). The study by Fritch et al., (2010) on UMC in Limpopo revealed that while some of the girl children were raped, others were beaten and tortured on their way from Zimbabwe to South Africa. It is these kinds of abuse and torture that leave children with scarred memories that might in turn influence their behaviour. Carl Rogers (1951) in his theory of human development believes that our experiences determine what we become in the future. Similarly, Consoli (2015) argues that despite what UMC have endured, for instance, having experienced such traumatic situations puts them at risk for depression and anxiety. However, many immigrant children prove to be remarkably strong and resilient, despite being traumatised (Consoli, 2015). The same author also argues that though most are resilient, some UMC experience greater risk of mental illness. A 2008 review of 22 papers covering unaccompanied refugee minors from 1998 to 2008 found higher levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms amongst UMC (Consoli, 2015). In the research conducted by Suarez-Orozco (2014), the impact of separation from parents was noted among the unaccompanied children. The emergent findings being that children separated from their parents experienced higher levels of anxiety and depression than those living with their parents, and that effects waned within five years of reunification (Suarez-Orozco, 2014).

In light of the above, one would agree that long-standing concerns about the difficulties faced by UMC along the migratory journey are a cause for concern. While some UMC might cope quite well, others struggle emotionally and psychologically in a new country due to a lack of family support. This serves as a reminder of the rebuilding that needs to happen among many UMC undergoing such traumatic experiences as well as the psychological discomfort associated with these experiences.

The high rates of victimisation and exposure to trauma that UMC experience, combined with limited access to mental health treatment services, are likely to put them at higher risk for a host of long-term consequences, such as PTSD (Briggs-King cited in Suarez-Orozco, 2014). Strengthening this argument further, Briggs-King postulates that UMC are likely to display a more complex presentation of PTSD symptoms, including difficulty regulating emotions and behaviours, which may manifest in the form of rage, fear, shame, substance abuse and/or self-injury as well

as difficulty in concentrating and in learning. In the same study by Briggs-King (2014), it was revealed that UMC appear to experience high levels of psychological distress as well as of emotional and behavioural problems.

It is important to emphasise that not only is the physical safety of UMC at risk, but also that the emotional impact and the psychological functioning of the UMC are at stake. There is no question that UMC are a vulnerable population. The mental strains caused by their migratory journeys are well established in various studies such as those by Pumariega Rothe and Pumariega (2005).

## **2.4 Challenges faced by social workers in rendering services to the UMC**

Before embarking on the challenges and roles of social workers in rendering services to the UMC, it is important to commence by comprehending what the social work profession entails. The International Federation for Social Workers (IFSW, 2014a:1) defines social work 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 knowledge systems; social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (IFSW, 2014).

Secondly, social work is defined to be a systematic way of helping individuals and groups towards better adaptation to society. The social worker works in collaboration with clients to help them develop their inner resources and mobilise if necessary, outside facilities for assistance to bring about change in their environment. Thus, social work contributes towards greater harmony in any given society. As in other professions, social work is based on specialized knowledge, certain principles and skills (IFSW, 2014). Notably, both definitions are relevant to this study, and would thus equally be utilised to clarify issues pertinent to the profession, more especially in caring for the UMC.

First, the definition incorporates the key elements of building resilience among individuals whilst the second one stresses the importance of social workers in

applying their knowledge and skills during the intervention processes. Based on the circumstances of the UMC in South Africa, re-building and empowering the UMC is of paramount importance; hence the significance of making use of professional knowledge.

According to the IFSW (2014) “the social work profession’s core mandates includes promoting social change, social development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people”. Added to the above is that social work is a practice profession and an academic discipline which recognises that interconnected historical, socio-economic, cultural, spatial, political and personal factors serve as opportunities and/or barriers to human wellbeing and development (IFSW, 2014).

Deducing from the definitions above, it is the role of the profession to intervene against structural barriers that contribute to the perpetuation of inequalities, discrimination, exploitation, and oppression of people. The development of critical consciousness through reflecting on structural sources of oppression and/or privilege, on the basis of criteria such as race, class, language, religion, gender, disability, culture and sexual orientation, and developing action strategies towards addressing structural and personal barriers, are central to emancipatory social work practice, where the goals are the empowerment and liberation of people. In solidarity with those who are disadvantaged, the profession strives to alleviate poverty, liberate the vulnerable and oppressed, and promote social inclusion and social cohesion. The overarching principles of social work are respect for the inherent worth and dignity of human beings, doing no harm, respect for diversity and upholding human rights and social justice (IFSW, 2014).

Across the globe, and in line with the above definitions, “the role of social workers is to protect and care for the vulnerable population groups such as the children from any harmful acts that might impinge on their social functioning in order to ensure their safety and well-being (Valtonen, 2007:257). Added to that, the social work profession has a generic focus on the functioning of people within their environment, where strong relationships or ties with social environment evolve from participation, involvement or engagement of individuals in meaningful and productive activities. In South Africa, the social work profession is primarily centred, amongst others, on the best interests of the child as enshrined in the Children’s Act No. 38 of 2005. It follows,

therefore, that any decision social workers make should be of greater benefit to the child than anybody else. However, with a lot of factors in play, this is far from being realistic, taking into account that, there are numerous challenges faced by social workers in South Africa as discussed below.

#### 2.4.1 Documentation of the UMC and limited resources

Often, the difficulty to access documentation for the UMC limits social workers' ability in helping the latter to access social services. This statement is based on the view that the starting point for any child to be recognised for welfare services is to have a valid form of identity documentation. Despite policies and legislation designed to protect the UMC in South Africa, UMC are still exposed to constant threats and challenges in accessing social services they are entitled to (UNICEF, 2015). This has increased frustrations among social workers who are rendering services to UMC; as they receive little or no support from the government. Social workers, thus, became caught up in the swirling tensions of the socio-political issues, seeing that their capacity to influence most of these issues is not taken seriously or is overlooked.

As argued, UMC are a diverse and extremely vulnerable population group requiring the services of social workers. As much as social workers understand that these children are in need of care, it could be deduced that a lack of proper documentation deters social workers from assisting such vulnerable group of children; as previously indicated.

The researcher assumes that the available resources may not be sufficient to deal with the volumes of UMC and those of South African children requiring social work services. This assumption is confirmed by the UNICEF's (2009) findings which identified the following as critical challenges faced by social workers in rendering and responding to the needs of UMC in South African:

- According to UNICEF, due to fear of arrest and mistrust (because of not having legal identity documentation), many migrant children tend to avoid contact with authorities or not try to access existing services and thereby complicating the service provision to them as well as their care and protection.
- UNICEF postulates that the network of temporary shelters and places of safety is

inadequate to deal with a caseload that has reached emergency proportions (UNICEF, 2009).

- In addition to this challenge, UNICEF also indicates with concern that the capacity of social worker's ability to do statutory work is already overstretched, as the burden of dealing with the consequences of HIV/AIDS and the high demand for foster care amongst South African children have already created huge strains on the system.

#### 2.4.2 Shortage of social workers in South Africa

South Africa has experienced a critical decrease of social workers (Department of Social Development, 2009a), resulting in social work being declared a "scarce skill". The research conducted by the Department of Labour (DoL) (2008) had previously also alluded to this point. Due to poor conditions of service, a large number of social workers leave the country to find jobs in first world countries or get absorbed in the corporate world.

The shortage of social workers contributes to a lack of capacity to implement policies and programmes that deal with social issues such as substance abuse, HIV and AIDS, chronic poverty, food insecurity and other related social conditions (DSD, 2009a). In addition, the current shortage impacts negatively on the social work aims of enhancing the social functioning and well-being of individuals and groups within society through empowerment, and promoting social change as provided by the definition of social work earlier on (National Association of Social Workers, 2008). Strengthening this argument further is the contention of Vermeulen (2008) in his assertion that such a shortage is not only a challenge for South Africa, but also for countries such as the USA and the UK. The report by DoL also indicated a brain drain of social workers to the abovementioned countries, as well as New Zealand and Australia. Given the current shortages and extensive demand for social workers, South Africa is in the midst of a serious challenge that needs to be tackled with a sense of urgency. The following scenarios paint the extent of the shortage of social workers:

South Africa currently needs 68, 498 social workers. However, there were only 16, 164 social workers registered with the South African Council for Social Services



Professions as at June 2013. This represented a 77% shortfall that could affect the implementation of crucial welfare services and social legislation. Due to this, Mike Waters of the Democratic Alliance in 2013 raised the following statistics in Parliament:

- 66 329 social workers are required to implement the Children's Act;
- A further 743 social workers are required for the Older Persons Act; and
- 1, 426 social workers for the Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Act.
- In 2016, South Africa had a shortage of 66 000 social workers, but has currently fewer than 18 000.

The findings of a study conducted by Magqibelo (2010) on experiences of UMC in South Africa, also revealed that 70% of the participants had never had access to social work services, and that 30% of the participants received marginal social work services from non-governmental organisations. Based on the above statistics, it can be concluded that the shortage of social workers negatively affects the provision of services to the UMC, and other vulnerable population groups in the country.

To respond to the shortage, the DSD introduced the following benefits as a way to retain social workers: car allowances, and bursaries for prospective social work students. As part of the plan to alleviate social work caseloads, the inception of auxiliary social workers to assist social workers in handling massive workloads of foster care cases came into effect.

#### 2.4.3 Implementation of the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 is a comprehensive piece of legislation with the purpose of affording children the necessary care, protection and assistance to ensure that they develop to their full potential (DSD, 2010). This Act was prepared after the realisation that the previous Child Care Act, 74 of 1983, was too narrow in focus and could not adequately live up to the required standards of the new South Africa (Sibanda, 2015), as it was premised on separate services for children, based on the colour of their skin; in other words, it was racially based, segregating blacks - including Indian and Coloured from the rest of the white population (Dawes, 2009). Although segregation laws were removed by an amendment in 1996, a more radical

change is required to give effect to the rights provided for the children in terms of section 28 of the 1996 Constitution (Dawes, 2009).

Developmental social welfare principles which are stipulated in the Children's Act 38 of 2005, which social workers are expected to apply when rendering services to children and their families, include participation, universal access, social integration, self-reliance, empowerment, appropriateness and accessibility (Department of Social Development, 2009b). As intimated, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 provides a wide scope to the rights and welfare of children and seeks to counter the narrow focus of the previous Child Care Act by aligning itself with the principles of developmental social welfare in the areas of giving effect to the constitutional rights of children (Constitution of South Africa, 1996). This was also intended to include their participation in decisions affecting them. It is worth noting that the children's Act does not exclude UMC since it refers to all children within SA borders.

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 defines a child as "*Any person under the age of 18*". This definition is broad, comprehensive and gives social workers authority to provide services to non-South African children who happen to be in the Republic registered as being in need of care and protection. This Act is developmental in nature due to its emphasis on early intervention and other proactive services. Unaccompanied foreign minors, according to South African policy guidelines, and in particular the said Act 38 of 2005, are by their very nature considered to be; "children in need of care and protection". In other words, when identified by authorities, they ought to be referred to the children's court within 48-72 hours by the social worker, for the court to undertake an inquiry into the child's circumstances (Lawyers for Human Rights-LHR, 2005). From the inquiry, the court will determine whether the child is indeed a child "in need of care and protection. This process also involves a finding by the social worker to confirm whether or not there is a possibility of reunification with the child's family or re-settlement in their country of origin (LHR, 2005).

Despite a clear articulation by the above author, together with confirmation of the right of the child to remain in South Africa, there are no mechanisms in place to ensure that the child is documented in a manner which reflects the permanency and severity of the conclusions reached (LHR, 2005). For all the years the child lives in South Africa, the only resource they will have is the children's court order acquired on their

being identified by social workers. As indicated, the lack of other legal documentation automatically marginalises the child from government benefits and other commonplace activities. This confirms that social workers fall short of implementing the Children's Act as far as UMC are concerned.

The following section discusses the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study.

## **2.5 Theoretical framework**

According to Swanson (2013), a theoretical framework consists of concepts and their definitions and reference to relevant scholarly literature. Swanson further emphasises that the theoretical framework strengthens the study in the sense that it connects the researcher to the existing body of knowledge. Creswell (2009: 206) also stresses that one of the crucial aspects to be considered in a study is a theoretical paradigm that is intended to guide the entire research design. It has already been indicated in the literature cited that UMC are in a vulnerable situation and susceptible to emotional and psychological distress throughout the whole process of migration (Harris, 2001). It is therefore worth noting that researchers such as Kohli (2006b) have begun to pay attention to the circumstances of UMC, mainly from a strengths-based perspective rather than focusing on the deficits and that attention is now being paid to the diverse manners in which they respond to the challenges of forced migration.

According to Ní Raghallaigh (2010), many of the UMC emerge as active survivors rather than passive victims. In support of Ní Raghallaigh's standpoint is IOM (2011) which postulates that academic and policy discussions tend to represent children as passive victims of exploitation, who are coerced to move and work in exploitative situations. Yet not all the UMC become victims of these volatile situations. Some bounce back. It is worth acknowledging that recent research and policy approaches to UMC are uncovering and addressing the varying migratory experiences using both the positive (strengths-based) and the negative approach (Kohli, 2006a; IOM, 2012). Bearing the above literature in mind, this study also aims to look at the UMC from a positive approach because every individual has some form of strength despite any adversities they might encounter. Therefore, this section provides different theoretical frameworks for understanding descriptive accounts of UMC and their migration experiences in South Africa.

The discussions below cover the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study, namely: the strengths based perspective, resilience and coping, Maslow's hierarchy of needs; and Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. The rationale for their choice is given as follows:

- The inclusion of the strength-based perspective is found to be relevant to this study due to its main focus being on the individual's strength. This framework has duly enlightened the researcher on multiple strengths of the UMC amid adversities they encounter in their new environments.
- The resilience theory helped the researcher in acknowledging the UMC's ability to survive in the afore-mentioned adversities as they try to adapt and cope in the new environments in the absence of any form of parental supervision, support and guidance.
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs is explored to obtain an understanding of whether the needs of the UMC are met as well as the implications of deprivation of such needs.
- Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory is considered due to its underlying assumptions that are relevant and appropriate to respond to the research problem of this study.

### 2.5.1 The strengths based approach

According to Hutchinson (2012), the problem of labelling refugees and the way in which the trauma discourse can categorise, oppress and diminish their resilience is of great concern. Furthermore, social work practitioners, working with refugees, to help them build their resilience, are cautioned to stay away from self-pity. Additionally, if practitioners continue to focus on the trauma aspects of refugees' lives, the existence of factors for building resilience in them will most likely be denied (Hutchinson, 2012). This researcher argues that in order to ensure that the social work practice focuses on the promotion of UMC's resilience, a practitioner should utilise a strengths based practice approach. From a social work perspective, such an approach enables social workers to identify UMC strengths and resources that will assist them in mobilising pathways to build each child's resilience. By so doing, the social worker will be fulfilling one of the important professional roles of being a "change agent" and fulfilling the obligations of the developmental paradigm;

based on the belief that people have to be empowered so that they can be self-sufficient. Empowering people simply means that the cycle of dependency on the government is fragmented, thus lessening the burden of the state.

Working from a strengths-based perspective is of paramount importance, especially in counteracting the social dysfunction of UMC within their environment. This assumption is confirmed by McCashen (2007) who argues that the strengths-based approach stands in opposition to a deficits approach, in that it does not focus on person's shortcomings, deficits or dysfunction, nor does it label or disempower a person. A strengths perspective draws on a "power with" (clients) approach rather than a "power over" (clients) approach – viewing clients as the experts on their own lives and situations (McCashen, 2007; Saleebey, 2006; Corcoran, 2012). Drawing on UMC strengths will enable the children to feel part of the decision making process in issues involving their lives rather than passive victims. For the fact that these children decided to leave their home countries to search for a better future in a foreign country where most of them know no one should be acknowledged as an enormous strength. This is a risky move that no faint hearted individual, either a child or an adult, can easily take. Since UMC are unique individuals, it is a constructive move as well for the social workers to try and identify each UMC's positive aspects. Notably, while some UMC might be good in sporting activities, others might be excellent in writing poetry, and so forth. Identifying these will enable the social workers to focus on each child's abilities and this will better prepare her or him for a future career.

According to Saleebey (2006), strengths based practices concentrate on the inherent strengths of individuals, families, groups and organisations, deploying peoples' personal strengths to aid their recovery and empowerment. In addition, the strengths based practices are empowering alternatives to traditional methods with individuals, groups or organisational work, as they refrain from allowing crippling, labelling and stigmatising language. Descriptions and pathology owned by persons, groups and organisations that suggest acceptance of their condition as hopeless or helpless to change are constructively challenged through strengths based practices. These strategies build and foster hope from within, by focusing and working with precedent successes. Furthermore, this strategy facilitates change by assisting one to look at what has worked, asking the questions: What does not work? And what might work

presently? This makes it important for facilitators and those desiring change to be integral to the process of change. Rather than focusing on an individual's problems, a strengths-based approach seeks to understand and develop the strengths and capabilities that can transform the lives of people in positive ways (Saleebey, 2014). The strengths based practices often creates awareness in individuals to encourage paying attention to their strengths, and thereby enabling them to develop a positive self-image.

According to Saleebey (1997), the strengths perspective demands the following: a different way of looking at individuals, families and communities, which seeks to develop in clients their natural abilities and capabilities. Furthermore, this approach rests on the belief that clients come for help already in possession of various competencies and resources that may be tapped into and that will improve their situation (Saleebey, 2006). This framework gives emphasis to discovering, affirming, and enhancing the capabilities, interests, knowledge, resources, goals, and objectives of individuals (Cederbaum and Klusaritz, 2009).

The strengths based perspective is composed of seven principles; however, for the purpose of this study, the researcher made use of only four, because of their relevance.

The following principles are explained: 1) every individual, group, family has strengths; (2) every environment is full of resources; (3) trauma, abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious, but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity; (4) assume that one does not know the upper limits of the capacity to grow and change and take individual, group, and community aspirations seriously. Each principle is briefly discussed below in relation to the phenomenon under discussion.

- **Principle 1: Every individual, group, family has strengths**

According to Saleebey (2014), this principle strongly emphasises that, it is essential for social workers to take cognisance of the fact that any person, community or family possesses some assets and strengths that the practitioner knows nothing about. The perspective further espouses that in order for the social worker to detect the clients' strengths, he or she must be genuinely interested in and respectful of clients' stories and the interpretive accounts of these. This principle relates well with this study, as it

enabled the researcher to mould and be attentive to her posture during the interviewing process so that she would not portray a position that could intimidate the participants. Bearing this on mind helped the researcher to be attentive to the UMC's assets and strong points without displaying any judgemental attitudes. From a practical point of view, identifying the relevant strengths of a child will enable the social worker to develop appropriate intervention strategies that will assist the UMC to cope better within their new environment, in the host country.

Moreover, the use of this principle will benefit and guide the social worker to identify the adaptive potentials of each UMC, attempting to examine their coping strategies as unique individuals. Identification of the children's strengths will help the social worker to guide the child in terms of the latter's best interests, for these are paramount. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 strengthens the constitutional principle, which emphasises the best interests of a child as being of supreme importance in every matter concerning such a child. For example, the social worker might find out that the child performs well in sporting activities, yet being poor in academic functioning. It is in this light that the social worker has to help the child grow the interest rather than forcing her/him to try and excel academically as well. That is to say, identifying the child's strengths will help empower and develop her/him with confidence. In working with UMC, it is very important for social workers to understand that young as they may be, they also have strengths, which need to be unearthed in order to empower them. Focussing on their strengths will provide the UMC with a sense of confidence and positive self-worth as well as clear future prospects.

- **Principle 2: Every environment is full of resources.**

Every environment contains potential resources to be used for the benefit of individuals. According to Saleebey (2014), this principle simply means that; no matter how harsh or poor the environment might be to its inhabitants, one can still find some useful resources in it. For example, irrespective of the harshness or poverty of the environment of the host country, certain children are able to obtain some form of menial jobs or employment to sustain themselves and their families. Some may be taken to places of safety, which is confirmation that such a place is a resource that may temporarily alleviate the problems or challenges faced by UMC in a foreign country. This might also mean that no matter how hostile the host country may be,

there are some benefits that the UMC can still enjoy and benefit from. As suggested, the fact that they are able to survive on their own daily, is an indication that there are some resources that they tap into from their environment which sustain them. This is confirmed by CoRmsa (2010) on musing that many of the children in the Save the Children and UNICEF studies reported that their decision to migrate was influenced by friends and neighbours, older siblings and other family members who normally display material benefits on returning home. This, according to the children, had a major impact on them in deciding to forge forward with life in a host country. With this principle in mind, the researcher recognises that no matter how deprived their environment might be, there are still some resources to sustain the UMC.

- **Principle 3: Trauma, abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity.**

This principle stipulates that any challenge encountered by an individual might also turn to be the source of opportunity. With reference to this study, it is worth noting that UMC are not perceived as passive victims of their situation, but active survivors despite the traumatic nature of the migration processes. In other words, they take the hostility of their environment in a positive light. This principle helps one to perceive and appreciate UMC as individuals who, through these trials, learn and develop their personal attributes which help them survive any circumstances. One is bound to argue that although the UMC are in a foreign country, they have, in a number of ways, showed their strengths and coping strategies and for this reason, this perspective is considered suitable for this study. This is further based on the notion that trauma, when dealt with positively, can cause an individual to emerge much stronger (Kohli, 2006b).

In a nutshell, the strengths based perspective is applicable to this study because it provides a framework within which the researcher is able to unpack and understand each UMC's coping strategies and capacities. According to Saleebey (2014), people become motivated when their strengths are supported instead of being asked what their problems are. According to Pulla (2014), the strength based practices, in simple terms, presents approaches that promotes resilience as opposed to dealing with deficits. As indicated, the strength based practices are gaining impetus globally in diverse fields of human services management, healthcare, education and training,



reminding one that all environments have resources and that in every society individual, and institutions are willing to assist each other to promote human wellbeing. The principles of caring and caretaking, nurturing and ensuring that members of our society and our organisations in turn become resilient and hopefully fall within the scope of the strengths approaches. The following notes explain the rationale why this approach was chosen for this study: simply put, it concentrates on the individual's inherent strengths. This enables social workers to concentrate only on the UMC strengths. Additionally, this approach refrains from labelling, crippling and stigmatising utterances, thereby allowing the social worker to refrain from such language. Descriptions and pathology owned by persons that suggest acceptance of their condition as hopeless or helpless to change are constructively challenged, through strength based practices. Strengths based strategies build and foster hope from within by focusing and working with precedent successes.

- **Principle 4: Assume that one does not know the upper limits of the capacity to grow and change and take individual, group, and community aspirations seriously.**

This principle is based on the premise that by holding high expectations of individuals and keeping an alliance with their hopes, values, aspirations, and visions, we make an obvious deal with their promises and possibilities. This basically means that if the social workers are able to have higher expectations of the UMC, they will be in a better position to help them reach their potential, making it relevant to the current study. Also in keeping with this principle, and in order to work collaboratively with clients, social workers ought to hold a basic view of humans as strong beings who are capable of many accomplishments (Gray and Kabadaki, 2005). That is to say, UMC are able to achieve many things in their lives despite their status and the adversities they might be confronted with.

While it is clear that UMC face myriads of challenges that require appropriate intervention procedures, it also remains equally important to note that these children have strengths and resilience, which social workers are obliged to identify and utilise to enhance the children's well-being. This perspective creates the need for social workers to build on people's capabilities that are often not tapped into. This places the focus on the clients' positive attributes rather than concentrating on the negative

aspects, which might not be of any help to the client in question.

Drawing from the above discussion, it is clear that the strengths' perspective enables social workers to approach clients with a positive attitude, which, in turn, enhances clients' motivation and gives them hope. This not only opens doors for clients' growth and change, but also increases effective coping. This perspective also enables clients, who often lack confidence and feel like failures when seeking services, to gain improved self-esteem. Furthermore, the strengths perspective makes it easier for social workers to uphold the value of individualisation, even when dealing with clients in the same situation or facing a similar problem (Gray and Kabadaki, 2005).

### 2.5.2 Resilience Theory

The term resilience is widely spoken about by politicians, communities, service providers and amongst the seemingly endless supply of experts (Wilson and Arvanitakis (2013:1). The concept is undergoing a renaissance of some sorts in contemporary Western societies, because individuals and their communities are experiencing increased and intensified levels of adversity and hardship, necessitating the accumulation and deployment of more resilience (Wilson and Arvanitakis, 2013: 1). Given the increasing prevalence of populations affected by war and other disasters, Wilson and Arvanitakis are certain that the efforts to better understand the accumulative dynamics of resilience are now, more than ever, a vital area of public and academic concern. According to these scholars, the concept of resilience represents a vital conceptual tool for responding to the complex challenges emerging from broad scale movements in climate change, migration patterns, pollution, economic integration and other consequences of globalisation. The relevance of the concept 'resilience' in this study stems from understanding the resilience of the UMC within the South African context. As impelled by this study, there is a need to understand how UMC survive in the South African soil without any parental love, guidance and support. The most interesting perspective here is how the children feel and think about their situation; as this is actually their truth of an experienced reality, and consequently also, their point of departure for how they navigate their way towards resilience.

Resilience is the capacity and dynamic process of adaptively overcoming stress and adversity while maintaining normal psychological and physical functioning, as pointed out by works of Rutter (2012), and those of Southwick and Charney (2012). According to Wilson (2012), resilience is defined as the cumulative build-up of particular kinds of knowledge, skills and capabilities as well as positive effects such as hope, which accumulate over time as transpersonal capacities for self-preservation and on-going growth. Similarly, Pulla (2013) confirms that resilience implies that an individual, group or community will recover from trauma and crisis, display competence and obtain reasonable outcomes, whilst using adversities for the purpose of growth. While it is indisputable that every individual experiences stressful and traumatic events during the course of life, one can acknowledge that resilience becomes a significant tool with which one has to be equipped in order to survive the harsh conditions. Ungar (2008:220) describes resilience as “competence under stress”, which is an apt description of what UMC display in dealing with the difficulties they face daily in South Africa.

Deducing a definition from the views of all the above scholars, resilience could be best described as the positive ability of an individual to effectively handle an array of challenges. Therefore, understanding how one can develop and enhance resilience is of considerable relevance in promoting coping mechanisms, but also in mitigating a maladaptive coping and stress response (Wu, Feder, Cohen, Kim, Calderon, Charney and Mathe, 2013). Hutchinson (2012) identified a number of factors which he believes challenges resilience in refugees, namely, language barriers, racism, discrimination and labelling or trauma stories. Usually, language is the major barrier to UMC seeing that the majority of them cannot speak the local languages and sometimes even English. Apart from the language barrier, discriminatory practices both in the school and community setting also pose a great challenge for the UMC. In this study, it is therefore very important to understand the concept of resilience and how it relates to the UMC, clearly articulating why the UMC should be looked at from a resilient perspective.

#### 2.5.2.1 Viewing UMC from a resilient perspective

It is important to understand why UMC should be looked at from such a perspective. Their identity as children, who arrived in a foreign country with no parental

supervision, requires one to look at them from a positive angle. The fact already noted that they left their home countries alone and navigated their way through sometimes dangerous routes to arrive in a totally new country is a clear indication of some resilience among the UMC. Indeed, there is considerable evidence of a number of UMC who have become prosperous in South Africa despite having undergone turmoil. For example, the true story of a Sudanese boy who went through all the terrifying migratory experiences (from Sudan via Zimbabwe), and finally landed on the South African soil, eventually managing to secure himself a Law degree from the University of South Africa (UNISA) and is a better person today (UNHCR, 2015). The Centre for Men and Women (CMW) shelter where the current study was conducted, also narrates true stories of two children who have done well in school, passed matric, and by 2014, were in Universities furthering their studies.

While the needs and wants of children might seem to be universal across the globe, UMC have been obliged to overcome multiple barriers to access basic needs that South African children have easy access to. Hence, some of them have been able to demonstrate, with no doubt, that they are survivors due to such success stories as described above. In a study of an unaccompanied Sudanese youth living in the United States, Goodman (2004) reported that, none of the participants displayed a sense of victimhood at the time of the interviews. Although individual narratives did reflect a sense of victimization and helplessness relating to the enormity of past trauma, the young participants viewed themselves primarily as survivors and agents of their own future” Goodman further stated that the tone of the refugee testimonials was not bitter, but instead, feelings of brotherliness, kindness, and hope prevailed. Such response patterns among refugees and trauma survivors indicate a similar resilience-related capacity to positively interpret and derive meaning from negative migration experiences and associated emotions.

Accordingly, by focusing on negative effects of migration on UMC, the social service providers may miss opportunities to better understand the positive role of negative factors in the social functioning of the UMC. This negative approach may distract the social service providers from highlighting only the pathologies and antisocial behaviours and compel them rather to focus on the UMC competencies. Arguing from a social work perspective, it is worth mentioning that, failing to perceive the

UMC strengths and competencies undermines the very basic social work principle that; “every person has the inherent worth and capacity to grow and change”, and that every person has strengths waiting to be unearthed (Hepworth, Rooney, Gottfried and Larsen, 2013: 81). The UMC have the potential and the capacity to better themselves in new environments. Sharing the same values as the resilient perspective is the paradigm shift from social welfare to developmental social work, which confirms that social workers must break away from being a nanny state and direct their focus to strengths and resilience of individuals within the communities. From this point of view, it is apparent that; social workers have a huge responsibility of helping UMC build their resilience so that they can be self-sufficient in the long run in order to lessen their reliance on the state.

Previous research findings, practice knowledge and conventional wisdom all confirm that UMC face multiple challenges in their lives. Irrespective of all these, as has been indicated, some emerge stronger than before since they have the capacity to bounce back (Ní Raghallaigh, 2010). Also of this view is Rutter (2003) in his assertion that many of these children survive and seem to cope with the multiple stressors they encounter. If Rutter’s view is proven to be true, it could be argued that UMC consider their challenges as an opportunity for growth which is associated with positive feelings of anticipated mastery and zestful struggle (Lazarus, 1986; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Depending on personal, environmental, and cultural differences, some people might experience a disruptive life issue as a stressor, whereas others experience the same issue as a challenge. Furthermore, El-Bushra and Fish (2004) posit that despite the challenges the children come across, many go on to thrive in their new country and surroundings. Ayers and Sandler (1999) argues that resilience and coping are intertwined concepts that should be discussed together. The link between these two concepts will therefore be considered below.

#### 2.5.2.2 Resilience and coping

Resilience and coping are closely related theoretical constructs. Ayers and Sandler (1999:18) who refers to them as “resilient coping” and “coping efficacy” define them to be the adaptive behaviour of children living with parents with pathology, whilst Papalia, Olds and Feldman (2009:349) simply refer to “children coping with stress” as “resilient children”. Kumpfer (1999:184) clarifies the relationship further in describing

adaptive processes as “unique short term or long term resilience or coping processes learned by the individual through gradual exposure to increasing challenges and stressors that help the individual to bounce back”. In other words, coping is the science of remarkable people, whereas resilience is the story of how remarkable people can be (Gray and Kabadaki, 2005). The relevance of this theory lies in the fact that the study is investigating the coping strategies used by UMC in their efforts to adapt in their new environment, South Africa.

In a similar manner, Pulla, Shatte and Warren (2013) associate the resilience of an individual, group or system with the ability to interact with and adapt to the present environment, coupled with the production of strengths to cope with the stress and adversity experienced within a crisis. Strengthening this point further are Wu, Feder and Mathe (2013) who maintain that the individual’s ability to ‘bounce back’ biologically, psychologically and socially solely relies on an understanding of risk factors which have the ability to hinder successful adaptation and maintenance of typical functioning within changing circumstances and environments. Such a theoretical stance compels the social workers to look at psychosocial factors that might hamper the UMC’s ability to function fully within their new environment.

To link the above theory and this study accordingly, the researcher has to identify the resilience of UMC within their new environment, bearing in mind that each UMC experiences the latter in unique ways. It is also worth noting that while there are some factors in the life of the UMC that might enable them to develop some resilience, certain elements may come to impede such efforts. For example, the absence of parental guidance means the absence of parental love which might result in emotional instability, poor psychological functioning, which in turn could hold back the child’s development.

However, an enabling environment with adequate love, enough food, shelter, safety and security will offer positive factors that could reinforce resilience within any individual child as well as the child’s opportunity to grow and learn. The researcher’s argument stems from the assumption that any favourable environment is likely to enable the UMC to respond in a socially desirable manner, despite the different environmental changes they encounter. This assumption is reinforced by Rende (2012), who also argues that developmental environment is a crucial contributor to

resilience. Nevertheless, the preceding argument serves as a warning that severe adverse events in childhood could negatively affect the development of stress response systems, in some cases causing long-lasting damage. In other words, any hostile adversities encountered by UMC may leave the child with both psychological and physical damages. A clear understanding of UMC resilience will help social workers to develop new social work interventions for enhancing resilience and coping, and alleviating complications in the social functioning of the UMC. For this reason, an understanding of factors that promote resilience and coping is of considerable relevance to the study. From the above literature, it could be deduced that resilience and coping as successful adaptations, rely on effective responsiveness to the environmental challenges as well as resistance to harmful stress effects.

Like resilience, coping is defined as comprising cognitive and behavioural responses to a stressful situation, as well as efforts to manage and overcome demands and critical events that pose a challenge, threat, harm, loss and/or adversity to a person (Lazarus, 1993). King (2008) covers the conceptualisation of coping by describing it as the individual's effort to manage stressful circumstances, expending effort to solve encountered problems and seeking to master or reduce stress. For the purposes of this study, coping is looked at from the UMC perspective of coping with life challenges in South Africa, closely describing and exploring strategies they use in threatening circumstances.

Adults deal with stress in various ways, from helpful strategies such as exercise, meditation and long walks, to harmful methods like drinking, smoking, and abusing drugs (Davies and Webb, 2000). One would therefore wonder how UMC deal with different challenges or stressors. Depending on their ages and temperaments, some children withdraw, sulk or zone out, while others act aggressively, talk back, and throw tantrums (Davies and Webb, 2000). Older children may turn to coping mechanisms that they copy from their peers such as smoking, drinking, fighting, being sexually active, eating disorders and delinquency.

Negative behaviours are often attempts to counter stress, suppress it and make it go away. From an experiential point of view, when children are stressed, their first impulse is to relieve discomfort since they do not sit down and rationally think about the best way to do it (Weiss and Berger, 2010). They often find relief by acting

impulsively or following the paths most readily available to them, the ones they see other children taking. Similarly, most young people simply do not know healthy and effective alternatives to dealing with problems and unless they are guided in positive ways to relieve and manage stress, they will choose the negative behaviours of their peers or the culture they absorb from the media. They will become caught up in a cycle of negative coping methods and risky behaviours such as using alcohol or drugs to relieve their stress. In these kind of situations, external interventions are required to support children's (UMC's) ability to cope with specific stressors they experience and to strengthen their resistances (Cohen and Lazarus, 2009).

In contrast, Folkman and Lazarus (1986) perceive coping strategies as constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person. Problem-focused coping strategies and emotion-focused strategies are two major coping strategies that individuals make use of, when they are faced with stressful or adverse situations (MacArthur and MacArthur, 1998). In making use of the problem-focused strategy, an individual takes the necessary steps to engage with and tackle the issues at hand, whereas in emotion-focused coping, the individual tends to focus on dealing with emotions regarding the situation, rather than attempting to change the reality of the circumstances. Emotion-focused coping also consists of turning to others and seeking social support, as well as turning to religious or spiritual sources of strength and support (Kassin, Fein and Markus, 2014). This type of coping could further include avoidance, which exists when an individual ignores the situation at hand; and avoids any interaction relating to solving the issues (Carver and Scheier, 1990).

A third strategy of coping referred to by Kassin et al. (2014) is proactive coping which implies upfront efforts to ward off or to change the onset of a crisis or taxing event. Social and spiritual resources could also be engaged in attempts towards proactive coping. Kivaria (2007) described coping mechanisms as responses of an individual, group or society to challenging situations while, according to MacArthur and MacArthur (1998), a coping strategy is a specific effort, both behavioural and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimise stressful events. While some coping mechanisms may be brought into play by a stress factor,



others may be an intensification of already internalised behavioural patterns (Davies, 1993). For the purposes of this study, the concept of coping strategies/mechanisms is considered as closely related to the idea of survival and dealing with threats. It is a key concept of emergency management, which refers to the capacity to respond to and recover from something stressful over which one has very little control (Ager, 1999). The more one is vulnerable, the less one has the capacity to cope and the more one tends to adopt negative coping mechanisms (Ager, 1999). Activities such as migration, begging, child labour, violence and prostitution have been identified as negative coping mechanisms (Eriksen et al., 2005).

The qualitative research undertaken by Ní Raghallaigh and Gillian (2010), on the active survival of UMC in Ireland, found that most of the unaccompanied foreign children coped by adopting a positive outlook by focusing on positive aspects of their situation, expressing appreciation for the good things in their lives and being optimistic about the future. The children are said to have compared their current situation in a foreign country to the circumstances of the countries of their origin, and as a result, their sense of hope assisted them to cope with their present life circumstances, leading to feelings of resilience (Eriksen et al., 2005). Suppressing emotions and seeking distraction is another coping strategy that these children are said to have utilised (Ní Raghallaigh and Gillian, 2010). Certain children found it helpful to be silent about the past and present circumstances because thinking about them provoked upsetting experiences. Suppression was thus considered by them to be a helpful way of dealing and coping with everyday challenges. Yet another functional strategy found in this research was that some children tried to always be in the company of their peers and to keep one another busy by focusing on mostly positive activities (Ní Raghallaigh and Gillian, 2010).

In summary, because of the UMC foreign status in South Africa, there is no doubt that they will always face a series of traumas, challenges and painful experiences. One will agree that for them to meet these challenges, they need to develop specific survival strategies, capacities and coping mechanisms. This is based on the assumption that the propensity of each child to survive in a foreign country is based on his or her strengths, while failure to develop all these may well hinder the social functioning of the child. It is critical to provide children with a loving, healthy and

supportive environment as they grow up, to avoid exposing them to repeated unmanageable stress, and to offer them chances to embrace and conquer life challenges, so as to develop mastery of critical life stressors and acquire “stress inoculation” (Southwick and Charney, 2012).

### 2.5.3 Maslow’s hierarchy of needs

In this section of the study, the application of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs has relevance to analyse issues pertaining to the challenges, experiences and coping strategies of UMC in South Africa. The fact that the Children’s Act, 38 of 2005, classifies UMC as children in need of care is reason enough to classify them as requiring complete parental guidance, care and support, which is in line with this hierarchy. It is depicted as a pyramid, with more basic needs at the base and more complex needs at the peak. Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy includes five motivational needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid, listed below:

- Biological and physiological needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sleep.
- Safety needs - protection from bad elements, security, order, law, stability.
- Love and belongingness needs - friendship, intimacy, affection and love - from work group, family, friends, romantic relationships.
- Esteem needs - achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect, respect for and from others.
- Self-Actualisation needs - realising personal potential, self-fulfilment, personal growth and peak experiences. (See the following figure: 2)



**Figure 2: Hierarchy of needs adapted from Maslow (1943).**

Maslow (1943) is of the view that every individual is motivated to achieve certain needs in their life experiences, further clarifying that when one need is fulfilled, a person becomes motivated to fulfil the next one, and so on. Maslow designed a five-stage model which is divided into basic or deficiency needs (e.g. physiological, safety, love, and esteem) and growth needs (self-actualization). The physiological needs are identified by Maslow as the most essential needs in the hierarchy, followed by the safety needs which centre mainly on issues of protection, which means an individual cannot feel safe before attaining complete satisfaction as regards the physiological needs.

In essence, an individual is compelled to fulfil the lower level basic needs before progressing on to meet higher-level growth needs. Once these needs have been reasonably satisfied, one may be able to reach the highest level, termed self-actualisation. According to Maslow (ibid), every individual is capable of moving up the hierarchy towards this level, and has the desire to do so. However, he notes that progress is often disrupted by failure to meet the lower level needs. This assertion is

strengthened by the study conducted by the Department of Education on school-going children which revealed that children who go to school hungry obtain poor academic results as compared to those who are well fed. The significance of physiological needs as stipulated by Maslow is explained below.

#### 2.5.3.1 Physiological needs

The following needs: air, water, clothing, food and shelter are considered important for human survival (Maslow, 1943). They are basic since the body craves constantly for food, liquid, sleep, oxygen, sex, freedom of movement, and a moderate temperature. When any of these are in short supply, a distressing tension of hunger, thirst, fatigue, and shortness of breath emanates (Maslow, 1943). If one associates these physiological needs with the UMC, it is evident that they also require air, water, clothing, food and shelter; and that a shortage of any of these will ultimately impede the social functioning of each one of them. It is important to note with concern though, that deprivation of these needs might have severe negative impact on the UMC's physical and psychological functioning. In general, when one is hungry, for instance, concentration levels are at stake based on the reasoning that food provides the body with some energy to function efficiently. It therefore goes without saying that Chiguvare's assertion that food, health and shelter are of paramount importance to a child's physical, mental and emotional development is accurate (Chiguvare, 2011). Having discussed the challenges faced by UMC in host countries, it becomes obvious that the needs mentioned above are crucial.

Due to lack of food provisions in the shelters, UMC often go for days without food, thereby compelling them to become involved in menial jobs such as car washing in the streets, although sometimes these kind of jobs are difficult to come by (Fritch et al., 2010). Because of lack of food and proper sleep, illnesses may result where medical care may be needed. As stated by IOM (2011), access to health services is not easily available due to the fact that the majority of UMC avoid using health facilities for fear of being identified for not having lawful documentation.

The IOM, Save the Children, UNICEF and faith based organisations have committed themselves to help in caring for the UMC, with the objective to meet their physiological needs. However, the study conducted by Chiguvare (2011) on UMC

revealed that the major challenge facing the children in shelters or places of safety is the shortage of food. This is evidenced with the finding that 98% of the UMC opted to move out from the shelters to the streets where they could find piece-jobs to make a living. Constant shortage of food in these shelters has been identified as the major pushing factor (Chiguvare, 2011). Similarly, the study conducted by De Lannoy, Swartz, Lake and Smith (2015) revealed that South Africa records very high rates of child poverty with 54% of children living below the lower poverty line. It is thus acknowledged that as much as UMC suffer from hunger, the root of the matter is that poverty is a dire challenge to South Africa.

While the CWM shelter makes an effort to keep up the health and well-being of the UMC, the researcher observed that the shelter is not in good condition: for example, the sewage system is malfunctioning, the ablution facilities broken, thus children compelled to use buckets to shower themselves. What is apparent is that, although there is evidence of different organisations working in liaison with the shelter, to fulfil the physiological needs, the children still struggle to gain access to food because of financial constraints. During the interview sessions, children mentioned that; sometimes they only have one meal per day, which is supper, thus meaning that they skip the most important meal of the day which is breakfast. They also revealed that at times the kitchen is closed for two weeks because there will be no food to serve, and; thus opening up the kitchen would be of no purpose. While Maslow in his hierarchy of needs put the emphasis on the importance of the physiological needs, there is no doubt that this is often a pipedream for the UMC. Although South Africa's constitution and laws extend the same protection to the UMC, as to local children, in practice the UMC have to face immense bureaucratic hurdles to attain such services, thus making it impossible to fulfil their physiological needs.

From Maslow's perspective, it is clear that when an individual's physiological needs are unfulfilled, a huge challenge arises for an individual to attain the safety needs. For example, the UMC who do not know where the next meal will come from are unlikely to be concerned with security or a safe environment, based on the reasoning that the need to obtain food and shelter daily becomes the most significant concern. UMC who leave the shelter because of hardship oftentimes live in hazardous environments such as sleeping under bridges, in front of shops and any other open spaces. While

living under such volatile circumstances, their most prominent need thus becomes the attainability of food and water first.

Based on the above discussions it is apparent that Maslow's assumption that the physiological needs take precedence over safety needs is true and need to be accepted as such. In this instance, the fact that UMC's physiological needs are difficult to meet foreshadows the difficulties of achieving the next level of needs, which concern safety and security.

#### 2.5.3.2 Safety and security

Children are considered the most vulnerable population group locally and globally. If this is accurate, it can be concluded that UMC are even more vulnerable because of being alone in a foreign country. For this reason, they have no one else to turn to for assistance except for relying on friends and shelters accommodating them. The fact of being alone, with no supervision or support exposes the UMC to issues of danger and lack of security. They are not safe if they lack proper accommodation. They are in danger of being arrested and deported back to the same conditions they ran away from. They are also in danger, if they were to be sleeping in overcrowded shelters with adults. Because of hardships, girl children may opt to engage in compromising relationships with older men as a coping strategy to escape their unfortunate situations, thereby exposing themselves to dangers of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Undoubtedly, this move threatens their safety and security needs as children.

Although some of the UMC may feel safe at the shelters as compared to living in the streets, there are still a number of aspects that might challenge their safety and security within the borders of South Africa, such as not feeling free to walk in the streets since they are not legally in the country. For this reason, UMC constantly live in fear of being caught by the police, with a high possibility of being deported to their countries of origin, most likely triggering feelings of insecurity. Furthermore, it has been mentioned that, because of insufficient food in the shelters, some children go foraging for food in the street. This exposes them to all forms of danger (begging and stealing), threatening their sense of safety and freedom of movement. Failure to address this essential need could be seen as; cultivating rebelliousness among them,

which may result in enticing them to engage in criminal activities. Taking all this into consideration, one would agree that the degree of safety for these children remains questionable.

#### 2.5.3.3 Love and belonging

Love and belonging concern friendship, intimacy, affection and love, from work group, family, friends, romantic relationships, etc. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, love and belonging are among the major needs that influences better human behaviour. The need for love and belonging lies at the centre of his pyramid and constitutes part of the social needs. While Maslow suggested that these needs may be less important than the physiological and safety needs, he believes that the need for belonging encourages individuals to experience companionship and acceptance through family, friends, and other relationships (Maslow, 1943).

With reference to this study, it is believed that love and belongingness are an important aspect in the growth and development of UMC. The absence of any of these two critical aspects might hamper the child's psychosocial development. Because the UMC left their friends, relatives and parents in their countries of origin, they become confronted by the huge responsibility of finding new attachments amongst their peers, teachers, caregivers and or social workers who are not always available to them. Developing new ways of adapting and fitting into a new group or family structure may not be an easy process. The family is the most significant institution where initial socialisation of any child takes place. It is during this process that the child is taught societal norms and values and how to live within a given society. Many of the UMC, by virtue of being unaccompanied do not have this luxury as they grow up in the absence of their family culture and traditions. The absence of parental love, care and guidance might result in numerous emotional anxieties being triggered, thereby challenging their psychological functioning.

The UMC housed in shelters are taken care of by the caregivers. However, there is a strong possibility that the latter may not be able to provide them with sufficient love and attachment due to the fact that they are short-staffed and underpaid. As already intimated, the shortage of social workers is another obstacle that deters the provisioning of quality services to UMC. According to Amit (2011) social workers are

not succeeding in maintaining constant contact with the UMC due to staff shortages and lack of resources. Amit also adds that most of the UMC stayed in the shelter for too long, without having any contact with the social workers or knowing what would happen to them in future. It is important for every UMC to have close contact with social workers upon their arrival in any refugee centre. This affords the social worker allotted an opportunity to understand any urgent issues that the child may need to be assisted with. For instance, some children might have been severely traumatised or raped along their migratory route. Such children need urgent attention and constant monitoring to curb further emotional discomfort and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Inferring this from Maslow's theory, one may argue that close relationships in family systems provide the UMC with a secure base that enables them to move to the next level in the hierarchy. If this is omitted, the children are likely to underperform in all spheres of life, leading to feelings of isolation. Families are an important institution in every child's life and every child should belong to a family where love and care is provided unconditionally, for them to move to the next level of need: that of self-esteem. Strengthening this viewpoint is UNHCR (2013) which postulates that children do not develop in isolation. The family is essential in providing the sense of self-esteem, security and identity that is necessary for the child to successfully learn from, and fit into, the rest of the society.

The uprooting, disruption and insecurity inherent in refugee situations can harm children's physical, intellectual, psychological, cultural and social development. These factors are severely compounded when, in addition, children suffer or witness the torture or murder of family members or other forms of abuse or violence. Notably, the emotional well-being of children is influenced by the protection and care they receive from their families and communities. The former are affected not only by what happens to them, but by what they are deprived of, for example, missing out on developmental essentials such as play and school (source).

Applying the critical thinking skills to the UMC situation, may be very difficult for them to reach the next level of self-esteem as discussed hereunder.



#### 2.5.3.4 Esteem needs

Esteem needs concern being accepted and valued by others. They include achievements, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, and self-respect, respect for and from others.

From the outset, any child who lacks love and a sense of belonging often find it difficult to develop a sense of self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others. Poor self-esteem has an impact on how other people accept or value one's friendship. This situates UMC at the lowest level of this need. The theory emphasises that after the first three needs have been satisfied, esteem needs become increasingly important. These include the need for matters that reflect on the self, personal worth, social recognition, and accomplishment. At this point, it becomes increasingly important to gain the respect and appreciation of others. People have a need to accomplish things and then have their efforts recognised. Activities such as going to school, playing a sport, enjoying a hobby, help to fulfil and satisfy this need, and thus enhance one's confidence. Failing to gain social recognition, personal worth and accomplishments, could lead to feelings of failure or inferiority (Maslow, 1943). This is often the case with UMC.

According to Germain (1994), self-esteem is the most important part of one's self-concept as it represents the extent to which one feels competent, respected and worthy, at the same time influencing human thinking and behaviour. A high level of self-esteem is intrinsically satisfying and pleasurable especially in childhood and adolescence, but continues to develop and even to change in adulthood. Low self-esteem reflects a lack of respect for oneself as well as the feeling that one is inadequate, inferior, unlovable, and unworthy. It is often associated with depression (Gitterman and Germain, 2008).

Self-esteem can only develop when one is valued and accepted by others. This aspect of Maslow's needs relates to the issue of social integration (Maslow, 1943). UMC are encouraged to socially integrate with local communities in their countries of destination, with the aim of enhancing their language skills as well as their grasp of the new community's norms and values. In the case of UMC, this should take place when other children accept them as worthy individuals in the society. By getting

involved and communicating with their peers at school and in the community, they are likely to gain self-worth. However, because of the xenophobic attacks that besieged South Africa in the recent past, involvement and communication at community levels have been greatly curtailed. This evokes the following question posed by Tawodzera (2011): “how does a child develop self-esteem when s/he lives in fear of being attacked and more often discriminated against in a school setting?”

#### 2.5.3.5 Self-actualisation

Self-actualisation is about realising personal potential, self-fulfilment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences. Often, a child who struggles with issues of self-esteem may suffer or struggle to reach the expected levels of self-actualisation. The concept itself refers to the need for personal growth and development throughout one's life. According to Maslow, this is the highest level of the hierarchy of needs. Self-actualising people are self-aware, concerned with personal growth, less concerned with the opinions of others, and are interested in fulfilling their potential (Maslow, 1943). Maslow, as indicated, made it clear that each stage of need has to be fulfilled before an individual moves to the next level of need. However, failure to achieve that satisfaction means that the chances of reaching the point of self-actualisation become impossible.

Maslow should be acknowledged for noting that only one in a hundred people become fully self-actualised because, generally, society rewards motivation primarily based on self-esteem, love and other social needs. While it is challenging for anybody to achieve self-actualisation, one could imagine how difficult it is for an UMC to attain this maturity level. Moreover, that the UMC rely on other people to meet their basic needs. However, Maslow's theory fall-short to clarify how the satisfaction of all the needs should be met. What the researcher also disagrees with is his assumption that a person has to meet every need on the hierarchy before reaching the point of self-actualisation, which in all fairness, is not possible.

Based on the above discussions, one would agree that it is therefore vital for social workers to first understand challenges likely to be encountered by the UMC, within their environment, if they are to effectively address their needs. Howsoever, for this study, Maslow's theory of needs is of great significance in understanding UMC, for

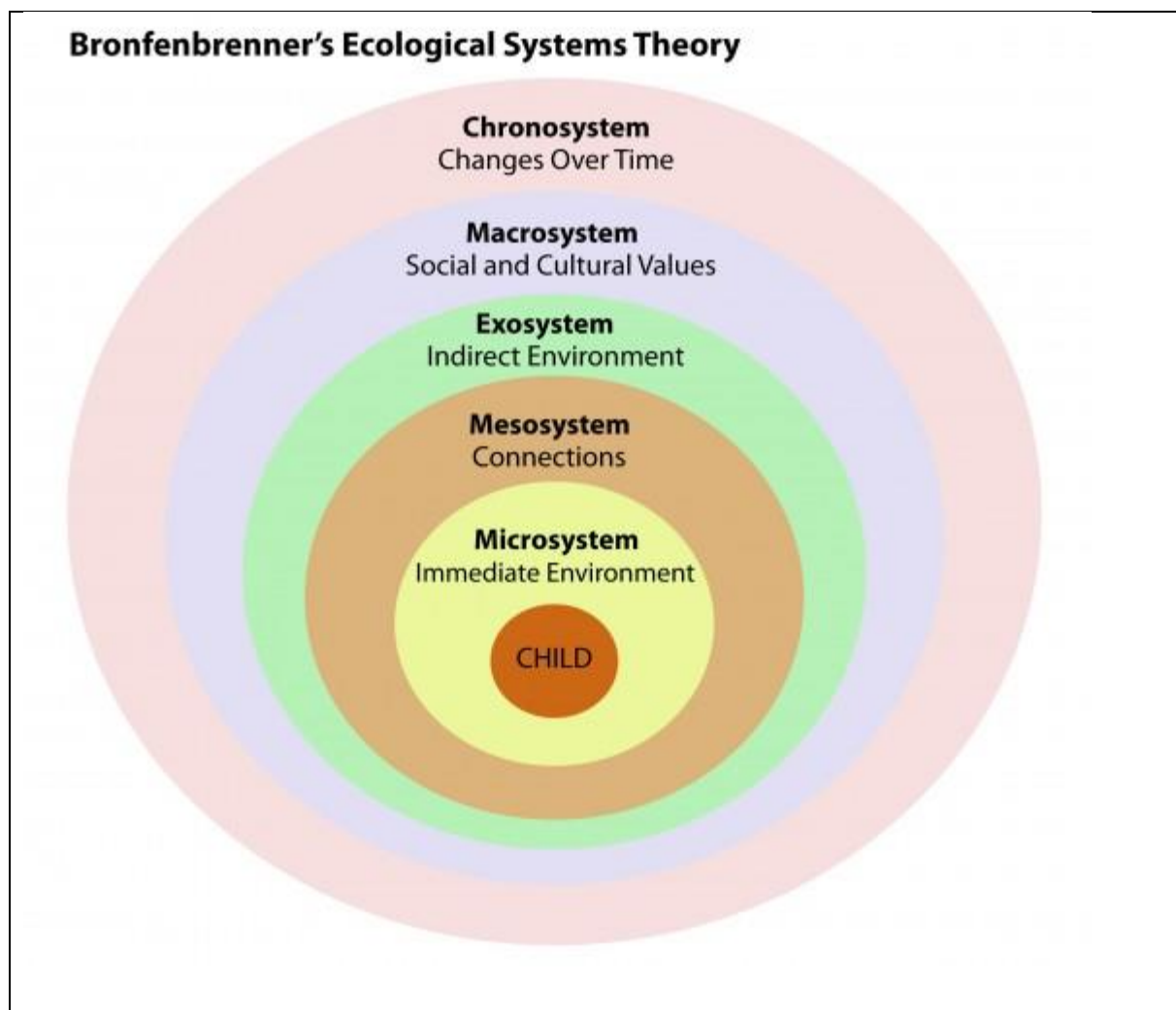
reasons already adduced. This view is reinforced by Onchwari and Keengwe (2008) who argue that many immigrants come from developing countries with no financial resources to help them survive in the new land. As a result, they struggle to get basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, which are extremely important (Onchwari et al., 2008).

Taking into account the circumstance of the UMC, resilience becomes an important element in order to survive in a foreign country. The following section will thus discuss ecological systems theory in relation to the UMC.

#### 2.5.4 Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory was also considered appropriate for this study due to its core beliefs found suitable to respond to the needs of the UMC. For example, this theory rests on the belief that a child's development occurs within an interactive system of nested influences: between the child and the environment. This theory clearly depicts how a child's development could be affected by other systems within his or her environment; and how it is affected by their social relationships and the world around them. This belief is important for this study, seeing that there are numerous factors that have an impact on the social functioning, growth and development of the UMC within the South African context.

Bronfenbrenner believe that, a child's development is affected by everything in their surrounding environment. He therefore, illustratively divided the person's environment into five different layers: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. All these environments simultaneously play various roles in the child's development, as illustrated below



**Figure 3: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory maintains that a child does not exist in isolation since each system interacts with other systems. Each layer explains how a child interacts, reacts or is influenced by each environment. These are listed from the most intimate to the broadest. Thus, a stronger interaction of these layers will result in a stronger effect on the UMC.

Below follows brief explications of Bronfenbrenner's environmental layers, and their relevancy to the study and its discussions of the UMC phenomenon.

#### 2.5.4.1 Microsystem

The microsystem is composed of the child's most immediate environment such as family, peers, caregivers and the school (Rathus, 2006). According to Bronfenbrenner, this is the most influential level of the ecological system's theory. Broadly speaking, a family is an important unit for any growing child, because this is

where nurturing and grooming of the child takes place. In this study the caregivers/social workers who are employed to look after the UMC at the shelters turn out to be part of the immediate environment; as they adopt and play the role and responsibilities of a family. In this study, the microsystem is explored to investigate the experiences and challenges faced by UMC within it. Any difficulties within the said system could seriously affect the child's growth and developmental process. For example, the UMC have been separated from their families due to migration which could have triggered other problematic issues for the child such as anger, other psychological issues and problematic behaviours, due to the lack in parental guidance.

#### 2.5.4.2 Mesosystem

The next level in ecological systems theory is the mesosystem. This consists of the interactions between different parts of a person's microsystem. The mesosystem is the place where a person's individual microsystems do not function independently, but are interconnected and exert influence upon one another. These interactions have an indirect impact on the individual. An example would be the relationship between UMC and the caregivers and teachers at school. In this case, the caregivers take an active role in the UMC's education, such as attending parent/teacher meetings. This has a positive impact on the UMC's academic development, because the different elements of his/her microsystem are working together for his/her personal benefit. Conversely, the said development could be affected in a negative way if different elements of the microsystem were to work against each other (Rathus, 2006). In essence, the mesosystem describes how different aspects of the child's microsystem work together to strengthen the child's overall growth and development.

#### 2.5.4.3 Exosystem

The exosystem refers to a setting that does not involve persons as active participants, but still affects them. This includes decisions that have a bearing on persons, without them being participants in the decision-making process. A typical example could be that of UMC, affected by unilateral decisions by the state not to provide them with local ID documents. In such an instance, the UMC have no voice in matters and subsequent decisions that affect them. However, taking away the agency of decision

making from children often enable adults to make proper decisions in the best interest of their charges, although sometimes such an exercise thrusts them into vulnerability as structures are put in places which sometimes act in opposition to their interests (Nyuke, 2014).

Bronfenbrenner's final level, as cited by Rathus (2006), is the macrosystem. Bray, Gooskens, Khan, Moses, and Seekings (2010) describe this system as the one that involves dominant social and economic structures as well as values, beliefs and practices that influence all other social systems. The macrosystem includes issues such as the relative freedoms permitted by the national government, cultural values, wars and the economy just to mention a few. The above mentioned system can affect a child either positively or negatively.

## **2.6 DSD Guidelines for UMC and separated children in South Africa**

In South Africa, as intimated, the state has a direct responsibility to provide care and protection for all children who do not have family care, including UMC. The DSD specifically plays a pivotal role in providing social services for all the children in South Africa. Therefore, social workers are duty bound to ascertain that the rights of all children in South Africa, including UMC, are met without any compromise. The right to care and protection is important for children because it implies the provision of all services necessary for their welfare.

Delving deeper into the issue of guidelines, it is worth mentioning that the development of guidelines is not a new thing. In 1997, the UN guidelines were developed in terms of the premise of protecting and caring for all unaccompanied children seeking refuge in other countries. Arguably, the international concern regarding the rights of children has been highlighted by the development of the UN guidelines (1997). Similarly, in 2009, South Africa's Department of Social Development also developed and released guidelines for separated and unaccompanied migrant children. Profoundly, both guidelines were developed out of recognition of the need to care and protect unaccompanied migrant children in a specific host country. However, despite such endeavours, the various studies on UMC reveal that the plight of such children remains unaddressed, owing to the premise that they continue to suffer from different forms of neglect and abuse. The

guidelines are assumed to be consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, The Bill of Rights of the Constitution of South Africa (1996), Children's Act No 38 of 2005, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child respectively.

While the two guidelines have various articulations in common - caring and protection of UMC - they seem to differ in the sense that the UN guidelines vehemently stress the importance of creating durable solutions, and buttressing the livelihoods of this vulnerable population group. However, for the purpose of this study, the central focus is on the current DSD guidelines: their strengths and weaknesses as well as the endeavour to fill in the existing gaps.

## **2.7 Purpose of the DSD Guidelines**

According to DSD, the Guidelines were developed in terms of the following reasoning: the state's recognition of the increasing number and vulnerability of separated and unaccompanied foreign children in South Africa; discrimination and difficulties faced by these children in accessing basic services, and exposure to high risk of violence, exploitation and abuse; and the challenges faced by social services in providing care and protection to these children (DSD, 2009a). The motive behind the development of the guidelines was to aid social workers rendering services to UMC on how to better take care and protect unaccompanied and separated children in SA.

Contained in the existing guidelines are the service standards to be adhered to by social workers servicing UMC such as:

- There will be no discrimination in terms of access to social services and protective measures between a foreign and South African child.
- All unaccompanied children will have immediate access to temporary safe care facilities.
- A social worker (after receiving the notification) will investigate the matter within 72 hours, and conduct a full assessment.
- All unaccompanied children in need of care and protection will be subject to a Warrant to Remove and Place Child in Place of Safety and a Medical

#### Report/Age Assessment.

- Family tracing procedures will begin upon intake of the child without delay
- All children who cannot be immediately reunified with their families or communities of origin will appear before a Children's Court within 90 days of intake.
- Alternative care arrangements will promote and respect links with the child's community of origin.

Despite the aforementioned defined service standards, the guidelines have proven to have limitations that need to be attended to in order to come up with procedures that will clearly direct social workers in dealing with the UMC.

The following section outlines the identified limitations:

- According to DSD, these Guidelines were developed with an aim to assist the staff of the Department of Social Development in fulfilling their obligations with regard to separated and unaccompanied registered foreign children in South Africa. An identified gap within this articulation is the notion that the guidelines aim to assist staff members. The guidelines do not specifically mention anything about assisting the social workers. In the researcher's view, a staff member could refer to anybody employed within the DSD. Therefore, what is needed are guidelines specifically designed to assist social workers, and not the general staff as prescribed throughout the country, who are working with UMC. It is for this reason that this study sought to develop guidelines meant specifically for social workers country-wide, including those employed by NGOs, CBOs and FBOs.
- The guidelines specify that identification of an unaccompanied or separated child can be undertaken by anyone, for example: the police, immigration officials, social workers, NGOs or community members. In addition to this, it is stated that all role players potentially in contact with unaccompanied children should be briefed on procedures to be followed. However, these guidelines are silent on who exactly is designated to brief them, on what aspects they are supposed to be briefed on and which protocols are to be followed.
- The local Provincial DSD will be notified of each case, at latest by the end of



business on the next day. The Department will in turn assign a social worker who will accompany the child throughout the process. While the researcher takes cognisance of the role assigned to the social worker, in this case, to take the child through the prescribed steps, the thrust of the matter is that there is no specificity and no clear clarification of those declared steps and processes. In essence, neither steps nor processes are outlined. This makes it difficult for social workers to follow due processes.

- Each child is supposed to be assessed by a social worker within 72 hours upon receiving notification. The researcher is of the opinion that 72 hours is too long for a child who has been greatly exposed to traumatic conditions. Such children need immediate debriefing to alleviate stress. Keeping the child for this long may also create more anxiety and fear. Children should be taken for debriefing, HIV AIDS counselling, psychosocial care, and anger management immediately upon identification.
- Under the assessment and documentation section of the guidelines, it is recommended that the child (UMC) should immediately be registered and documented upon identification. The challenge in this regard is that processes and procedures for registration and documentation need to be specified. For example, where the child needs to be taken to for registration. Under which classification criteria should the child be documented? Whether such children should be documented as illegal immigrants, asylum seekers, or just foreign children in need of care.
- The documented evidence is that many UMC are never documented until they exit the child protection system (Willie and Mfubu, 2016; Mboyisa, 2014). Furthermore, evidence has it that some children are not being schooled due to the lack of documentation (Magqibelo, 2010).
- The guidelines further indicate that, during assessment, the compilation of key personal data and further information should be recorded in order to meet specific needs of the child, and to make future plans. While it is good for social workers to have all the relevant information, the existing guidelines do not mention the exact nature of future plans or any durable solutions relating to the UMC. Nothing is said about how these children will be helped going forward, and there are no plans for exit strategy identified.

- The guidelines also specify that if the child appears to qualify for refugee status, a social worker must assist the child in applying for asylum. While the guideline acknowledges the need for such asylum procedures to apply, for those who qualify, it nevertheless falls short to clarify how children who do not qualify for asylum and dispensation would be helped. Furthermore, they do not explain what measures could be put in place to assist those in doubt. The document only looks at one group of children whilst ignoring the group that does not qualify.
- The length of stay in temporary safe care should not exceed 90 days. What remains unclear and unanswered is what happens to a 13-year-old child after 90 days of identification and registration. Could such a child qualify to be placed in foster care? If the answer is a yes, what happens when the child turns 18?

## **2.8 Conclusion**

Based on the above identified weaknesses, the researcher came to the conclusion that the existing guidelines are good on paper, progressive by nature, rights orientated, very inclusive, but that, when it comes to practical implementation, there are gaps that need to be filled. Moreover, these guidelines are found not formidable to assist in creating sustainable strategies and solutions to address the challenges encountered by unaccompanied children in this country. This notion is premised on the literature evidence which indicates that the unfavourable plight of the UMC still persists despite the existence of the DSD guidelines. While the latter pointed to quite a number of issues that could be beneficial for the UMC if the guidelines are effected, the reality is that, the existing guidelines lack a clear set of protocols on how social workers could enhance the social functioning of the UMC. Basically, the guidelines emerged not responsive to the needs of the UMC in many ways, as revealed in this review.

# CHAPTER THREE

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents detailed discussions of the research methodology and design. The main focus being on the qualitative research design and the data collection methods/techniques adopted. The discussions also includes: the population sampling procedures, that is, site selection and the selection of participants. Other aspects considered, in the chapter, include: issues of data verification, ethical considerations as well as data analysis.

### 3.2 Research methodology

The term “research methodology” refers to methods, techniques, and procedures utilised to implement the research design and its underlying principles and assumptions (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:647). Creswell (2009:153) is also of the view that research methodology denotes the procedural rules for the evaluation of research claims and the validation of the knowledge gathered, whilst the research design functions as the research blueprint. In this study, the above explanations are interpreted as meaning that the research methodology is about methodological process and rules used by a researcher to engage in any research inquiry. This also serves to imply that research methodology is not a once off event and, hence, a procedural process with certain steps to be adhered to by the researcher. Thus, what follows are descriptions of the nature of the qualitative approach and its data gathering methods.

### 3.3 Qualitative approach

Based on its multiple values, a qualitative research design and its data collection methods were considered appropriate and thus adopted by this study. Moreover, that it is an approach that makes it possible, for the researcher, to obtain an in-depth understanding of human behaviour in their natural setting, as well as reasons that govern such behaviour (Maree and Van der Westhuizen, 2009). Denzin and Lincoln

(2007) describe qualitative research as a situational activity, which locates the observer within the practical context, and encompassing interpretative material practices that make the world understandable. Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state that qualitative research is characterized by the study of phenomena in their natural settings and the interpretation of these phenomena in terms of the meanings which people attach to them. Merriam (2009:13) concurs that qualitative researchers are interested in learning how people experience and interact with their social worlds and the meanings that these social worlds have for them. It is based on these multiple advantages that qualitative approach was adopted for this study, as the researcher aims to explore the views of participants within their natural settings.

Thus, the qualitative research approach was considered appropriate based on the following characteristics.

- **Qualitative approach as naturalistic**

Qualitative research adopts a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context (real world settings), and the researcher does not manipulate the phenomenon of interest (Maree and Van der Westhuizen, 2009:5). Similarly, Patton (2002) posits that the naturalistic approach seeks to study real-world situations as they unfold naturally in the absence of manipulative controlling factors. In light of the above discussion, one would argue that, unlike quantitative research which is usually conducted in controlled settings, qualitative research studies people in their actual life situations. For example, this study was conducted in a natural environment, which is the place of safety (shelter) where the UMC live and social workers' offices. The advantage about this kind of a situation is that the environment is natural and not tempered with to influence any form of behaviour or participants' responses. Furthermore, a naturalistic environment enabled participants to respond freely when being interviewed because of its familiarity and absence of any form of intimidation. Under such non-threatening circumstances, the participants were able to provide the researcher with rich detailed information.

- **Qualitative approach as interpretive**

According to Rallis and Rossman (2012:9), qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive. That is to say, it focuses on understanding the ways people interpret, making sense of, and generating meaning from their world-view experiences. In line with this research study, this interpretive feature allowed the researcher to deduce and interpret the meaning the participants attached to their situation. Through this interaction, the researcher had the privilege of analysing and deducting meaning from the data obtained. This is where the researcher utilized her creative reasoning and analytical thinking skills in order to make sense of the information collected.

- **Qualitative approach as giving meaning to life experiences**

Qualitative research is interested in meaning, particularly in how people make sense of their everyday lives, and what their experiences are in relation to their environmental structures (Maree and Van der Westhuizen, 2009). These are relevant to this study, as, among others, the researcher's objective was to understand issues that affect UMC, that is, their experiences as well as the coping strategies adopted for survival. The researcher has chosen this approach, because she is interested in the challenges, and experiences of UMC in their environment, as they go about their daily lives.

- **Qualitative approach recognising the researcher as an instrument of data collection**

With regard to qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection (Rubin and Babbie, 2013). The researcher directly and personally collects data from the participants during the interviewing process (Maree and Van der Westhuizen, 2009). That being the case, the researcher directly conducted face-to-face interviews with participants instead of distributing questionnaires among them. The advantage of the researcher's personal involvement during data collection created good interpersonal relations between the researcher and the participants, thus promoting trust between the two parties. This, in turn, enabled the researcher to obtain a holistic description of events and in-depth information from participants, thus validating the choice of this approach.

The following section describes the research design used in the study;

### **3.4 Research design**

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013: 95), a research design is a blue print for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data, based on the research questions of the study. Neuman (2006:14) holds the same view in asserting that the research design entails making decisions about the type of sample to choose, as well as the research techniques utilised by the researcher to collect, analyse, and verify data. Based on the above definitions, one can argue that a research design is an overall plan and structure of an investigation, which the researcher uses to answer the research questions. In other words, it is a guideline of how the research should be conducted. Based on the nature of the topic under study, the researcher utilised the exploratory, descriptive, and contextual research designs in order to gain an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the complex nature of the participants. Below follows the discussions of each of the above mentioned research designs as well as their relevance to this study.

#### **3.4.1 Exploratory research design**

According to Neuman (2006: 34), the primary purpose of using exploratory design is to examine a new topic where little is known about it, in order to generate more precise research questions for future research. Furthermore, Sekaran and Bougie (2013: 96) explain that exploratory study is undertaken when little is known about the situation at hand or no information is available on how similar problems or research issues have been solved in the past. On the other hand, Willig (2008) also stipulates that qualitative research is mainly concerned with the exploration of the lived experiences of participant's, thus defining meaning. Given that little is known about the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of UMC and the challenges faced by social workers in rendering services to the UMC, this design is deemed relevant to this study.

#### **3.4.2 Descriptive research design**

Descriptive research design is designed to collect data that describes the characteristics of persons, events, or situations (Sekaran and Bougie 2013: 97). In

addition, Neuman (2006:34-35) views the descriptive design as painting a picture of specific details of a situation such as that of a, social setting, or relationship. For the purposes of this study, the researcher utilised the descriptive research design to provide the reader with an imaginary picture that enables readers to fathom the challenges faced by UMC. Similarly, this approach elucidates challenges often endured by social workers when rendering the care services to UMC. Through semi-structured interviews, participants are able to share descriptive accounts of their experiences. The rationale behind making use of descriptive design for this study was driven by the research goals, questions, and objectives, mentioned in the introductory chapter of this study. Because the researcher aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of experiences and challenges faced by both the UMC and the social workers, the descriptive research design, was found appropriate for this study as it enabled the researcher to gain more insight into the challenges at hand in order to determine the solutions.

#### 3.4.3 Contextual research design

Contextual research design is utilised by the researcher in order to understand the social meaning and significance of an event or social world action from the social context in which it appears (Neumann, 2006). This design focuses on developing a deeper understanding of the problem, identifying unexpected issues, as well as latent needs and opportunities in a specific context (Hennink et. al., 2011). In this study, contextual research is relevant in the investigation of the challenges faced by the UMC in South Africa. The rationale being that contextual research involves the researcher going into the participant's' environment to observe and understand their first-hand experience and perceptions of their environment and how it influences their condition. Personal involvement and participation allowed the researcher to unravel the challenges and experiences faced by UMC and the social workers, thus gaining experiences and knowledge of what ought to be done.

In respect of this study, the research areas sampled are dichotomised into mainly rural Limpopo province and urbanised Gauteng province. The rationale behind the choice of a rural province versus an urban one is solely to gain more knowledge concerning the above mentioned challenges faced by UMC and social workers, living under different socio-economic and cultural environments. The disparities would

enable the researcher to compare and to contrast the impact of living environments thus gaining knowledge to influence the formulation of guidelines on service delivery by social workers and how to best serve the UMC.

### 3.5 Delimitation of the study area, population and sampling

The study area, population and sampling are here delimited as follows:

#### 3.5.1 Delimitation of the study area

It is already noted in the introductory chapter that this study is limited to only two provinces, namely Limpopo and Gauteng. To that, while CMW shelter is situated in Musina, Kids Haven is located in Benoni. The motivation for sampling these two shelters is based on the fact that they are recognized shelters that cater for large numbers of unaccompanied migrant children. Both provinces attract a large and varied migrant population and that offered the researcher a substantial number of potential participants, more specifically UMC. The two provinces were also considered based on their easy accessibility to the researcher and Limpopo was further considered for its close proximity to the Beitbridge border post which is the main entrance and gate way to South Africa for people coming from neighbouring countries such as sub Saharan region.

Below are the maps of the two provinces under discussion.



Source: <https://www.google.co.za/southafrican/Maps>.

**Figure 4: Map 1, Limpopo Province (Musina)**





Source: <https://www.google.co.za/southafrican/Maps>.

**Figure 5: Gauteng Province (Benoni)**

### 3.5.2 Population and sampling

Sekaran and Bougie (2013:240) define the concept 'population' as the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher seek to investigate. Similarly, Babbie and Mouton (2001) describe a population as a total of the elements from which the sample is actually selected. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, population refers to the total number of people from which the research participants were chosen, that is, UMC and social workers working directly with unaccompanied migrant children. Due to unvarying sizes of the population, a need for a sample exists. Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2009), cautions that owing to the time as well as financial constraints involved in conducting research, it is practically impossible involving the entire population in the research project. Sekaran and Bougie (2013:242) concur that it is practically impossible and prohibitive in terms of time, cost, and human resources to study the entire population, hence the need for a sample. A sample refers to the small group of research participants or a subset drawn from a wider population and about which a degree of generalisation can be made (Carey, 2013:46). Sharing a similar view is Newman (2011: 219) who describes a sample as a subset or subgroup of the population comprising members selected from it. Furthermore, Newman (2011: 219) asserts that the primary purpose of sampling is to collect specific cases, events, or actions that can clarify and deepen understanding. Hence, in respect of this study, the sample population was two-fold; it was made up of unaccompanied migrant children as well as social workers who were directly rendering services to UMC.

There are two recognized forms of sampling methods in the social sciences: probability and non-probability sampling. Carey (2013:46) is of the view that quantitative and qualitative research design approaches' sampling are effected in different ways. Usually, qualitative researchers tend to favour the use of non-probability or non-random samples, whilst quantitative researchers use probability sampling. A distinction is drawn between probability samples and non-probability samples. Probability samples allow each member an equal chance of being selected by the researcher, and thus enjoy a high degree of representativeness and remain the most common samples used in quantitative research (Carey, 2013: 46). In contrast, qualitative researchers rely on non-probability samples in which members of a population do not have an equal chance of selection. Non-probability sampling represents a group of sampling techniques that help researchers to select units from a population that they desire. This sampling approach is unlikely to be representative and does not allow generalisation, yet it has the advantage of being a rich source of data (Carey, 2013:46). A non-probability sampling method was thus adopted and deemed appropriate for this study.

For the purpose of this study, purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling, is a form of non-probability sampling, in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria, which may include specialist knowledge on issues being researched or capacity and willingness to participate in the research (Carey, 2013:47). In reference to purposeful sampling, Grinnell and Unrau (2011) state that the researcher decisively selects knowledgeable participants with regard to the phenomenon being studied.

Corroborating the above explications is Newman (2011) whose view is that purposive sampling's main objective is to gather sufficient people to be able to collect sufficient data and, more importantly, to begin to interpret, explore, and understand the topic under investigation. Thus, purposive sampling enabled the researcher to access the UMC and social workers, as participants in this research. Sekaran and Bougie, (2013:240) concur with the above reflections by stating that purposive sampling is strictly confined to specific types of people sampled because of their knowledge of the matter under investigation. The advantage of using purposive sampling is because it

enables the researcher to select participants that are able to answer the questions designed for the study based on their knowledge and experiences.

### 3.5.3 Sample size

A qualitative approach does not have the advantage of determining the sample size in advance. Thus, the researcher has limited knowledge about the larger group or population from which the sample is taken. The sample size cannot be determined on the outset of the study. Therefore, the researcher only included participants who met the inclusion criteria, and continued to work with the same group until the data collection exercise had reached a point of saturation (Newman, 2011:221). Data saturation is when the information being gathered is starting to become repetitive and no new information emerges (Fossey and Curtin, 2007). The sample therefore consisted of unaccompanied migrant children from Gauteng and Limpopo provinces, as well as social workers commissioned to work with those unaccompanied migrant children. All participants were selected based on the inclusion criteria, as explained in Table1 below.

**Table 1: The inclusion criteria of the participants**

<b>Unaccompanied Migrant Children (UMC)</b>	<b>Social workers working with the UMC</b>
Unaccompanied migrant child between the ages of 13 and 18 years	Social Workers registered with the Council for social services profession
UMC who were from Southern Africa temporarily residing in Limpopo and Gauteng province	Social workers who were employed by the Department of Social Development or a recognised registered NGO.
UMC who were willing to participate voluntarily	Social workers who were willing to participate voluntarily
Who have been in the shelter for a	Those who have been working directly with UMC for a minimum period of 6 months and

minimum period of 6 months.	more.
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### **3.6 Preparing participants for data collection**

The participants need thorough preparation prior to the data collection processes. Permission to conduct research from concerned stakeholders must be sought beforehand. For this study, recruiting participants and preparing them for data collection, the researcher adopted the following procedures:

First of all, permission to conduct the study was sought from the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa (UNISA), where ethical clearance was granted to the researcher (see Addendum I). The ethical clearance was granted subsequent to the submission of a research proposal, which clearly outlined the purpose and ethical consideration of the intended study. Therefore, worth underlining is the fact that, this study was strongly guided by the University of South Africa's Code of Ethics.

After permission was granted by UNISA, a letter was written to the Department of Social Development to request permission to conduct this research with the assistance of social workers and UMC. Subsequent to receiving permission from the Department of Social Development, separate letters of request to conduct the study were written to each shelters housing the UMC (see Addendum: E). On receipt of the letters, a meeting was scheduled by the respective shelters where the researcher was given an opportunity to explain the nature and purpose of the study. Following these meetings, the researcher was granted permission to conduct the study at each of the identified shelters (see Addendum: H).

Subsequent to receiving the necessary permissions, a meeting was scheduled with centre managers to discuss the data collection process as well as the inclusion criteria for UMC. This was done to ensure that the right participants were selected into the sample. After selecting the sample using indicated selection criteria (see. Addendum: D), the researcher embarked on preparing participants for the data collection processes.

Following Farber's (2009) advice concerning the importance of establishing rapport, setting the tone, discussing confidentiality, study purpose, and addressing any questions or concerns of the participants, meetings were scheduled with all the potential participants from both groups. The meetings enabled the researcher to answer and to clarify issues at hand. The meetings also cleared any matter that could have come to mar the smooth flow of interviews. The meetings also helped to establish the element of trust between the researcher and the possible participants, inculcating the spirit of rapport prior to the commencement of the data collection activities (Farber, 2009). Furthermore, the exercises were undertaken to avoid any false impressions that may arise, concerning the study, and to enhance voluntary participation.

Consent forms as displayed (see Addendum: F1) were explained to them in the presence of the shelter managers. This was done to make sure that children are not coerced to participate in the study. The presence of the shelter managers was of great assistance as they managed to reiterate what the researcher had already explained in a local language understood by the participants (Shona) as the majority of UMC were from Zimbabwe.

According to Johnson, Hart and Colwell, (2014), ethical protocols should be developed and strictly adhered to when researching on children. This included giving children the option to decide whether they want to participate in the research or not, whilst ensuring that children are safe and not exposed to different forms of abuse. In South Africa, anyone under the age of 18 is considered a child and has not yet attained the legal age (Children's Act No. 38 of 2005). Johnson, et al (2014) further postulate that when children are involved in a research activity, it is necessary to obtain their assent and their parental permission. Therefore, in this research, because UMC have no biological parents, shelter managers acted in loco-parentis, with regard to consent forms (see Addendum: F1).

Assent forms (see Addendum: F2) were also recited for the sampled children by the researcher, in the presence of the shelter managers. Greig and Taylor (1999) postulate that the researcher, depending on the child's reading ability and comprehension has the responsibility to read the assent forms to or with the child in the language that the child understands, for purposes of the child fully comprehending

and understanding what the study entails. For Greig and Taylor, assent is defined as a child's affirmative agreement to participate in research. The reading exercise gave the sampled children the opportunity to decide if they want to take part, and to decline if they were not interested or comfortable to participate. Participants also had the opportunity to ask questions and to receive clarity from the researcher. The children managed to sign the assent forms with the help of the shelter managers. Those who could not write were advised to put an X to show that they are willing to participate in the study. Participating UMC were also informed of their right to refuse participation if they wished and their right to withdraw from the study anytime they wish to do so, without bearing any negative consequences.

With reference to social workers, the researcher telephonically approached each participant to seek his or her permission to voluntarily participate in the study. The telephonic conversation commenced with the exchange of formal introductions, followed by the announcement of the purpose of the call which encapsulates the request for the receiver's participation in the study. Although the researcher had personally explained the nature and purpose of the study, during the first visit, she again gave each social worker participant copies of the information sheet and consent forms to read before the commencement of the data collection activities. A time frame of two weeks was given to each social worker to read through the study information prior to their involvement. This afforded the participants enough time to reflect in order to make informed decisions to participate or not.

Interviews only proceeded after the participants had read and understood the information sheet thoroughly and where necessary, sought clarifications and agreed to participate in the study through signing the consent forms. Both sets of participants were consulted with regards to audio recordings of the interviews and the purpose thereof. Tape-recording of the interviews was done in order to prevent loss of information; and also to enhance the accuracy of data capturing and analysing (Carey, 2013). In addition, participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality of any information divulged, as a matter of ethical department.

After consents were secured, dates were set and venues for interviews were identified and the information thereof announced to sampled participants. Regarding UMC, centre managers from selected shelters allowed the researcher to interview the

children only after school hours. The objective was to minimize disruptions of those UMC attending school. At Kids Haven shelter, the researcher was afforded access to the staff boardroom to conduct the interviews. At CMW shelter, a dining Hall and a church building were utilised to conduct interviews. Privacy and confidentiality during the interview sessions was maintained at all cost.

The duration of the interviews with each participant took between 30-45 minutes. For example, some children were so outspoken so much that they gave the researcher more information without having to be probed, while others were slow in talking, which resulted in the interview taking longer. Equally, some social workers took longer than others, based on their uniqueness. To manage diversity, the data collection was conducted in English; and there was no need for an interpreter as both the UMC and social workers had English as the common language of communication.

### **3.7 Data collection methods**

According to De Vos et al (2011: 359), the data collection process is essentially an accumulation of information with a view to gaining answers to research questions. Sharing the same view is Carey (2013), who assert that data collection is a process of gathering and measuring information about variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were selected and used as the primary method of collecting data from the participants. Thus, the following paragraphs would give more clarity regarding the nature and purpose of this method. The semi-structured interviews were found appropriate to solicit information from the research participants. As De Vos et.al (2005) would explain, semi-structured interviews refer to a one-on-one interview in which the number of participants is limited to two people, the researcher and the participant. In this regard, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with the UMC in an attempt to understand their personal experiences and perspectives with regard to life challenges and the coping strategies they apply to survive. Furthermore, in-depth interviews are optimal for collecting data on the personal histories, perspectives, and experiences of individuals, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored (Maree et.al, 2009). The rationale behind

choosing in-depth interviews is also based on Hancock's assertion (2002:9) that semi-structured/in-depth interviews provide the researcher with rich data and allow the researcher to gain a deeper insight into the phenomena being researched.

Ling and Bouma (2010: 177) also state that in-depth interviews are more productive if the researcher gains some rapport or mutual sense of comfort with the participants. However, the same authors caution that in-depth interviews should be conducted in places that are safe and comfortable for the researcher and the participants. It was also important that the researcher take care not to make use of words that can make participants feel offended or patronised given the fact that UMC are young and considered vulnerable. The researcher took the above cautioning into consideration as failure to do so might have frightened the children and, thus, jeopardise the data collection process.

Before conducting the actual interviews, an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions was developed to ensure that the researcher ask questions that are within the scope of the study and the level of interviewees (see Addendum: G). The result of interviewing participants as individuals also gave the researcher the opportunity to reflect on the whole range of different experiences, coping strategies, and adaptive abilities of the participants.

Conducting these interviews was found advantageous in various ways, as indicated below:

- The technique applied enabled the researcher to obtain detailed accounts of participants' personal experiences.
- Participants were able to share their own life experiences in spaces free from any form of intimidation.
- It allowed the interviewer not to be guided by a rigid interview guide thereby giving the researcher sufficient flexibility to follow up on information that needs some more clarification.
- It also allowed the researcher to ask probing questions on complex and sensitive issues that sought clarifications.
- Furthermore, it allowed participants a chance to make sense of their situation and how their own action and that of others impact their lives.



### **3.8 Interviewing skills**

In the researcher's view, a good researcher should command good interviewing skills to extract relevant information from the informants. It is for this reason that the researcher decided to employ the following interviewing skills to obtain maximum result, namely, listening skills, probing skills and empathic skills.

#### **3.8.1 Listening skills**

The ability to listen is important and a pre-requisite tool in any research process, during the data collection process (Creswell, 2009). In this instance, the researcher listened attentively, paying attention to all details shared by the UMC as well as the social workers. This seemed to relax the situation, making the participants feel free and to open up and contribute more information. It further allowed the researcher to correctly paraphrase the information as verbalized by the participants. Paraphrasing and reinterpreting the information reassured participants that the researcher was paying attention and interested in the deliberations. According to Bellota (2012), this skill is important for promoting more positive interactions between people.

#### **3.8.2 Probing skills**

According to Roulston and Given (2008), probing is a research technique used by interviewers during the data collection process to generate further explanation from the participants. Potgieter (1998) alludes to the above view by saying that probing is an honest request for more information from participants and should be in a form of open-ended questions rather than closed questions. In addition, Grobler and Schenk (2009) are also of the view that probing is an excellent tool that should be utilised during the data gathering process. Further, a good researcher ought to make use of probing techniques during the follow up questions on participant's responses, mainly where participants' responses are not clear. In this study, probing skills were significantly used, owing to the exploratory and descriptive nature of the study. Furthermore, because the researcher was also interviewing children, who sometimes had challenges to answer some questions, the researcher had to resort to creative probing questions in order to obtain the information needed. For the purposes of this research, creative probing involved the researcher asking questions in a language that was easily understandable to children and in a non-threatening way.

### 3.8.3 Empathy skills

Empathy refers to the effort of trying to see the world from another person's perspective, to understand his or her situation as well as the feelings experienced in such a situation (Hepworth et al., 2013: 81). Briefly, empathy involves the sensitive and correct grasping of the meaning of what another person says and feel. It also consists of going beyond the most obvious feelings to the subtler experiences of that person. Empathetic understanding can be communicated to the next person both verbally and non- verbally (Hepworth et al., 2013: 82). The relevance of this skill is based on the sensitive nature of the topic under investigation. Given that participation, in this regard involves children, who are in South Africa as a result of forced migration, it is essential for the researcher to apply empathetic skills during data collection process. From a researcher's observation, application of empathetic skills, on UMC stimulated participation which resulted in participants sharing their deepest experiences and perceptions, thereby equipping the researcher with valuable data. The above explications are in congruence with the assumption that an empathic researcher enables his/her participants to feel more open and to share their valuable experiences freely (Grobler and Schenk, 2009:138).

### 3.9 Pilot testing

A pilot study is a study of a smaller section of selected participants of the proposed study with the aim of testing whether the current data collection instrument is suitable (Creswell, 2014). Sharing the same view is Johnson and Christensen (2008) who describes a pilot study to be a preliminary test of the data collection instrument. Agreeing with the above scholars, the researcher's view is that a pilot study is an experiment conducted with a few participants before the commencement of the actual study where the researcher is pre-testing the data collection instruments to be used as well as his/her qualitative interviewing skills. Pre-testing of the tool is vital as it provides the researcher with some caution if need be, before the commencement of the actual study (Johnson and Christensen, 2008).

Data collection process was therefore preceded by a pilot study, conducted with a sample of three UMC and three social workers. Semi structured interviews guided by an interview guide were used as methods for data collection. Thereafter, the

information obtained was analysed to determine whether any adjustment to the data collection process was necessary.

Pilot testing allowed the researcher an opportunity to test her qualitative interviewing skills and to verify the data collecting instruments to be used prior to the actual investigation. In essence, pilot testing exercise enabled the researcher to get rid of any ambiguities and inappropriate wording from the interview guide. It is the researcher's view that by doing so, credibility of the main study to be conducted was strengthened and confidence in the researcher's ability to complete the study successfully within the set time schedules enhanced. It is important to indicate that participants used in the pilot testing were not included in the main study.

### **3.10 Data analysis**

Qualitative data analysis refers to the interpretative philosophy that is aimed at examining the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data (Carey, 2013). Phrased differently, it attempts to establish how participants make meaning of specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, values, feelings, and experiences in an attempt to approximate their construction of the phenomenon (Maree and Van der Westhuizen, 2009: 99). From the researcher's analytical point of view, data analysis entails the researcher's ability to analyse, interpret, and make sense of the research findings. In this instance, the researcher tries to gather and codify information that falls into the same category of themes. This is a lengthy process that has to be handled meticulously as the researcher has to read the data repetitively in order to avoid any misinterpretations. Although the main constructs of the research will be deductively obtained from literature, an inductive approach to thematic analysis was used, taking into account that themes emerged from the data rather than by searching for pre-defined themes (Carey, 2013).

In this study, the two sets of data (that of UMC and social workers) were analysed according to Tesch's eight steps of data analysis described in Creswell (2009:186). Due to its flexibility and because it made it easier for the researcher to analyse textual data as well as to identify themes as they emerged from the data, this method was considered appropriate for this study.

Outlined below are Tesch's eight steps of data analysis:

- Data transcription - the researcher started by transcribing the interviews word-for-word and then formed an overview of the gathered information by reading through all the transcriptions and making notes about important information in the margins.
- Selection of transcripts - few transcripts were chosen and read carefully through while asking herself, "What am I reading here?" "What is it all about?" What does this mean? Through this critical reflection process, ideas were generated and noted in the margins as the reading proceeds.
- Compilation of themes and sub-themes list- the above mentioned process was completed in respect of all the other transcriptions and, later, a list comprising themes and sub-themes was compiled. That is to say the researcher listed all the emerging themes and grouped together those that belong to similar categories.
- Compilation of abbreviated codes lists - with this list, the researcher returned to the transcribed data and fit abbreviations for each identified theme. The abbreviated codes were then written in the margins next to the segments of data that matched a particular code.
- Categorisation of themes - subsequently, related themes were grouped together and this enabled the researcher to double check for duplication in the list of themes and put together those themes that belonged to the same category.
- Final decision and alphabetic arrangement of codes and abbreviations according to themes - the researcher made a final decision about the abbreviations for each theme and its related code/abbreviation and arranged them alphabetically.
- Applying the cut-and-paste method - by using the cut-and-paste method, the researcher assembled the data material (storylines) belonging to each theme and category in one place and conducted a preliminary analysis.
- Re-coding of data - where necessary, the data was re-coded. After that the researcher started the process of reporting the research findings, verifying those segments of data that may have been missed, during the coding process. Concurrently, the researcher solicited the services of a professional

qualitative coder. At the end of the analysis, the results of the coder were compared with those of the researcher; to enhance validity.

### **3.11 Data verification methods**

Below follows the data verification methods employed in this study:

#### **3.11.1 Trustworthiness**

According to Williams and Hill (2012:175), establishing data verification, in any empirical research, is of critical importance. Data verification involves checking the collected data for biases that might affect the process of drawing conclusions (De Vos et. al., 2005). In order to verify data, the researcher used Lincoln and Guba's model which is based on four aspects of trustworthiness, relevant to qualitative studies. Trustworthiness in qualitative research is emphasised by scholars such as Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2009), De Vos et. al. (2011), Terre Blanche et. al. (2006), and De Vos et., al (2011), and is seen as the extent to which the research findings flow from the research process and are reliably based on data collection and analyses (Terre Blanche et.al, 2006). In support of the above, Lietz et.,al (2006:444), postulate that trustworthiness is established when findings closely and possibly reflect the meanings as described by the participants.

For the purpose of this study, trustworthiness was assessed according to the criteria of Guba and Lincoln (in Krefting, 1991) namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Each criterion is discussed briefly within the context of the proposed research to ensure trustworthiness of the data. Guba's criteria is of vital importance, to researchers, in designing ways of increasing the rigour of their qualitative studies; and also for readers to use as a means of assessing the value of the findings.

#### **3.11.2 Credibility**

The credibility of a study refers to the extent to which a researcher is able to capture and reflect on the perceptions and experiences of the participants accurately (Seale, 1999). Similarly, Gasson in Morrow (2005) describes credibility as referring to the internal consistency of the proposed study where investigators attempt to

demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon, under scrutiny, is being presented. That is to say, to what extent the results represent the same information that was obtained from the participants.

The following techniques of ensuring credibility, identified by Babbie and Mouton (2001:277), Pecorra (1995) and Krefting (1991:216) were adopted and adhered to. They include:

- Prolonged engagements with the participants requires the researcher to maintain persistent observation and to remain adequately immersed to the participants during the whole research process in order to enable recurrence of patterns to be identified and verified (Krefting 1991:217). To maintain prolonged engagements, the researcher exercised her empathy to allay emotions among participants. The researcher was at all times using her observation skills to observe any emotional and behavioural changes that may impact on the process. Prolonged engagement enabled the researcher to develop rapport and trust with the participants. This made the participants to feel at ease and made them to open up and offered the needed information which at times the researcher regarded as sensitive. With valuable information shared, the researcher had the opportunity to identify and document emergent features such as patterns, themes and values. Knowledge of the in-depth interviews came handy, thus enabling and allowing the researcher to spend prolonged engagement time with participants, sharing valuable information.
- Member checking: Shenton (2004) is of the view that member checking, of the research project, may be offered by colleagues or peers who will offer a second opinion to the researcher. For the proposed study, member checking was done by the research supervisor who is a professor and well experienced in research matters. Thus, she assessed all the aspects of the research report and provided a feedback suggesting further improvements. The verbatim accounts of participants (tape recordings or transcripts of interviews) were made available to the promoter who critically assessed the interpretations of direct quotes.

### 3.11.3 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings could be used to address similar issues in different contexts, following the same procedure (Mabudusha, 2014:38). According to Lincoln and Guba (in Krefting, 1991:216), transferability can be addressed through examining whether the researcher can present sufficient descriptive data to allow comparison. To ensure transferability, the researcher provided a solid and accurate description of the demographic characteristics of the research participants, the research context, the research methodology and settings, in order to enable future researchers to assess the transferability of the research findings without difficulty. In this way, the researcher who wants to transfer or compare the findings of this study should take all the above factors into consideration.

### 3.11.4 Dependability

Dependability as a criterion for trustworthiness refers to the possibility of replicating the research process with the same participants in a similar context as per the original study and yielding similar results (Guba, 1985). The researcher ensured dependability by recording the participants' responses and writing down field notes [during observation or interview visits as well as by incorporating a member-checking strategy to enhance the credibility of the study. To address the criterion of dependability, the researcher also adopted the code-re-code procedure on data during the analysis phase of the study. After coding a segment of data, the researcher waited for about two weeks and, then, returned to re-code the same data and compare the results. Guba (1985), however, cautions researchers saying that in qualitative research, due to multiple realities, the possibility that findings can be consistent are slim.

### 3.11.5 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are solely functions of participants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations, and perspectives (Guba, 1985). For Marshall and Rossman (2014:263), confirm-ability allows the researcher to prove the transparency of their studies that others will use to confirm their findings. Put differently, confirm-ability refers to the impartiality of the researcher in the process. In ensuring confirm-ability, researchers should

demonstrate that findings emerge from data and not from their own biases and preferences (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). To strengthen confirm-ability, the researcher ensured that every aspect of the study was scrutinised by the supervisor to ensure that data gathering, analysis, and interpretations conform to the general acceptable standards, and thus encouraging and guiding the researcher to exercise objectivity in her work. To ensure confirm-ability, the researcher adopted the 'bracketing' method, to prevent subjectivity, as it is not scholarly for one's personal experiences, ideas or cultural background from interfering with the answers given by the participants (Denscombe, 2007). During the interview sessions, the researcher endeavoured not to ask leading questions, as that would weaken the value of the outcomes.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a detailed presentation of the qualitative research design and the data collection methods adopted. Based on the nature of the topic under study, the researcher utilised the exploratory, descriptive, and contextual research designs. All these designs were considered in light of their relevance and suitability. Population sample and sampling procedures used in the study, and reasons for their adoption, were given. Semi structured interviews were used to collect the data from participants. To identify themes and categories, the researcher applied Tesch's method of data analysis. These methods were of vital importance as they enabled the researcher to collect the data which composed of content of the next chapter, data presentation, analysis and descriptions.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS – PART ONE**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter follows the research methodology chapter which served as the framework detailing the qualitative process followed in collecting data. Thus, the main focus of this chapter is to present data and discuss the findings drawn from a sample of unaccompanied migrant children (UMC) from Limpopo and Gauteng Provinces. A sample of 32 participants including both males and females was selected using non-probability sampling technique following the selection criteria specified in Chapters 1 and 3. Data was analysed and integrated with the literature review, in chapter two, which forms the theoretical background of this study. To address matters of credibility, the researcher made use of an independent coder who extracted various themes and sub-themes from the data presented, of which the supervisor and the researcher had reached a consensus. To complement the independent coder, the researcher, independently embarked on data analysis and compared it with that of the independent coder. It is from this process that four major themes and seventeen sub-themes emerged.

These themes are thus discussed, interpreted and explained, in relation to the challenges, experiences and coping strategies of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa. It should be noted that this chapter only presents data from the UMC participants as part one of the findings. Data presentation from a sample of social workers will be discussed in Chapter 5 as Part two of the findings.

## Biographical profile of the participants

**Table 2: Biographical profile of the participants**

Participant	Age	Race	Gender	Country of origin	Crossed border with whom	School grade	Year of arrival in S.A	Accommodation
P1	13	B	F	Zim	Alone	5	2012	CMW
P2	13	B	M	Zim	Alone	NIS	2015	CMW
P3	18	B	F	Zim	Alone	8	2010	CMW
P4	14	B	M	Zim	Alone	7	2014	CMW
P5	14	B	F	Zim	Alone	5	2011	Kids Haven
P6	16	B	M	Zim	Alone	NIS	2015	CMW
P7	13	B	F	Zim	Alone	6	2013	CMW
P8	16	B	F	Zim	Alone	8	2011	CMW
P9	16	B	M	Zim	Alone	8	2013	CMW
P10	13	B	F	Mal	Alone	6	2014	CMW

P11	14	B	F	DRC	Alone	5	2011	Kids Haven
P12	17	B	M	Zim	Alone	10	2009	CMW
P13	17	B	M	Zim	Alone	8	2010	CMW
P14	17	B	M	Zim	Alone	11	2012	CMW
P15	18	B	M	Zim	Alone	10	2009	CMW
P16	17	B	M	Zim	Alone	7	2012	CMW
P17	13	B	F	Zim	Alone	9	2013	CMW
P18	15	B	M	Swaz	Alone	9	2013	CMW
P19	17	B	M	Moz	Alone	8	2014	CMW
P20	18	B	M	Zim	Alone	12	2010	CMW
P 21	18	B	M	Zim	Alone	12	2008	CMW
P 22	14	B	M	Zim	Alone	NIS	2015	CMW
P 23	17	B	F	Zim	Alone	7	2011	CMW

P 24	15	B	M	DRC	Alone	7	2005	CMW
P 25	13	B	M	Zim	Alone	7	2012	CMW
P 26	17	B	M	Zim	Alone	10	2010	CMW
P27	13	B	F	DRC	Alone	6	2004	Kids Haven
P28	13	B	F	Zim	Alone	6	2010	Kids Haven
P29	15	B	M	Moz	Alone	9	N/R	Kids Haven
P 30	17	B	M	Swaz	Alone	10	2014	Kids Haven
P31	13	B	F	DRC	Alone	6	N/R	Kids Haven
P32	14	B	F	DRC	Alone	7	2008	Kids Haven

**KEY**

Zim	Zimbabwe
Mal	Malawi

Moz	Mozambique
Swaz	Swaziland
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
N\R	Not remember
N\S	Not schooling
CMW	Centre for Men and Women

#### 4.2.1 The UMC gender distribution

According to the research findings, gender distribution revealed that the majority of participants were male. Of the 32 UMC participants, 19 were males and 13 were female. The research findings are in agreement with those of Fritch, Johnson, Juska, (2010), on a study concerning the UMC in South Africa, which revealed that 70% of the UMC population interviewed, were boys while only 30% were girls. However, they further concede, by arguing that it is challenging to verify the number of girls travelling alone into the country as most of them, upon arrival in South Africa, quickly get absorbed into the domestic workers' industry.

The researcher's perception of the situation is that migrants are predominantly males because it is easier for boys to migrate than girls. The researcher thus attributes this migration disparity, between boys and girls, to the biological make up of boys which make it easier for them to navigate dangerous routes of migration as compared to girls. In support of this assumption is the report by Save the Children UK (2007) whose findings on the UMC crossing borders to South Africa, also established that the majority of UMC comprised of more boys than girls. Although the above mentioned report failed to provide any justification why it was easier for boys to migrate than girls, it nevertheless acknowledged that migration was easier for boys than girls. This finding is consistent with that of Mahati (2014) which endorses that a girl child is more vulnerable than the boy child and further argues that it remains a challenge for girls to work and live, particularly far from home.

#### 4.2.2 Age and racial distribution of the participants

The age distribution of the participants ranged from 13 -18 years. Nine of the participants were 13 years old; five were 14 years old; three were 15 years old; another three were 16 years old; and four were 18 years old whilst the remaining eight were 17 years of age. In his study on vulnerability of the independent child migrants, Mahati (2015) conceded to have seen boys and girls under the age of 18 and some as young as seven years old crossing borders into South Africa. By virtue of their age group and being 18 and under the age of 18, these UMC are regarded as children in need of care. The Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 and the UNCRC (1989) define a child in need of care as a person under the age of 18 who is in need

of care, guidance and protection. The Children's Act further makes provision for and plays a critical role in safeguarding and protecting the rights of all children (including foreign children) within South Africa. All participants interviewed were of black ethnic groupings, notwithstanding their different languages as they originated from different African countries. No coloured or white UMC were available for interviews as the shelters did not have any.

#### 4.2.3 Educational status

By virtue of their ages, all the participants were of school-going age and expected to be attending school. Unaccompanied migrant children are entitled to education on the same terms as South African children. This is confirmed by section 5 (1) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996b which states that public schools must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way. Similarly, the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2, section (29) states that; "everyone has the right to a basic education." The Bill of Rights further prescribes access to schooling as a basic right and prohibits any kind of discrimination or exclusion, whether on the basis of nationality, documentation status or inability to pay. Additionally, the UNCRC (1989) which South Africa has ratified, guarantees access to education for all children in SA including UMC and further gives a directive that "education must be achieved on the basis of equal opportunity and non-discrimination.

As depicted in table 4.1, above, the majority of participants (29) were attending school, with only three UMC out of school. From the research findings, the three children that were not attending school were held back because of lack of documentation or delay thereof. This delay may, in the long run, have a negative impact on the children, since preventing and delaying children from attending school is detrimental to their future and to the society in general. Moreover, education facilitates the developmental aspect of any society. With the majority of UMC attending school, it is evidence that South Africa at the least upholds and respects children's rights to education as enshrined in the Constitution, the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 and the UNCRC of 1989.

#### 4.2.4 Accommodation for the UMC

With reference to unaccompanied migrant children, the UNCRC (1989:1) treaty commands the following:” that all children be accorded equal status regardless of their nationality; they are entitled to special care and assistance; that all children be granted protection in South Africa without any form of discrimination, and that the best interests of the child should be of paramount importance in any action involving them”. More importantly, the same treaty commands that children without families should be accorded special protection (UNCRC, 1989).

In honoring this legal principle, the research findings testify that South Africa has indeed managed to commit itself to providing alternative care and shelter to UMC as they are without family care. This is subsequent to the finding that all UMC who participated in this study were accommodated in registered shelters. One of the shelters is (CMW) and is located in Limpopo Province and the other is Kids Haven in Gauteng Province. For the purposes of this study, a shelter is described as any registered place that accommodates children who are homeless. This however, does not preclude the fact that there are many more UMC living independently on the streets with no proper shelter over their heads. In support of the above discussion, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR, 2013) revealed that only 5.2% of UMC in SA were residing in formal shelters, whereas 14.3% were living on the streets, and the rest of them living in informal shelters or shacks.

Both shelters are under the auspices of the National Department of Social Development (DSD). However, the one in Gauteng Province (Kids Haven) is run by a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) and subsidised by the provincial government. The other shelter (CMW) is managed directly by DSD. There are disparities between the two shelters in terms of service provision. For example, the CMW shelter does not have full-time social workers attached to it. The disadvantage here is that the absence of a social worker restricts regular service provision to UMC. It would have been more beneficial for the UMC to have a social worker onsite. Due to the absence of social workers employed by the shelter, the organisation uses social workers employed by DSD in the province. On the other hand, the Kids Haven shelter has more than five social workers, who are stationed within the shelter and who are working directly with UMC. The availability of social workers within the shelter



promotes effective interaction and service provision between UMC and social workers.

According to Mbutsa (2013), placing UMC in shelters is a way of providing the children with a home, care and support. It, however, emerged from the study that even though the children had a place to call home and guardians who acted on behalf of their parents, they still lacked that parental love offered by one's biological parents. What also became evident was the fact that, although UMC lived in shelters, most of them made use of the shelter only for the purposes of sleeping, since they spent most of their time on the streets doing menial jobs for survival. Desperate to survive, the children resorted to washing cars, becoming car guards at malls, helping shoppers with trollies and parking their cars; and also working as security personnel in Chinese Shops. In this light, not only did these children display the strengths to identify the available opportunities within their environment, but also their ability to take action in improving their situations, through doing menial jobs. Their ability to bounce back and to cope with all the challenges thrown at them by conditions in the host country clearly challenges the notion that children are not passive victims as they are social actors within their environment. This also underlines their high degree of resilience.

#### 4.2.5 Country of origin

As depicted in table 2 above, the participants originated from five countries in Southern Africa namely, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Zimbabwe had 22 children, followed by DRC which had 5, Mozambique had 2; Swaziland had 2; and only one child was from Malawi. Drawing from the findings, it would seem Zimbabweans UMC are currently the largest migrant group in the country.

Comparable to the study findings, the International Forum for Child Welfare (2014:4) explains that UMC tend to move from the less developed to more developed countries in search of a better life. This is similar to the findings by Fritch et al., (2010) which also revealed that South Africa has received large numbers of UMC from different African countries with the Zimbabwean children being the majority. Hunger, poverty and political instability in Zimbabwe are considered to be the major pushing factors behind the influx of UMC (Chiguvare, 2011). However, UNHCR (2015) posits

that some children flee their native countries because of violence. Given the volatile nature of their countries, they opt to search for safety in South Africa. In this regard, the researcher is of the view that should such volatility continue in neighbouring countries, South Africa could continue to suffer the brunt of forced migration arising from instability and violence in neighbouring countries. It is undeniable that South Africa, with its thriving economy (compared to that of its neighbouring countries), coupled with a democratic dispensation, lures millions of foreign migrants from the continent (Ortelee, 2009).

What is common about the above- mentioned countries is that they all suffer from poor economic conditions. It is thus logical to argue that UMC fled their respective countries to escape poverty in the hope of attaining improved living conditions in South Africa. Similarly, according to the UNHCR Global Report, there is approximately 65 000 refugees in South Africa originating from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Burundi, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe (UNHCR, 2015). This report further estimated that fifty percent of these refugees are children, some of whom are unaccompanied. For Schreier (2011), South Africa experiences what she terms a mixed flow of migrants, which she describes as a combination of diverse categories of migrants arriving into South Africa, each with different incentives and motivations for their migrations and varying levels of vulnerability.

#### 4.2.6 Year of arrival

From the table, it is apparent that the participants arrived in South Africa on different intervals or time frames from different parts of the world. The table further depicts that UMC started arriving in South Africa from 2004 with more and more arriving each year thereafter. Looking at the current state of affairs in the neighbouring states, it can be assumed that South Africa will continue to receive UMC and this trend will most likely continue rising for as long as the economic meltdown in neighbouring countries prevails (Palmary, 2009b). The Green paper on International Migration (2016) adds to this finding by indicating that since its transition to democracy in 1994, South Africa became a popular regional destination for migrants from different African countries.

The following section discusses the themes and sub-themes emanating from the data analysis.

### 4.3 Discussion of themes and sub-themes

In this section, various themes and sub-themes emerging from the data analysis are presented and contrasted with relevant literature. These themes were identified following responses shared by the participants. The analysis of the empirical data for UMC yielded the following themes and sub-themes as presented in table 3 below.

**Table 3: An overview of themes and sub-themes**

Themes	Sub-themes
<p><b>4.3.1 Theme 1: Reasons why UMC migrate to South Africa</b></p>	<p><b>4.3.1.1 Push factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Loss of parents\ orphanhood</li> <li>• Parental pressure</li> <li>• Peer influence</li> </ul> <p><b>4.3.1.2 Pull factors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UMC quest for education versus a better life.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.3.2 Theme 2: Experiences and challenges faced by UMC enroute South Africa</b></p>	<p>4.3.2.1 Bribery and robbery</p> <p>4.3.2.2 Long torturous journeys</p>
<p><b>4.3.3 Theme 3: Experiences and challenges faced by UMC within South Africa</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Xenophobia and misconception</li> <li>• Language barriers versus career setback</li> </ul> <p>4.3.3.3 Discrimination and intimidation</p> <p>4.3.3.4 Safety and security</p> <p>4.3.3.5 Documentation</p>

<p><b>4.3.4 Theme 4: Coping strategies</b></p>	<p><b>4.3.4.1 Emotion focused coping</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious coping</li> <li>• Coping through distraction/avoidance</li> <li>• Accepting of the status quo.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.3.4.2 Problem focused coping</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coping through lying</li> <li>• Coping through optimism and hope</li> </ul>
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#### 4.3.1 Theme 1: Reasons why UMC migrate to South Africa

Currently, the rising number of children undertaking unaccompanied journeys have turned out to be of increasing concern (Echavez, Bagaporo, Pilingo, Azadmanesh, 2014). In their quest to achieve their desires Appianing (2013) argues that human beings will always be in continuous movement. Hence the Institute for Human and Development Studies (2015) attests that migration journeys take place within countries, regions and internationally, and involve many diverse people all with their own motivations. South Africa has, in the last few years, witnessed considerable growth in numbers of UMC entering the country (UNHCR, 2015). The Department of Home Affairs` White Paper on International Migration (2017:27) declared 12,3 million international visitors and migrants to have entered South Africa. This figure was however, an estimate and challenging to verify due to many unauthorized entrants into the country, and not documented through official statistics.

For purposes of this study, and in order to grasp the reasons why the participants, UMC, embarked on these treacherous journeys, they were asked to explain why they chose South Africa among all other African countries. The intention of the question was to help the researcher to establish reasons that impelled UMC to migrate to South Africa. Children enter South Africa either as accompanied or unaccompanied. Unaccompanied migrant children refers to those children who are under the age of 18 years and enter South Africa on their own, whereas accompanied children are those that arrive in the country with their parents or any responsible adult. For the purpose

of this study, focus is on unaccompanied migrant children. The study findings revealed complex factors which led children to flee from their mother-land or countries of origin.

The findings of this study established that, for a variety of reasons, unaccompanied migrant children often find themselves alone in South Africa in the absence of adult care. Drawing from the findings, a number of UMC were forced to migrate to South Africa alone while others became separated from their caregivers whilst on the way. In some instances, they were accompanied by a caregiver, but are later abandoned on arrival in the country.

According to UNICEF (2010a), migration is a strategy to escape desperation, extreme poverty and war. It is also a strategy for aspirational upward mobility, access to better job opportunities, education and health care. A number of factors lead to the migration of foreign children to South Africa with some fleeing conflict and unrest, natural disaster or recruitment as child soldiers, while others leave their countries in the face of extreme poverty (Lawyers for Human rights, 2014).

The preceding discussions of factors that compelled UMC to leave their countries for South Africa gave rise to further discussions categorised into the following sub-themes:

#### 4.3.1.1 Push factors

Various scholars advance diverse circumstances that coerced children to migrate to different parts of the world, (Magqibelo, 2010; Echavez, et al., 2014). Therefore, an understanding of an array of factors contributing to child migration (push factors), is crucial for this study. It is for this reason that participants were asked to elaborate on push factors that compelled them to migrate to South Africa. As often argued, reasons why people migrate to a new territory are largely attributed to the *push* and *pull* factors. The push and pull factors are defined as forces that can either induce people to move to a new location or oblige them to leave old residences. These factors can be economic, political, cultural, and environmentally based (Global migration patterns, 2016). The push factors are referred to as those conditions that drive people out of their homes, they are forceful, and relate to the country from which a person migrates (Valtonen, 2008). From the findings, it became evident that the

push factors that compelled UMC to migrate to South Africa are complex. These include; poverty, orphanhood, peer and parental pressure, abuse and exploitation, with the intention to seek a better living elsewhere and to pursue education.

Below follows the discussions of the push factors mentioned above:

- **Poverty**

It is an undeniable fact that children are pushed out of their home countries by poverty with the hope of securing a better life in other parts of the world.

Concerning the matter, participants were reported as saying:

*“...we could go for days without eating, you go to the kitchen there is no food, and we could go for days without making fire because it served no point to make fire when there was nothing to cook at home”.*

*Another child sharing similar views commented;*

*“...I did not have parents, I stayed with my aunt and food was a problem, if you ask for food, my aunt will tell you to go and look for a job and being hungry was not nice, I would just sleep so that I don't feel the hunger pains”.*

*“ ... you know at home food was a luxury, it is something that we rarely had... maybe one in five days we will have food at home”.*

The finding corroborates that of the Human Rights Council-HRC (2016) which also note that extreme poverty has historically been one of the main reasons why children have left their homes in the hope that they will find jobs and make money to better their lives (Skeleton, 2010). It is worth underlining that poverty is a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional concept that encompasses the economic, social, political as well as environmental well-being of people (World Bank, 2010). As a result, it is difficult to provide a single definition of poverty, due to the fact that different authors provide different definitions of this concept. The World Bank Report (2012) defines poverty as the inability to attain minimum standard of living, not having enough to eat, low life expectancy, higher rate of infant mortality, a low educational standard, enrolment and opportunities, poor drinking water, inadequate health care, unfit housing conditions,

and a lack of participation in the decision-making process. Hence, Grimm (2012) and Connell (2010: 141) define poverty as consisting of poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, the incapacity and lack of opportunity to better one's life.

In view of the above definition, poverty could be described as a deprivation of people's well-being, including, among others, the inability to acquire basic goods and services that are of importance for human's daily survival. Failure to provide basic needs or goods for human survival such as access to clean water, food and health undermines Maslow's hierarchy of needs which stresses the importance of fulfilment of basic needs for human survival. The essential point in Maslow's theory is that people tend to satisfy their needs in a chronological sequence, starting with the basic or physiological needs such as food, drink and shelter, moving up the hierarchy until the last needs are met. Maslow's theory rested on the belief that higher-level needs can only be achieved if the lower-order needs have been gratified first. For example, a starving (hungry) UMC is not likely to be motivated to consider safety and affection needs until such time that his hunger has been dealt with or become satisfied.

According to Chinyokai (2013), poverty remains a global problem which requires great attention. Sharing the same view is the World Bank (2012) whose statistical insights points out that more than 350 million people, over half of Africa's population, live below poverty line. Of interest was that, all participants originated from countries that are characterised by widespread poverty such as DRC, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Mozambique. Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe share other elements of political instability. Therefore, migration of UMC from these countries could be linked to poverty.

Following are some of the extracts from the participants confirming poverty as a push factor:

*"...I came to South Africa because I had to come, at home we were staying alone, I was staying with my siblings, my mother and father died long time ago, my relatives were not looking after us, we could go for days without eating, not going to school*

*either. Life was hard, you know hunger is painful. We survived on tree leaves that we got from the bush, believe me I had no choice”.*

*“...I could not take it anymore, life was so difficult, I did not want to die from starvation when other kids were leaving to South Africa, and I decided I should do the same. I was the eldest at home and without parents, so I had to do something to serve myself.*

In addition, the above responses also serve to confirm the assertion that poverty can persuade children to leave their homes especially if they believe they are a burden, or if their parents express that they may be one (UNICEF, 2010b). From the researcher’s perspective, it became evident that lack of food had a direct influence for children to move out of their homes despite them being less prepared for living on their own. It can be inferred from the above discussion, that poverty at any level has the potential to negatively affect children and force them to resort to other survival strategies such as migrating elsewhere.

In accordance with the above storylines, another participant also spoke of how poverty pushed him out of Zimbabwe.

*“...We would go for days drinking water as there was no food at home; no one was working in my family.”*

*“...When I was in Zimbabwe, I was staying with my mom and we were very poor, life was hard because sometimes we used to sleep without eating and sometimes we would sleep outside without shelter”.*

*“...In Zimbabwe hunger was our daily bread, nobody had food even if you ask, no one would give you food”.*

It is reported that numerous children from Zimbabwe migrated to South Africa in an effort to escape poverty, optimistic that they would find jobs and make money to improve their lives (Skelton, 2010; Fritch et.al, 2010; Chiguvare, 2011). HRC (2016) also attests that Zimbabwe, has in recent years, witnessed a steep increase in child migration due to the following factors: abuse of children by caregivers, peer pressure, the death of a caregiver (mostly from HIV- and AIDS-related complications), the



breakdown of traditional families, public budgets that do not prioritize child rights, deteriorating education standards, high school dropout rates and poverty (HRC, 2016).

From the above explications, it is evident that participants constructed poverty as a factor that propelled them to “voluntarily” leave their countries of origin. In support of the above, are Doek, Van Loon, and Vlaardingerbroek (1996) who assert that political and economic imbalances among African countries are a major driving force for migration, coupled with poverty, inequalities, gender-based discrimination, lack of opportunities, abuse, and violence.

- **Loss of Parents/Orphanhood**

There is a proverb in isiZulu that reads as follows; *“intandane enhle umakhothwa nguNina”*, loosely translated, it reads as follows: *a well looked after and a fortunate child is the one who grows within the embraces of their mother*. From the researcher’s point of view, parents ought to be the first teachers and role models for their children. It is also during their children’s developmental stages that they hold a strong influence specifically during the socialization process, a process where children are groomed for the future and prepared to be integrated within the society (Durkheim, 2014). The participants cited loss of parents as another aspect that drove them out of their countries of origin. In essence, parental loss was a common theme shared by some participants. The separation from parents, grandparents, and siblings became one of the most painful experiences UMC suffered. A silent finding though, was that this separation tormented the children leaving them with no other alternatives but to bear their grief in silence and move to South Africa where they had hoped for a better life. For the participants, the loss created a plethora of challenges, such as abuse and mistreatment from the extended family members who were left to take care of them.

Below follows extracts of the UMC perceptions on parental loss:

*“...after the death of my parents, I had no choice but to think steadily, no one cared for me, I relied on begging on the streets, selling ice blocks in the taxi rank. After realising that I was not making enough money through this, I decided to come to South Africa.*

*“...I could not stay in Zimbabwe, I had no parents. ... I was sleeping in the streets so it was better for me to look for work and support myself. My parents died long ago; my uncle could not look after us as he had children of his own. Life was hard”.*

*“...I have no parents in Zimbabwe and we used to live at someone`s place and they did not treat us well, so we decided to come to South Africa to attend school”.*

As one might expect, the family set-up is a vital component of every growing child due to its provision of emotional comfort, economic support, education, guidance and protection. In support of this view is Nziyane (2010) who muses that, the family, as the basic unit of society plays an important role in the lives of individuals especially children as it is anticipated to nurture and provide care and support. However, for the majority of the participants, this is a dream that will never come true because they are orphaned, left to fend for themselves, and forced by unbearable circumstances to flee to foreign lands where they know no one.

It is the researcher’s perspective that loss of parents breeds numerous child-headed households, a phenomenon which is growing in South Africa. Child-headed households are defined as those homes that are run by children in the absence of parents (Luzze, 2002). Strengthening the above point is Nziyane (2010) whose assertions bring to the fore that an increased death-rate of young parents due to AIDS-related diseases has led to an escalating number of orphaned children growing in child-headed households without adult care.

Closer to this discussion is Bronfenbrenner’s ecological (1998) systems theory which is made up of layers that affect the development of a child: microsystem, mesosystem, macro system and chronosystem. This theory rests on the belief that a child should not be looked at in isolation, but holistically considering that all the above systems are interconnected. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model posits that development occurs within an interactive system of nested influences between the child and the environment. An emerging argument is therefore that UMC cannot be fully understood in the absence of their environment and the value of each system surrounding the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). This is attributed to the fact that this theory provides a useful framework for exploring the various levels of interactions and influences that have an impact on the UMC. From a social work point of view, being

knowledgeable about the person's environment facilitates the provision of responsive social services to clients. This theory was thus helpful in a sense that it enabled the researcher to explore UMC experiences from different angles within the interrelated systems, such as shelter, the child protection system (DSD), the immigration system (Department of home affairs), and the government policies that influence child welfare in South Africa.

The following reflections made by one participant bears reference to the above

*".....Since we did not have parents, we sometimes slept on people's verandas, on the streets and under the bridges; and we are all the time scared that some people may assault us. We did not feel safe at all, but we did not have any other alternative".*

The most important setting for any unaccompanied child should be his family because that is where he spends most of the time and where emotional influence originates. However, owing to UMC being alone in the foreign country and without parental supervision, UMC undermines Bronfenbrenner's underpinnings. Worth underlining is that, a family is a place where a child is taught appropriate ways to behave, societal norms and how to be ready for life at large. Without a family to provide shelter and protection, UMC found themselves to be in a vulnerable position.

Given that some of the UMC reported not to have parents, automatically that classifies them as children in need of care and protection. The Children's Act declares that any person below the age of eighteen, who is without any visible form of adult care or supervision, automatically falls within the category of being a state child. Extremely important is that the Children's Act No 38 of 2005 equally applies to all children within the borders of South Africa. The Children's Act makes no distinction between South African born children and foreign children, which basically applies to all the children having equal rights.

- **Parental pressure**

According to Tamanja (2014), the process of child migration decision making is primarily influenced by a combination of actors and conditions. Tamanja also adds that although children are eventually seen to be on the move, the decision to migrate emanates from a complex mix of influences such as that of their parents and the

communities in which children live. In contrast, the report by HRC (2016) revealed that in Honduras, parents allow their children to migrate to other countries to prevent them from being recruited by gang members.

One of the participants who has a family remarked as follows:

*“.....Since we did not have anything to eat in the house, my uncle told me to go out and look for a job so that we can have food to eat”.*

*“.....My mother repeatedly reminded me to be like other children and to go out to look for menial jobs”.*

The above findings are corroborated by Whitehead and Hashim (2005) whose finding is that the decision for the child to migrate is in some cases a negotiated one. The above authors (ibid) further added that due to hostile home circumstances, parents send their children to other countries to look for work. They further revealed that fifty-five percent (55%) of children independently made the decision to move, while twenty-four per cent (24%) stated that their relatives influenced their decision to move and only nineteen per cent (19%) had their parents deciding for them. As a result, children tend to internalise a sense of responsibility to their parents and feel driven to meet their parents' high expectations (Chow and Chu, 2007).

However, the degree of choice attributed to young migrants is difficult to ascertain as parents and families, as well as wider communities, all have a part to play in decision-making about who migrates and when (Thorsen and Hashim, 2011). Similarly, the study findings revealed that the decision to move to South Africa was not taken out of influence as there are a myriad of reasons why children ran away from their home countries and came to South Africa. Below follows some of the UMC confident reports as evidence that their decision to migrate to South Africa was instigated by the parents.

*“... I was forced by my mother to come to South Africa, she told me that I can't be sitting home when girls of my age are making money in South Africa, and supporting their parents. I had no choice but to come and work, because my mom kept on telling me to go and look for a job. There was this other girl next door you know, she came*

*to South Africa and she was sending money to her parents. All the time my mother would tell me about her. It was boring, you know, that is why I decided to come”.*

*“...Me and my siblings were staying with my Aunt, all the time she would tell us that money is all over in South Africa, you can find money on the streets, so I thought, aah why should I not go”.*

*“...Another child said, My mum always had this thing for South Africa, she would always tell me life is good there, and that is why I finally decided to come, because all I knew was that life is good, nothing bad”.*

In the above quotes, we find children who found themselves under pressure from parental demands to leave home and search for work in South Africa. Fritch et al., (2010), as well as Cammisa (2009) confirm that some UMC are encouraged by their parents to migrate to South Africa in search for work, particularly girls, because somehow, motherly roles are shifted to the girl child when a mother is sick or dies. This is driven by strong expectations from some families expecting that children should start giving back to their parents once they grow up especially in an African culture (Stretmo, 2014). Save the Children UK (2007) supports the above scholars by postulating that at times, families pressurise children to seek work across the borders and as a result, children comply with this demand due to a strong desire to fulfil their familial responsibilities.

- **Peer influence**

It has already been indicated above that while some participants may be sent to South Africa by parents/ relatives, some have migrated to South Africa due to peer influence. These findings are parallel to a study conducted by Khair (2005) whose findings revealed that some children moved out of their countries of origin without attaining parental consent. The same author argues that other children did not even consider requesting permission from their parents, as they knew that it would not be granted. Similarly, the study conducted by Chisale (2014) on UMC from Zimbabwe revealed that some UMC migrated because of peer pressure. Some of the participants correctly explained that they were following friends who enticed them into believing that life was rosy in South Africa.

Peer pressure refers to the way in which people of the same social group can influence one another to take certain actions, adopt certain values, or otherwise conform in order to be accepted (Manese, 2012). For the purpose of this study, peer pressure or peer influence is when one chooses to do something that they would not have done, mainly because they want to feel accepted and valued by friends. During interviews, some of the participants clearly indicated that peer pressure had a prominent role in their decision to migrate to South Africa. They explained that they envied their friends who repeatedly bragged about a better life in South Africa. These findings confirm CoRmsa's (2010) views in explaining that many of the children in the Save the Children and UNICEF studies reported that their migration decision was influenced by friends and neighbours, older siblings and other family members who normally display material benefits on returning home. Below follows some remarks by UMC who experienced peer pressure to migrate:

*"...I didn't know where I was going, I was following my friends, I had no idea how South Africa looked like. The only thing that I wanted was to get to South Africa. My friends told me money is all over in South Africa, everything is there and people do not go hungry there. They told me there is money all over the streets of South Africa".*

*"... I came at the age of 11, with my friends; we just decided to walk from my home town and crossed the river so that we can make our lives better. My friends told me life is good in South Africa".*

*"...My friends used to tell me that in South Africa everybody is rich, you know and you can pick money from the streets, I was shocked when I arrived here, and to see what I was thinking is not true, I don't know what to say".*

From the above storylines, it is evident that the decision to migrate to South Africa was made by children themselves following influence by friends.

In relation to the foregoing, Save the Children UK (2010); Skelton (2010:5) attest that children as young as 7 years of age walk illegally across the border in groups of four or five, with older children, aged between 10 - 11 years. Decisions to take such risks were most often made to ensure family stability, to help a family cope with financial difficulties and to continue their education (Fritch et al., 2010). In general, the

researcher is of the view that it is natural for children to rely on friends as they grow and mature.

The above utterances symbolise the magnitude of peer pressure as endured by the participants who during and at the end of the journey are met with great disappointments when faced with the reality of no place to sleep, hunger, exploitation and hiding away from law enforcement agencies. For most participants, there exists a discord between how they imagined their lives and how their reality had manifested, revealing a common thread of unfulfilled expectations.

#### 4.3.1.2 Pull factors

Anecdotally, South Africa is still perceived as the land of opportunities for many migrants including children. However, there are a number of factors which attracts unaccompanied migrant children to this country. These are referred to as the pull factors which Fritch et al., (2010) views as those circumstances that attract an individual to a certain destination or a particular place. Pull factors are precisely the opposite of push factors. They are factors that draw people to a certain location. Examples of pull factors are job opportunities; better living conditions; political and/or religious freedom; enjoyment; education; better medical care; and security (Gonzalez, 2016).

It emerged, from the data collected that participants migrated to South Africa due to the following reasons; quest for education and mainly to secure a better future for themselves. Consistent to these findings is the study conducted by Watters (2008) which revealed that UMC seek refuge in other countries with the hope to secure a better life such as good economic prospects, safety and protection. The majority of the UMC interviewed indicated that they came to South Africa to access education as most of them were not schooling in their countries due to assertions that their parents could not afford to pay for their education.

Push factors are discussed below:

- **UMC Quest for education versus a better life**

The common cited reason that led UMC to South Africa was to seek education. Education has been identified as both a push and a pull factor, as lack of educational opportunities from countries of origin made it necessary for children to leave home to continue their education in other parts of the world, where they know education is easily accessible. Mahati (2009) studied cross-border minor migrants in Musina and his findings point out that although there are numerous UMC entering South Africa for educational purposes, a significant number come in search of improved living opportunities, particularly minors from Zimbabwe. The above are confirmed by the following utterances shared by the participants:

*“... I came here because at Zimbabwe they do not pay school fees for us so here we are going to school free but in Zimbabwe they do not do that. I just wanted to finish my education and be somebody; I also want to go to university and become a pilot”.*

*“.... we were too many at home and my stepfather could not afford to support all of us and pay school fees, so I was not going to school.... at least here we go to school and I am happy about that”.*

*“...I came to South Africa because I know in South Africa there is free education; I wanted to come here so I can go to school, at least here we do not pay school fees and no one is going to chase you from class. At home, I was chased from school because my parents could not afford to pay for my school fees.*

*“...I came to South Africa to build my future, I wanted to become a better person and break the cycle of poverty in my family. I had no choice, I did not want to die uneducated, I had to do something about my life and future, I was not schooling in Zimbabwe”.*

*“...I wanted to study and become better and look after my siblings too. Yes we crossed Limpopo River and I did not care about the crocodiles in the river, all that I wanted was to come to South Africa and start my life, that’s all”.*



The above remarks and comments are consistent with the study by Araia, Kola and Polzer (2010) which declares the hope to access education as one of the core reasons children cross borders into South Africa. It is well documented in the report by UNHCR (2010) that South Africa's free schooling system is drawing UMC from different parts of the world. Consistent with the research findings of this study, the majority of the participants cited searching for educational opportunities as the major reason that lured them to South Africa. Ironically, the study by Crush and Tawodzera, (2011) revealed the demands for study permits, birth certificates, as the preventive factors for UMC to attend school in South Africa. This was confirmed by social workers interviewed, as they lamented the difficulty in helping UMC access schools due to lack of documentation.

The section that follows discusses some of the challenges and experiences of UMC mainly paying attention to their journey from their respective countries to South Africa.

#### 4.3.2 Theme: 2: Experiences and challenges enroute South Africa

Experiences serve as a starting point that enables people to talk about things that have happened, and for establishing similarities and differences (Stretmo, 2014). To get to the core of the research question, participants were asked to share their experiences, and the challenges of being unaccompanied, in a foreign country. Participants had varied but similar experiences to share, which are here clustered into two themes: challenges experienced whilst on the way, from the country of origin, to South Africa, and theme three (3) discussing challenges experienced since arrival in South Africa. Theme two (2) is in line with a study on undocumented migrant children in South Africa which reveals that UMC's journey to South Africa is compounded by many challenges (Ortelee, 2009). IOM (2011) and Schreier (2011) confirmed that UMC who arrived in South Africa continued to face a plethora of challenges such as physical safety, life without parent or guardian, social discrimination, constant struggle to find food, shelter, health care services and employment. However, despite the hardships they experienced, the majority of UMC still wanted to remain in South Africa (Save the Children UK, 2007).

Thus, the following paragraphs discuss the UMC migratory experiences emanating from the challenges they encountered on their journeys to South Africa. They

acknowledged to have come across several challenges, which, among others, included bribery, and other torturous experiences that caused them anxiety, and mixed messages about what life would be like in a new country of their dreams. Some of the experiences are relived below:

All 32 participants were found to have been traumatised on their journey to South Africa. Participants reported with intense emotions how they were severely abused on the road to South Africa. They talked about how they were tortured by what they referred to as “*Magumagumas*”. According to the participants, these are a group of men usually found along the Zimbabwean Beitbridge border post and often reside in the bush targeting mainly the routes that are used by illegal immigrants to South Africa. IOM (2009) describes *Magumagumas* as thieves who are knowledgeable about the secret informal crossing points into South Africa and usually take advantage of people’s desperate circumstances, and abuse people who are desperate and vulnerable. Their role is to help illegal immigrants to cross the crocodile infested Limpopo River to South Africa. However, deducing from the study findings, their role is not all innocent as it involves demanding money, bribes, and clothes from all illegal immigrants, as payment for helping them cross the border illegally. Adding to this finding is the assertion that migration is a perilous undertaking, specifically the one that is illegal (Ortelee, 2009).

In light of the above, one should be aware that such traumatic ordeals ought to leave UMC extremely vulnerable because of the horrendous experiences not experienced by other children of their age group (Sobantu and Warria, 2014). The traumas suffered on the way, may further hinder their psychological growth and development, creating a barrier for successful adjustment in the host country (Ortelee, 2009). Despite the dangers and a variety of hurdles that migration presented to these vulnerable children, migration remains a viable livelihood option for thousands of migrants who enter South Africa every year (IOM, 2009).

As explained above, the following examples further share the kind of challenges experienced:

#### 4.3.2.1 Bribery and robbery

Bribery and robbery on the way to South Africa was a fate that most UMC could not escape from, due to sometimes being subjected to situations where force and coercion apply, resulting in the UMC being robbed or having to bribe their way out. Participants emphasised that they were forced to bribe the 'Magumagumas', as failure to do so would mean they would be prohibited from entering South Africa, something they all were thirsty for, and could not afford to lose.

The following storyline serves as an illustration:

*"...they stole my shoes and jacket, in fact they told me to give them, I had no choice, I had to give them, otherwise they would have beaten me up". If you refuse, they beat you up., They are scary, and their eyes are red.*

Another child stated,

*"...they took my last R50., They asked me to remove my shoes, and they found it under my stockings and they took it".*

*"...we saw this group of dirty men, they wanted money, we had no money, so they robbed us of our jackets and tekkies, but they let us go.*

The above discussions are in line with the stipulation by Fritch et., al (2010) whose view is that the "Magumagumas" go to an extent of sexually abusing illegal immigrants trying to cross the Limpopo River. Similarly, the study by Mahati (2011) and that of Magqibelo (2010) also yielded similar findings about the involvement of the "Magumagumas" terrorising any illegal immigrant making their way to South Africa through informal means. The above quote serves to illustrate the desperation endured by the children to cross into the land where they hope for better living opportunities. UMC confirmed little or no choice but to succumb to this bribery so that they can be allowed to cross over to South Africa. Bribery is referred to as the act of taking or receiving something with the intention of influencing the recipient in some way favorable to the person providing the bribe (Webster, 2011).

From the above quotes, one can deduce UMC extreme vulnerability, UMC's interaction with "Magumagumas", walking alone in the bush, crossing a crocodile

infested Limpopo river and heading to an unknown country provides insight into the risks and dangers of migration. Not only did this undertaking endanger their lives, but also exposed them to all forms of abuse such as rape and torture. Worth highlighting is that despite such experiences and owing to their young age, these children still managed to co-operate with the “Magumagumas” and successfully arrived in South Africa. This is a positive demonstration of their resilience, strength and courage.

#### 4.3.2.2 Long torturous journey

Participants confirmed to have taken long and dangerous routes to South Africa, simply because they did not have any legal documentation to allow them to cross through relevant borders into South Africa. They disclosed that they came in using delivery trucks, buses, as well as walking long distances through the bushes. One participant from Malawi, alleged to have used a boat to illegally crossover, had this to say:

*“...from Masvingo, I walked for five days to reach the Beitbridge border post and from there, I used a bus to get to Musina. When I arrived in Musina, the problem is I did not have a place to sleep so I used to sleep at the shop verandas before I got a place at the shelter”.*

*“...when I came from Zimbabwe, I walked up until I crossed the river and I walked for some time and I found a taxi rank. When I arrived at the taxi rank, I just started to walk along the N1 and I had to follow where many cars were going so I thought that is where Musina is and I just followed. It’s plus or minus 12km from here. I was afraid to stop the cars and I was very hungry, scared and tired, but I kept on walking until I arrived in Musina. I felt happy that I was going to another town but was not sure if I was safe”.*

*“...I was coming from Mozambique with my friends, I was 10 years old. We slept at another man’s house and in the morning we woke up and tried to cross from Mozambique to Zimbabwe. When we woke up in the morning, my clothes were stolen and then there was another man with a dreadlock who helped us cross the river in the morning by the use of a boat. We slept there by the river, it was raining and when we woke up in the morning, we continued moving further. It was raining and we stood in a corner and when we reached Zimbabwe, that other man said sit here I will go and*

*get a car and get you to the border and that man whom we were waiting sent their men to come and get the things which we were having until we pay. And they took our clothes, food and everything we were having and even took my disc with all the music that I liked. I was very angry at these people for what they did to us. They just wanted to sell that music here in South Africa; and another one had a bracelet and they took a knife and cut his bangle. They took the shoes he was wearing and they told me, "Go we do not want to see you". They said, "Run or else we will kill you". I started crying but they proceeded to search for any money I may have had. Later, their colleagues came out and they asked us for an account of what happened and we said nothing. However, they were kind enough to take us to the border and said we should not say anything".*

The above testimony reveals the emotional scars experienced and thus suffered by the participant. A study by the Human Rights Council-HRC (2016) found that often, the UMC prefer using less guarded and riskier methods which are not visible to the local population, the organizations offering services and the immigration authorities. The current study also revealed that UMC resort to taking long, dangerous routes to South Africa because they do not have any legal documents giving them permission to crossover.

In light of the above challenges experienced on the way to South Africa, what is evident is that the UMC suffered multiple challenges which might have a lasting impact on their psychological well-being. This argument is strengthened by UNICEF (2012) in asserting that unaccompanied and separated children are vulnerable to violence, prejudice and exploitation, including xenophobia, gangs, smuggling activities, labour exploitation and abuse by border officials as they are not protected by adult or family members. In this light, it is thus reasonable for one to argue that the painful thoughts endured by the UMC remain etched in their minds resulting in post-traumatic stress disorders. This is attributed to the fact that when asked about their challenges in South Africa, all UMC decided to start by narrating the challenges they encountered on their journey to the promised land of South Africa. However, what seems to be unknown yet is the level of impact of these painful experiences on the psychological well-being of the UMC.

In conclusion, the participants' narratives demonstrate how their journeys from their countries of origin to South Africa were filled with desolation, and that it was more about survival of the fittest.

#### 4.3.3 Theme 3: Experiences and challenges faced by UMC within South Africa

This section examines the challenges facing the UMC once arriving in South Africa. Ironically, while the UMC always hope for a better living, they often find themselves faced with several challenges, presented by the host country. Drawing from the emergent findings, arriving in South African is often found not as rosy as the participants had imagined. Whilst expecting to be afforded opportunities to start rebuilding their lives, they sometimes find themselves confronted by a deluge of challenges, which included among others, xenophobia and misconception, language barrier versus career set-back, discrimination and intimidation, safety and security and a lack of official identity documents, which are discussed in the following paragraphs.

##### 4.3.3.1 Xenophobia and misconceptions

The most frustrating experience and challenge that participants pointed out were the misconceptions and negative attitudes they experienced from South Africans. The UMC fearfully explained how they sensed hostility and rejection. Xenophobia was found to feature within the South African school setting. Those who happened to be admitted in schools related how teachers and pupils called them names and shunned at them. Such actions disregards to Landau and Amit (2014) contention that schools should be the safest places for migrant children to integrate into South Africa. Xenophobic tendencies, however, violate the rights of unaccompanied migrant children in various forms and have negative impact on their successful integration within the classroom setting (to Landau and Amit, 2014),).

The following quotes are illustrative of the above mentioned challenges:

*"....you 'Makwerekwere' children, you come here to eat away our food go back to your own country, we don't like you. Why are you here in our country, why not stay in your own country". You Makaranga, go back to Zimbabwe, we do not need you here, you are thieves go back to your country where you belong".*

*“...they used to say Zimbabwean to me and I used to feel so bored because I am not a Zimbabwean. This made me to hate school because they always say hey you Zimbabwean, Zimbabweans in class.*

*“...other teachers will call you hey Zimbabweans. Like if Cecilia breaks a chair by mistake, they will say Zimbabweans, Zimbabweans. They do not know that others come from Mozambique and Malawi but they keep on saying Zimbabweans. They would even refer to us as prostitutes unashamedly... Sometimes I cry, but crying is a waste of time and one has to fight for their education because there is nothing one can do. You can't even think of changing schools. How will you change? Because other schools do not want Zimbabweans. It's just this school that allows Zimbabweans.*

*“...you know I am not from Zimbabwe, but if I am staying here, they think I am from Zimbabwe. Sometimes other children in class will call you Zimbabwe, Muzimbabwe, mukaranga... and they will say ... I do not eat with a Zimbabwean”.*

The above expressions, by participants, portray xenophobic tendencies, discrimination and no regard for children's rights. Gonzalez (2011) opines that xenophobia is present in all levels of societies of the world, and this includes schools. However, the same author is concerned that any xenophobic aspects could affect how minors present themselves and in developing their identities. Xenophobia is described as actions perpetrated against others by groups or by individuals and permeates through all spheres of life such as workplace, schools, and other community settings (Mian, Andres and Pumariega, 2011). According to Landau and Amit (2014), xenophobia is described as fear of foreigners.

The study by Mahati (2011) illustrates that UMC in South Africa are susceptible to xenophobic comments mainly within the school environment where teachers also take part in engaging in xenophobic utterances. Such a scenario creates difficulties in adjustments to new environments. This becomes a setback for unaccompanied migrant children as they have to bear loss of parents, oppressive nature of the child protection system and the resentment emanating from teachers. As postulated by Mbutsa (2013), a child's ability to respond to new situations with a positive self-

esteem relies on positive environmental support, and through protective environments and strong peer relations.

The study by Clacherty (2006) on the effects of xenophobia on cross-border minors and their psychosocial well-being revealed that xenophobia has a significant effect on the physical and emotional well-being of cross-border minors. Paradoxically, while their South African peers perceive them as being here for food, UMC view their presence in South Africa as developmental and growth oriented. This is based on the rationale that they were denied educational opportunities in their countries of origin due to poor economic conditions. Their thinking points directly to the misconception of their presence in South Africa. Although, United Nations Convention on the rights of the child clearly illustrates that foreign children should not be discriminated against on the grounds of their nationality, however, all participants interviewed indicated that they had endured xenophobic comments and utterances at community and school level. The above storylines confirm Crush and Tawodzera's (2011) assertion that UMC suffer severe utterances in South African schools.

Sigsworth (2010:2) complements this finding by indicating that "most of the xenophobia-related offenses are unreported because foreigners are fearful of the police in an environment where the police have a reputation for complicity in corruption, intimidation and abuse of foreigners". It is against this background that the researcher holds a view that the UMC that still continued to attend school, refusing to allow toxic utterances to derail their vision of getting education, is nothing else, but sheer tenacity. This is based on the fact that amid such hostilities, no UMC indicated to have ever wanted to drop out school. Moreover, that many migrant children come from troubled past. Crush and Tawodzera (2011) propose that such children need to be welcomed rather than be abused; to be understood rather than be harassed; and to be integrated at schools rather than to be constantly reminded that they did not belong in South Africa.

#### 4.3.3.2 Language barrier versus career set-back

Participants identified language as one of the most pressing needs within the borders of South Africa. Language is a mode of communication and differs across communities. As such, one would imagine how difficult it is for the UMC to interact in



all spheres of their social strata, if they do not have a good command of the local language. From experience, it is presumed that any child starts by knowing his or her mother tongue before knowing other languages and mostly people express their feelings better when they speak in their mother tongue. Thus, it is reasonable to argue that the concept of language strengthens relationships among people in any given society. This reinforces the findings of Conger and Donnellan (2007) as well as those of Engle and Black (2008), who established that any child knows why and how to respond when an order is given in their mother language.

The majority of UMC brought forward concerns about having to learn South Africa's local languages. This is based on the researcher's perception that South Africa's public schools are more prone to using local languages as opposed to private schools whose medium of instruction is English. Taking their situation into perspective, private schools are out of reach for all UMC. This implies getting admitted to a public school and having to struggle to comprehend learning in a language which is not their mother tongue. Article 29 of the 1996 Constitution of South Africa states that: "everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice, and that the state has a duty to ensure the fulfilment of that right.

Some participants raised issues of language as the major challenge they faced. This is attested by the following sentiments.

*"... we are forced to do at least one vernacular language; it is difficult, me I fail it, my home language is Shona. I can't even understand a word and at times the teacher will try to explain things in Isipedi in class if the whole class does not understand what she is saying. You know this does not help me at all because I do not hear even a word.*

*"... Language is a problem for me, the teacher talks in Isipedi and sometimes I don't understand and it is hard for me and I am scared to ask her to repeat what she has just said".*

While poor language comprehension could be a barrier in all societal levels, the emerging findings have revealed that the child's inability to speak the local language leads to a career set-back.

That is illustrated in the following storyline by one of the participants:

*“... when I came here, I was attending grade 9 at home, but when I arrived here, my teacher said I can’t go to grade ten, instead she said I have to go back to grade 7.*

*When I asked why, she said I have to first master the local language, because I speak Shona you know, I don’t know any South African language.*

Taking the above extract into consideration means that the language issue has an adverse effect on the career path of UMC. Two grades demotion is likely to prolong the years to be spent by the child in the classroom, and with the possibility of the child finishing beyond the official school age of 18.

While some participants expressed concerns relating to language, some perceived the language issues not as a barrier, but a positive opportunity which enables them to learn the local language. The study revealed that some of the UMC have proudly done well in learning South African vernaculars, mainly Isipedi, which is the official language in Musina schools.

One participant was heard saying:

*“... I am very good in Isipedi, I have obtained a B grade, I like Isipedi and I pass it more than some of the South African children”.*

Although the language issue threatens the survival of the participants in host countries, it goes without saying that some of the participants refuse to be victims of circumstances and thus opted to develop a positive attitude towards the local languages. These enabled them to grasp the local languages effectively. Central to the extract above is the participant’s strength and resilience. Resilience is “the capacity of individuals to access resources that enhance their well-being and the capacity of their physical and social ecologies to make those resources available in meaningful ways” (Ungar, 2010:1).

The above quote also demonstrates the participant’s active role in his/her survival, rather than portraying himself/herself as the victim of language barrier, taking positive steps to learn and to cherish a local language. This step also fits well within the strengths perspective which is an empowerment approach to understanding

challenges faced by individuals (Saleebey, 2014). As opposed to a pathology or deficit based model, the strengths approach assumes that individuals have abilities that are untapped, but if the person could be empowered to use those abilities, they could meet their needs with the available resources. This approach is helpful when working and researching with UMC because, though many challenges confront them, they often manage to navigate the system and thus develop coping strategies that help them survive.

#### 4.3.3.3 Discrimination and intimidation

Almost all participants cited discrimination and intimidation as one of the major challenges they encounter daily in South Africa. A number of discriminatory statements experienced, were shared by different participants mainly within the school setting.

One child was quoted as saying:

*“...people in this country must welcome us because we are one and we are only from a different country.... people should love us for who we are. They don't like us because we are Zimbabweans. They tell you straight, that you Zimbabweans we hate you”.*

The same participant further indicated that:

*“...at school one of the teachers fails us because we are Zimbabwean, but if you give her money, she will pass you.*

Another child reported what most children at school would say *“you Mukaranga, you are ugly, the only thing you know is to come and overcrowd us here, and you don't belong here”.*

These statements are a clear reflection of diverse treatment and discriminatory utterances endured by the UMC. Other participants indicated to having received discriminatory utterances from teachers and their peers at school, which include intimidating comments. What could be drawn from the above comment is a tone of resentment and ignorance of “unconditional positive regard”. The ideal situation is

that teachers are duty-bound to treat these children like they would any other South African child. This would enable the child to adapt easily to their new environment.

The following excerpt is an example.

*“...the teacher said: “You Zimbabweans, Makaranga, you are thieves and have come to eat South African children`s food. Sometimes we give the teacher money to avoid further insults and to be accommodated in class. If you do not buy her (teacher) sweets, she will make you fail at the end of the year”.*

Given the above, it is reasonable to conclude that discriminatory utterances generate fear and uncertainty among migrant children. What compounds the situation is the fact that such comments come from teachers who, by virtue of their profession, are expected to protect the interests of all learners including the vulnerable UMC. The teacher is expected to provide guardianship while the child is at school. Ironically, they are the ones who label and intimidate vulnerable children. In supporting correction of this situation, Blum (2005) argues that the school is the primary social structure for children and the teacher’s role is vital, because a positive school environment encourages communication and interaction and does not tolerate harassment, bullying or violence of any kind. According to Blum (2005), no factor is more important for positive school outcomes than the children’s perception of the teacher’s attitude toward them. When children believe that their teachers care about them, they tend to develop more trust towards them and also tend to work towards meeting those high expectations.

According to Blum (2005:2), a positive school environment enhances a child’s motivation, increases educational aspirations and improves attendance. On the contrary, Blum further argues that an unhealthy school environment, one in which rules are unclear or arbitrary, bullying is accepted if not condoned, and teacher attitudes are indifferent, hostile or unnecessarily punitive, is a likely setting for high absenteeism, misbehavior and interpersonal aggression. Furthermore, noting that; the school environment is the key ingredient in a child’s academic success. Tawodzera (2011) further argues that there is significant evidence that schools themselves are not observing the children’s rights guaranteed in international conventions and the South African Constitution.

In this study, the emerging findings are that irrespective of the country of origin, all the UMC are referred to as “**Makaranga and Makwerekwere**”, a discriminatory name referring to foreign nationals. These derogatory names given to the UMC tend to have a negative impact on their self-esteem as they wonder what sets them apart from local children.

Different participants lamented being painted with the same brush as every foreign child is referred to as a Zimbabwean at school and in communities. They expressed hard feelings about this as they are proud about who they are, not withstanding their fluid situation as migrants.

One participant from the Democratic Republic of Congo voiced her concern as follows:

*“... they forget that some of us do not come from Zimbabwe ...its boring, they call all of us Zimbabweans ah, I am not from Zimbabwe, and I am from Congo.”*

How UMC experience their early school years may in large part determine their academic future and negatively affect their emotional, social, and mental development (Stretmo, 2014). Children normally benefit from a positive, supportive learning environment, where their contributions are valued. The experiences that children have in their first classrooms are foundational to how they think about themselves as learners, students, and members of the communities around them. Adair (2015) argues that, any experience of discrimination at this vulnerable age can negatively affect personal development and academic trajectories, and limit the emotional benefits of early childhood education. A number of UMC responses map the types of personal experiences and structural discrimination they endured in a school environment. Amidst this discrimination, it is important to note that some managed to pull through the systems and prospered.

#### 4.3.3.4 Safety and Security

Participants cited issues of lack of safety and security as a threat to their well-being. This referred to safety and security within the school premises, shelter (for those accommodated in shelters) and within the communities where they live. Bullying at school as well as in shelters was raised as a serious concern. Mention was made of

security guards at the shelter allowing boys from outside to jump over the shelter walls to take girls out by force.

The following assertions attest to the seriousness of a lack in safety and security in the shelters where the UMC are accommodated:

*“... security guards allow boys from the streets to jump over the walls to intimidate us. They give the security guard some cigarettes and he allows them inside our girls’ shelter”.*

*“...boys come at night to look for girls, some girls go with boys, no one cares. We have reported it to Magogo (caregiver), but she is always sick, she ignores the complaints”.*

*“...boys in class will come and touch me and say I do you what .... What.”*

Although it is clear that the child wanted to say boys come into the classroom and inappropriately touch her private parts, she seems embarrassed to say the exact words. However, the message was, clear, moreover that she may have been experiencing some challenges with the language of expression.

This finding attests to the conclusions by Mahati (2011) when saying that the physical safety and security of unaccompanied migrants is often compromised. Similarly, Willie and Mfubu (2016) argue with much concern that many children who enter foreign countries seeking safety and a better quality of life are not necessarily afforded the protection and safety, in their best interests, by the hosting countries.

While the researcher acknowledge the efforts made by these shelters at keeping the children off the street, providing them with accommodation and food, in the view of the researcher, shelters still need more improvements. The view emanates from poor living standards of these shelters, and specifically with regard to inadequate space, poor hygiene and nutrition. Life in the shelters is currently not viable due to inadequate supply of food, sanitation and safety, hence the UMC trying to make the best out of the worst situations. The above statement serves as a good example of how participants tried to normalise the abnormal circumstances they experience in South Africa.

#### 4.3.3.5 Documentation

In this regard, the key finding is that without legal identity documentation, UMC cannot access a wide range of other rights such as education, social service and health care. Documentation forms an important part of each person's daily activities since most transactions require positive identification. For unaccompanied migrant children, it is more vital as it forms a significant part of their protection. In the absence of an identity document, the child becomes more exploitable and their basic rights violated. Such circumstances not only violate these children's rights, but also threaten their future well-being.

Although the majority of UMC had an interest in going to school like local children, their capacity to do so is limited due to a lack of documentation. The reasoning for this is evidenced by the fact that although UMC are allowed to attend school, this problem haunts them as they near writing the matric examinations, where identity documents are required. In addition, and drawing from the findings, let it suffice to note that issues of identity documents (ID) delay the UMC's admission to school and thus detrimental to their future; they are also prone to be arrested and be deported. For example, a seventeen year-old Zimbabwean boy indicated that he is in Grade 12, and seeing that he has no ID, the school asked him to bring along his original birth certificate from his home country. Since he had earlier lied about his actual age, he was forced to temper with figures on his birth certificate to suit his age. Thus he fraudulently made and submitted a photocopy instead. This challenges the view that access to basic education is a human right that is applicable to "everybody" irrespective of one's nationality (South African Bill of Rights Article 22). Another daunting example relates to some children who attested to have been at some point arrested by the police when they were walking from school due to not having any form of identity document. The children explained that they were only released after the intervention of the shelter management who provided the court order to the police as proof that they were indeed children under their care.

As articulated by Mahati (2011), the nightmare of unaccompanied minors in accessing services starts with documentation. Similarly, Neocosmos (2010) emphasises that due to the UMC illegal status in South Africa, access to identification documents becomes a major challenge. Without any document that

legalises their stay in the country, such children remain to be unrecognised in the country and this becomes an automatic exclusion from other forms of rights, leaving them exposed to different forms of exploitation and abuse. In view of the fact that they are illegal in the country, they are not in a position to freely report the abuses as this is equal to handing themselves over to the authorities (Neocosmos, 2010). Thus, they become exposed to arrest by police, followed by detention in hostile conditions for unspecified periods of time in preparation for deportation to the countries they ran away from (SASLU, 2004). This basically, means their rights to adequate shelter, food, clean water or adequate sanitation, which are all constitutional rights, become threatened. Most of the children noted with concern lack of appropriate documentation which prevents them from getting jobs. They also expressed their vulnerability to being arrested by law enforcement officers. Participants aired their frustrations as follows:

*“...you know one day the police were doing some patrols and they found me on the streets, they asked me my ID, I didn’t have it, they put me in police custody. I told them am staying in the shelter; they gave me the phone to call the shelter. The shelter came with the court order and I was released”.*

The boy further went on to tell the researcher that, although he had a court order as his legal documentation allowing him to stay in the country, the order was kept by the shelter. Without the legal possession of this document, children are always at risk of being detained and deported. This confirms the report by Lawyers for Human Rights (2005) who argued that children were detained with adults and this exercise should come to an end. Notwithstanding this report, it is evident that children are detained and risk deportation from South Africa.

*“...I don’t have an ID so when I am writing matric, they want my ID, and I give them my birth certificate so that I can write matric, but now the problem is that.... I gave them my wrong age, so I told them I am 18 and my birth by the time I write matric I will be 21. But I will come up with a plan, I will change my date of birth and make a copy, and I will give them that copy that I have changed”.*

*“...we get easily arrested when we are outside the shelter. During school holidays, we look for piece jobs in town, and that is when we get exposed to police threats”*



In this study, social workers indicated that a lack of documentation limited the child's participation in other social activities. The social worker gave a scenario where a child with an outstanding performance had to be replaced by a South African child.

This is indicated in the following quote:

*"...you know we had this child who was very good in soccer, and he was excelling, some sponsor wanted to sponsor that child but because this child had no identity document, he could not be put in the national team. We had to replace that child with another South African child, who was not a good performer."*

As referred to by Neocosmos (2010), non- documentation in the host country deters UMC from receiving equal treatment in health, education and social service sectors. Equally, Fritsch, Johnson and Juska (2010) are of the opinion that while these minors survive without any parent / guardians, most of them lack knowledge and awareness of their rights as children. This leads to missing opportunities that could have added to their personal development. For those children who are lucky to be provided with a court order to legalise their stay in South Africa, it is worth noting that the court order becomes a temporary source of protection for them as it expires at the age of maturity leaving the children with no real long-term durable solutions. For Willie and Mfubu (2016), effective child protection can only be achieved by considering the best interests of the child from childhood and beyond. They further argue that any approach which fails to take a child's future into account fails to meet the best interests of the very same child.

While a lack of documentation fuels uncertainty and anxiety among UMC, one of their amazing strength is that they however refused to be disrupted from their intended goals and continued attending school. Documentation is a vital component in realization of their human rights. Delving deeper into the findings of this study, it is evident that the UMC are not accorded the same treatment and service provisions as the South African children, as enshrined in the Children's Act and the UNCRC, hence the inequalities are visible. Unaccompanied migrant children may be in school, but their access to education is certainly limited. The fact that UMC are requested to produce identification when they are supposed to sit for their matric examinations is evidence of this limitation. The fact that the majority of UMC testify to this fact should

be of great concern to the South African government, social workers and policy-makers.

Although after long deliberations UMC are ultimately allowed to sit for the matric exams, sometimes after producing their birth certificates or passports, the truth of the matter is that no matter how much they excel in their studies and wish to enroll at tertiary institutions, the issue of documentation remains a critical stumbling block. It is without question that whichever tertiary institution they want to enroll with, they would be requested to produce their valid identification. What the South African government fails to take into consideration is that improving the lives of all migrant children (through educating them) will yield large long-term benefits for their future well-being and the country as a whole would benefit as they become productive citizens. Supporting the notion is Mandela (1994) who muses as follows, "*Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of a mine that a child of a farm-worker can also become the president*". That is to say; it is through education that the lives of UMC could be improved.

In conclusion, let it suffice to reiterate that UMC fled their countries of origin without any resources and this further contributed to their vulnerability and difficulties in rebuilding their lives in South Africa. Given the above statement, it is therefore important to appreciate the efforts made by UMC to manage to cope with their living conditions in South Africa as the host country. Given that, it has emerged that the research participants had no choice but to survive at all costs. They adopted a range of strategies to overcome the difficult living conditions imposed on them by their circumstances. These coping strategies are comprehensively discussed in the following sections.

#### 4.3.4 Theme 4: Coping strategies

Taking into account the treacherous challenges UMC faced on their way to South Africa and within the country itself, it is necessary to make a review of the coping strategies they depended on to survive.

Coping is conceptualized as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or

exceeding the resources of the person” (Lazarus, 1998: 201). Hence, coping strategies are defined as cognitive and behavioral efforts used by an individual to reduce the effects of stress (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). For Salloum and Lewis, (2010) coping strategies are explained as influencing how individuals manage stressors in their lives. In addition, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified two main types of coping strategies, namely, emotional-focused one, where a person adopts avoidance with a lot of internal restructuring taking place within the individual; and secondly, problem –focused coping, where an individual uses action- oriented coping responses. The above explications are in line with the emerged findings of this study, which revealed that UMC also make use of emotion- focused and problem- focused coping strategies in managing stressful incidents they endured in South Africa.

Life’s adversities are part of everyday living. These adversities could be mentally exhausting and might cause negative effects relative to that individual’s psychological make-up. Therefore, in order to combat all the stress emanating from such life adversities, everyone is obliged to develop some coping mechanisms, and so are UMC. It is the researcher’s perspective that failure to develop coping mechanisms might cause significant psychological dysfunction in any person. Given the nature of their circumstances, UMC were forced to develop coping mechanisms in order to achieve their dreams and aspirations in South Africa. Adding to this finding is Derluyn and Broekaert (2008) who reiterate that adapting within a new society can be an overwhelming and challenging process for UMC as they are unfamiliar with the language and culture of the new environment.

Other findings in this study revealed that despite facing countless adversities within the borders of this country, UMC often manage to develop and implement some survival strategies, which are effective (Mahati, 2014). Large bodies of research have recently started to conceptualise unaccompanied migrant children as "active survivors" despite their high degree of vulnerability (Kohli, 2006b; Ní Raghallaigh and Gilligan, 2010). Although authors such as Schreier (2011) and Bhabha (2011) own up to the vulnerabilities surrounding UMC, Stretmo (2014) argues that, minimal attention has been paid to coping mechanisms of this population group. Ní Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010: 226) reiterate that “increasing attention has been paid to their (UMC) capacity for resilience; nonetheless little research has been done on the exact

manner in which they cope”. Resiliency is characteristic of those individuals who adjust effectively, and proceed to live successful lives after overcoming multiple challenges confronting them in the course of their life (Masten, 2007).

Therefore, drawing from the above discussions, it was thus vital for the researcher to explore how participants coped in a new country without any form of parental support and supervision, hence the question regarding their coping strategies. From this exploration, two broad sub-themes emerged, namely, problem-focussed and emotion-focussed coping. They will be discussed below.

#### 4.3.4.1 Emotion-focused coping

Emotion-focused coping is a coping strategy that is directed towards changing one's own emotional reaction, used by the “coper” in situations that are seen as unchangeable or where nothing more can be done to modify the present harmful or threatening circumstances (Folkman and Lazarus, 1984). In the same vein, Donnelly, (2002) posits that emotion-focused coping strategy is well suited for stressors that seem uncontrollable. In simpler terms, this form of coping is directed towards modifying the individual's emotional response to presenting the problem. In this light, it is logic to argue that UMC after realizing that there was little or nothing they could do to change their situations, they resorted to using emotion-focused coping strategies, which they explained as: religious coping, coping through distraction\ avoidance, accepting the status quo, and coping through suppressing painful memories. Each of these will be discussed below.

- **Religious coping**

In the context of this study, coping through religion was a sentiment echoed by the majority of the participants. Remarkably, most of the participants held a very strong belief in God. Religious coping involves the use of religion in an effort to cope with circumstances that are deemed challenging or stressful (Ní Raghallaigh, 2011). However, Cass and Moore (2006) warn that, religious coping should not be confused with church-going or the frequency thereof. Rather, the same authors argue that it relates to how people use their faith in God to seek guidance and support to deal with life's problems. Nonetheless, the scarcity of research in this area warrants concern

(Ni Raghallaigh, 2011). Schieman, Bierman and Ellison (2011) describe religious belief as a core component of religiousness, which plays a major role in preventing the effects of stress on an individual's mental health. Cornell (2015) says that the greater the increase in various stressors in life, the more likely an individual will employ religious coping in order to deal with these stressors.

Religious coping, was perceived as an important coping strategy by the study participants, as they proudly indicated to have sought the love and compassion of God when things got tough in South Africa. They confirmed turning to religious coping to alleviate their stress resulting from everyday life challenges. Not only did they hold a strong view that their problems would be resolved by praying, but they were also convinced that God watched over them all the time and that no evil would happen to them.

The following quotes are examples illustrating children's belief in God as a coping strategy.

*"...no matter what they do to me in class ... I keep quiet, I wanted to go to school, I suffered, I believe in God, we are all his children. God is watching over us and one day, he will punish all those who are doing wrong to us".*

*"...I believe in God, we all go to church, the pastor tells us that God is there to protect all of us. I go to church because God can be there for you".*

*"...I survive nicely, I read the Bible every day, I enjoy reading my Bible and they say in life never give up. Pray and Jesus will bless you if you are a good child; wait for your time and the door will open for you".*

*"... I just survive by grace of God. It is God who protects us, if he cannot protect us there is nothing we can do, those who hurt us God will punish them one day".*

*"...you know life was very hard on our way to South Africa ..... but God guided us until we arrived here, I believe in Him, He is so faithful to his children.*

From the above quotes, it could be concluded that religion plays an important role in the lives of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa. The children's

relationships with God provided them with a sense of meaning, comfort and an increased sense of control (Ni Raghallaigh, 2011).

- **Coping through distraction\avoidance**

The study has revealed that some of the children make use of distraction or avoidance as a coping mechanism. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) describe the concept of distraction as the process of diverting attention away from one issue and focusing attention on another. Avoidance coping refers to a maladaptive coping mechanism characterized by the effort to avoid dealing with a stressor or escape particular thoughts or feelings. This means that UMC avoid thinking or remembering any painful memories they might have endured in their life- time and as an alternative decide to think positively about their life (Ní Raghallaigh and Gilligan, 2010). Suppression of emotions and distraction from thoughts are common in literature regarding UMC (Beiser and Wickrama, 2004; Goodman, 2004; Kohli, 2006b).

For Lazarus and Folkman (1984), if a person discards thinking about a potential threat, the physiological stress response also turns off, resulting in the relaxation response. When people believe there is nothing that they can do to change the situation, it does little good to think about it (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Instead, the distress created by thinking about it can result in physical and emotional harm (Davis and Carter, 2008). Under these circumstances, it may be helpful to turn one's mind to an enjoyable, engaging leisure activity (Lyubomirsky, 2008). Leisure experiences that are personally meaningful, challenging, and enjoyable are optimal experiences for disengaging from stressful routines or circumstances (Hood and Carruthers, 2002). Scholars such as Beiser and Wickrama (2004) and Kohli (2006a) emphasise that while distraction appears as functional coping strategy, it is not sustainable and may have detrimental effects in the long-term.

Similar to the literature findings, participants have indicated that they keep themselves busy to escape particular stressful events. The following excerpts are illustration of how participants make use of this coping strategy:

*"... when we come back from school and find that there is no food, we play soccer, you know I love soccer and it keeps us busy". We have made a playground in the*

*shelter, where we compete as soccer teams. We enjoy playing. We play until it is late”.*

*“... I come back from school and sit under the shade and do my school work. I make sure I try and solve maths problems that were of challenge in class. When I go to class the following morning, I help other children who are struggling with maths. I don't have time to play. My playground is my maths book. It keeps me busy all the time, so much that after school, children from the community come to me so that I help them with maths problems. I enjoy it when I help other children; some of their parents invite me in their homes so that I help their children. Some give me food or pocket money afterwards and this keeps me busy”.*

*“...I prefer to water my vegetable garden when I'm bored just to keep myself busy. I make my own vegetable garden, as you can see (the child pointing to a well cultivated garden outside. You see that nice garden is mine. I sell vegetables to the community and I get pocket money. I don't like going to town to wash cars, I prefer doing my garden and sell the produce.*

A 17-year-old participant proudly said:

*“...I grow my vegetables in the shelter, the people from the community come to buy, and when they buy, I can have pocket money you see and sometimes I buy bread or any kind of food. This is called forced maturity, we don't have parents here and one should be able to mature faster than normal kids. You know all of us have vegetable beds.... We all do that... each person cultivates his bed and make sure that it is watered... we water them after school”.*

The above extract shows that most of the UMC had to take up adult responsibilities due to poor provisioning of basic necessities such as food. The findings further reveal that some of the UMC had to come up with solutions which could work out for them by making use of available land within the shelter. Some had to improvise for extra food supplies by planting vegetables which they sell to the local communities. It is through this initiative that they even manage to have surplus money which comes handy in instances where there is completely nothing to eat in the shelter. While this kind of action underlines the difficulties faced by UMC, on the contrary it relates well within the scope of the strength perspective, which postulates that, every environment

has resources and that every individual has the capacity to grow and change. Hence some of the UMC would have the ability to identify the land where they could grow vegetables or even construct a sports field. Growth and change in this regard could be likened to their level of maturity, in this case “*forced maturity*” seeing that they are forced by their circumstances to mature earlier than children of their age.

In this light, not only did these children display the strengths to identify available opportunities within their environment, but also their ability to take action in improving their living circumstances; through doing menial jobs thus destructing them or avoiding to think about hunger and other frustrating stressors. Their ability to bounce back and to cope with challenges thrown at them by the hosts clearly supports the notion that children are not passive victims and that they are social actors within their environment.

- **Acceptance of the status quo**

Although UMC are entitled to protection under UNCRC (1989) and Children’s Act, of 2005, evidence suggests that UMC continue to be marginalised amid domestic legislations and international agreements meant to protect them (Mabudusha, 2014) and Willie and Mfubu (2016). Findings in this regard reveal that some of the UMC have decided to accept their situation as it is, seeing that there is little or nothing they can do to change the status quo. It is out of this despondence that they decided to accept their situation as it is. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), this kind of the coping strategy - accepting their status quo as maintains - is used when people believe that there is little that they can do or should do to change a situation. Their view is that accepting the situation as it is becomes the best possible solution for those choosing this kind of coping strategy. Kabat-Zinn (1990) reiterates that acceptance of a situation is experiencing it for what it really is, without defense or distortion, and letting it be.

The following excerpts illustrate acceptance of one’s situation.

*“... we just manage,... there is nothing we can do, we can cry in class and we just finish and we just drop that and life goes on.”*



*“... I just ignore issues and get them out of my head and carry on with my life, crying does not help at all.”*

*“...even if there is no food at the shelter, we just cry on as if nothing happens, we go to bed or go and look for a job in Pakistan shops, wash dishes for community members”.*

The following section discusses the second coping strategy utilised by UMC.

#### 4.3.4.2 Problem-focused coping

Problem-focused coping involves identifying a problem that is causing stress and then developing and putting into action possible solutions for effectively managing the presenting problem (Folkman and Lazarus, 1984). This strategy is adopted when the situation is perceived as controllable. A person making use of the problem-focused coping strategy deals with the cause of the problem by finding out information on the problem and developing new ways to manage that particular problem (Dombeck, 2006). Problem-focused coping is aimed at changing or eliminating the source of the stress (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980). For Folkman and Lazarus (1980), both emotion and problem-focused coping mechanisms are used by individuals in response to stressful events. Kosic (2004) noted that problem-oriented strategies are related to positive adaptation and successful resolution of problematic situations as indicated below:

- **Coping through lying**

Lying was identified as a coping strategy that most of the UMC rely on. The study has revealed that the majority of UMC lie a lot specifically to the officials (social workers) working with them. Their lies range from giving false information about where they come from, their age, their relatives and abuse they endured at home. The findings have also revealed that some of the UMC go to an extent of claiming to have been abused in their countries in order to get the sympathy of the official as stipulated by social workers.

The following storylines serve as confirmation:

*“ I lied to the social workers about the village where I come from. I told her the wrong village so that when they try to send me back, they will not find my relatives. Because if you tell them the truth, they will take you back home. I don’t want to go back there and suffer again.*

*“...I told them my wrong age, I told them I am 13 when I was actually 15, because otherwise, I will have only three years to stay in the shelter, then what will happen to me if I leave the shelter. You can’t stay at the shelter after the age of 18”.*

Another point of deceit was illustrated in the following response:

*“...I was passing and they stopped me, they asked where I was going, I lied, I told them I am going to wash cars for people and the police let me go.” I knew exactly that I wanted a way to cross the border to South Africa because if I had told them the truth, they would have taken me back home.*

From the above quotes, it is clear that some of the UMC provided social workers with false information to avoid re-unification process or being sent back to countries of origin. Although such behaviour cannot be condoned, the strategy of giving false information simply shows the creativity and strategic thinking skills that UMC have developed to survive.

To corroborate the findings social workers also attested to UMC giving them false information to prevent them from sending them back to their respective countries. Such tendencies are further confirmed by Ní Raghallaigh (2010) who opines that; the majority of UMC displayed a high degree of mistrust towards officials which led them to providing misleading information. He further argued that distrusting has become a useful way of coping and of protecting themselves from hurt and harm.

A girl child who entered South Africa illegally at the age of nine protected herself from the police by telling a lie: *“...You know when I came to South Africa, I lied to the police at the border, and they asked me where I was going and I said I was going to pick bottles for recycling when I knew that I was actually going to South Africa.”*

The other participant also confirmed lying to a social worker: *“...I told the social worker that I come from Masvingo whereas I am from Bulawayo; I gave her the wrong address. I also told a lie that my parents passed away and gave wrong details of their names”*.

Given their hostile encounters in South Africa, the possibility is that UMC might have found it hard to trust social workers which led to their deceit. Although the participants did not specifically mention any feelings of distrust, it is the researcher's judgment that the inability to tell the truth was a symbol of distrust. This could also have been encouraged by their unauthorised status in the country. As indicated in one of the above quotes, another child lied about his age. This he did in fear of being thrown out of the shelter earlier than expected. At the age of maturity (18 years), support is no longer provided, and many are thus at risk of becoming illegal immigrants because long-term solutions are not identified and implemented prior to maturity age. As a result, UMC are more prone to provide a wrong age so that they can stay longer within the shelter. Regarding this challenge, some of the social workers indicated that although they try to deal with this problem of lying about their age through age assessment tests, the assessment procedure is not always accurate due to the age assessment surgeons lacking effective equipment to determine the correct ages.

- **Coping through optimism and hope**

Coping through optimism is defined by Ní Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010) as a strategy that entails nothing about adopting a positive outlook. The authors further clarify that, this strategy entailed focusing on positive aspects of the present situations compared to those of the past, which generate a sense of hope, which in turn help children to cope with difficulties in their present lives. In essence, the same authors indicated that they had created meaning out of their current difficulties by placing them in the context of past problems and future opportunities. The study conducted by Goodman (2004) on unaccompanied migrant Sudanese children also found that ‘emerging from hopelessness to hope’ was a key theme within Sudanese UMC narratives. Goodman further argued that these UMC accounts of flight experiences were characterised by a sense of hopelessness, powerlessness and an “emptiness of existence”. Lack of hope was strongly linked to lack of control, self-

efficacy or value as an individual. Conversely, on accounts of their arrival in South Africa, an increased sense of hope was portrayed. For Goodman (2004), the construct of hope is a strong theme in the literature on coping.

Similar to the above explications, the UMC in this study seems to have lost hope for a better life in their homelands, revealed by despondent responses starting from the times they were still in their countries, these exposing that their countries had failed them by not providing them with basic rights such as food and clothing. Nevertheless, it is this despondency that compelled them to leave for South Africa.

*“...at least here we are schooling, I could see that my life was going down the drain and that is why I decided to come to South Africa”.*

*“...I hope for the best, life at home was very bad, no food, no schooling, you know I mean nothing”. I had lost hope; I never thought I will be in a class room again. But here I am schooling”.*

For any concerned citizen, a child as young as 11, and not receiving schooling, should be a cause for concern and something that needs to be handled with urgency. Despite challenges and negative experiences, no child mentioned that they had lost hope in South Africa during the data collection process. Most seemed to have developed optimistic views about their lives in South Africa compared to their native countries, especially when they emphasised that at least here (South Africa) they were receiving education. The signs of appreciation were displayed by a majority of participants, with some clearly indicating their feelings of joy. This was a clear sign of hope in the host country as compared to signs of despondency in their countries of origin. The fact that these children would provide the social workers with false information, to obstruct the re-unification process, simply means they had hope that they were better off in South Africa than in their home lands.

Appreciating the positive in their current circumstances through making comparisons to the alternatives appeared to be a means by which UMC maintained a hopeful and resilient frame of mind. The ability to recognise relative advantages of their circumstances (i.e. viewing the 'glass as half full') appeared to be a deliberate strategy employed by UMC and is similar to the strategy, namely, 'adopting a positive outlook' identified by Ní Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010).

## **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter concerned the presentation of the first part of the data gathered from the participating UMC. The data discussed emanated from transcribed interviews with thirty-two unaccompanied migrant children from shelters in Limpopo and Gauteng Provinces. The biographical profile of participants was presented in the first section, followed by a discussion of four themes, seventeen sub-themes coupled with direct quotes from the transcribed interviews were also subjected to literature control. The information gathered was found to be aligned to the objectives of this study. The first theme looked at the reasons why UMC migrated to South Africa while the second theme presented their challenges experienced along the way to South Africa. The third theme explored the challenges experienced within their new environment. Theme four presented coping strategies employed by the UMC to cope with the challenges in the new environment, South Africa.

The following Chapter presents part-two of the data presentations, and findings from social workers who participated in the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS – PART TWO

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the first part of the data presentation, and discussions thereof drawn from a sample of the UMC in shelters in Limpopo and the Gauteng provinces. This chapter subsequently presents data and findings from a sample of social workers directly working with UMC in South Africa. The table below presents the biographical profile of the social workers who participated in the study.

#### 5.2 Biographical profile of the participants

*Table 4: Biographical information of the participants*

Participants	Year started working with UMC	Total number of years of direct involvement with UMC	Race	Gender	Profession	Province
S1	2012	4	B	F	Social worker	Limpopo
S2	2011	5	B	F	Social worker	Limpopo
S3	2010	6	B	M	Social worker	Limpopo
S4	2012	4	B	M	Social worker	Limpopo
S5	2013	3	B	F	Social worker	Gauteng

<b>S6</b>	2010	6	B	F	Social worker	Gauteng
<b>S7</b>	2015	1	B	M	Social worker	Gauteng

### **5.3 Discussion of the biographical profile of the participants**

A total of seven social workers were interviewed from the two chosen provinces namely, Limpopo and Gauteng. Four (4) social workers were from Limpopo, and three (3) were from the Gauteng Province. To collect the data, semi-structured interviews were used with individual participants. For convenience, the interviews with social workers took place in their respective offices at the time suitable for each of them. Baker, Edwards, and Doidge (2012) sheds some light on the importance of conducting interviews at a time and place that is convenient for participants for their effective participation. The emergent findings showed that both provinces have few in-service social workers who are directly rendering services to UMC as compared to the high numbers of UMC found in both provinces. The researcher attributes the glaring disparities to the severe shortage of social workers in South Africa (DSD, 2009b).

From Table 5.2.1 above, it is explicit that participants have between one and six years of experience of direct involvement with UMC, and thus deemed to be in good professional positions to provide the researcher with valuable data. Ethnicity wise, the participants, in this category were African blacks. This correlates well with the demographics of the country which shows the black African population as the majority (45.11 million) and constitutes approximately 81% of the total South African population (Statistics South Africa, 2016). Of the seven participants, three (3) were male while four (4) were female. This depicts the mix-gendered nature of the social work profession, but with a predominance of females (Hicks, 2015).

## 5.4 Presentation of data categorised into themes and sub-themes

According to Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen and Snelgrove (2016), a theme is the main product of data analysis that yields practical results in the field of study. Put differently, it is considered a thread of underlying meaning, implicitly discovered at the interpretative level and elements of subjective understanding of the participants. Each theme may have some sub-themes as sub-divisions to obtain a comprehensive view of data and uncovers a pattern among the participants (Vaismoradi et.al, 2016:101).

In this section, the social workers provided detailed descriptions of their experiences and perceptions of challenges they are confronted with when rendering service to UMC. Therefore, themes and sub-themes that illustrate these descriptions are discussed below and thus conveyed through verbatim quotes and literature control. In this study, data analysis was carried out by both the independent decoder and the researcher independently. These were later discussed by the independent coder, the researcher and the supervisor. The rationale was to maximise credibility of the emergent findings. To strengthen the validity of the study, some of the findings from data collected from social workers were corroborated with findings from interviews with UMC participants. Therefore, it is important to note that there may be substantial possibility of overlaps relative to the findings.

From data analysis, the following themes and sub-themes emerged as indicated in the table below.

### 5.4.1 An overview of themes and sub-themes

#### ***Table 5: Overview of themes and sub-themes***

##### **5.4.1.1 Theme 1: Challenges faced by social workers when rendering services to the UMC.**

###### **Subthemes:**

- Lack of transport
- Language barrier
- Lack of emotional support



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation</li> </ul>
<p><b>5.4.1.2 Theme 2: Common challenges often reported to social workers by the UMC.</b></p> <p><b>Subthemes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for identity documents</li> <li>• Need for food</li> <li>• Need for Shelter</li> <li>• Schooling opportunities</li> </ul>
<p><b>5.4.1.3 Theme 3: Social workers' experiences and perceptions with regard to servicing the UMC</b></p>
<p><b>5.4.1.4 Theme 4: Social workers' experiences and perceptions with regards to existing guidelines on UMC in South Africa.</b></p>

5.4.1.1 Theme 1: Challenges faced by social workers when rendering services to UMC

The findings confirmed that social workers are exposed to various challenges when rendering services to UMC. Therefore, this theme explains the challenges inherent in the provisioning of social work services to unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa. Lack of transport, language barrier, lack of emotional support and documentation are key factors identified by this study; which complicates social workers' service delivery to UMC in South Africa.

All the above listed aspects are discussed below.

- **Lack of Transport**

This study revealed that all social workers were concerned and worried about lack of transport. The participants regarded this as a major obstacle to their service provision to UMC. Drawing from the researcher's knowledge and experience of the social work fraternity, transport plays an important role to social workers providing service to UMC and all the people of South Africa in need of social work services. Therefore, it is important to underline that whether working in a private or governmental sector,

transport is an imperative resource for social workers. The reason is that a social worker's duty involves conducting home visits, attending courts and some other administrative duties requiring a social worker to move from one point to another. As a result, transport turns out to be an essential resource for everyday functioning of all social workers. Without transport, a social worker's duty is inadequately performed and this often leads to less productivity and poor service delivery to the intended recipients.

While Nhedzi (2014) argues that lack of transport is attributed by the government's poor financial support to the relevant departments, Rwomire and Raditlhokwa (1996) are of the view that investment in social welfare programmes is considered useless as it does not directly contribute to the country's economic growth and development. For Rwomire and Raditlhokwa (1996), economic development programmes thus receive a large share of government funding, which makes it difficult for social welfare agencies to obtain the necessary human and material resources to implement their programmes. Conversely, National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2008: 1) opines that social and economic changes have created pressures in social work practice settings as more people seek social work services from agencies that have often experienced budget cuts and sometimes lack adequate resources to meet the needs of those desperate for help.

The following statements attest to the transport challenge as alluded to by some participants:

*"...I cannot say we are getting all the support we need for dealing with the unaccompanied minors due to financial constraints. There are times where we need to roll out programmes for the children, but you find that there is no transport to reach to the destination and we end up postponing until such time when the transport becomes available.*

*"...we are struggling with transport; we are expected to visit the shelters regularly, but we have problems with transport and this is a huge problem for us. So we only go when we have transport and if it is not there, we just sit and wait".*

*“...we cannot avail ourselves when we are needed in the shelters because of lack of transport. This is not only difficult for us, but also for children as well as we do not usually see them when they need us.*

*“...sometimes we are expected to do daily visits to the shelters or some emergency programmes; and due to transport challenges, this becomes impossible. There are times when we take more weeks or even a month without visiting the shelters because of lack of transport”.*

*“ ...at times you find that we do have a small car available and the terrain or the road is not suitable for the small car, hence you need a bigger car such as four by four (4x4 cars) and in our department, we only have one four by four”.*

The above quotes clearly demonstrate the frustration endured by social workers in an effort to execute their professional responsibilities related to UMC. It could be noted that, although social workers are willing to assist this vulnerable group of children, they are however, disempowered by the lack of transport facilities. For the researcher, this in turn jeopardises the provisioning of critical services for the UMC. In this light, the study submit that social workers are not always provided with the essential resources to enable them to meet the needs of UMC and to execute their daily duties as prescribed by the Children’s Act No. 38 of 2005. What could not be disputed was that lack of transport meant that often children do not receive regular services from the social worker whenever needed, since their service to UMC is highly dependent on transport.

While it is clear that transport challenges are attributed to inadequate financial support for social services, in the researcher’s opinion, scarcity of financial resources leads to inadequate service delivery to the intended recipients (UMC). Under such conditions, it becomes very difficult to uphold the appropriate service delivery standards. For example, as revealed by the research findings, there are no full time social workers within one of the sampled shelters providing services to UMC. Therefore, this situation demands that social workers must have reliable transport in order to conduct visits and attend to the needs of UMC on time. In view of the above explications, absence of such critical resources restricts the services that the UMC are entitled to. In such cases, the social workers appear to be operating against the

best interest of the child, thus violating the provisions of the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005, which states that, services concerning children should be rendered in the best interest of the child.

What is also the outcome of this study is the finding that social workers only visit the shelters or reach any other destination where a foreign child has been found or identified only if they have transport available. Some participants confirmed that there were times when they were called by the police or shelters notifying them of the arrival of UMC. Due to the lack in transport, they seldom reach their destination on time.

This is illustrated in the following quote by one social worker:

*"...you know there are some instances where the police officers call to notify us about new arrivals of UMC in the police station, but because of lack of transport we hardly arrive or report there on time."*

According to the DSD guidelines (on unaccompanied or separated foreign child), social workers should ascertain that child assessment takes place within 48 hours upon the child's (UMC) arrival in South Africa (DSD, 2009b). Under the assessment and documentation section, the same DSD guidelines (2009a) notes the following: "when any unaccompanied or separated foreign child is identified, the child should be immediately registered and documented". However, the social workers have noted with concern that the shortage of cars to travel from one area to the other hinders this crucial exercise. Notably, as already mentioned above, lack of transport prevents social workers from responding timeously to this vital call. This result in social workers unintentionally acting against the very same guidelines prescribed for them to protect and care for these vulnerable children. Magqibelo, Londt, and Roman (2016) confirm that services provided by statutory social workers to UMC are in most instances limited, whilst Willie and Mfubu (2016) concur with the view that migrant children in South Africa experience vulnerability, exploitation and a sense of hopelessness with regard to service provision.

During interviews, some UMC indicated that they had never had any contact with social workers, despite having been accommodated in the shelter for a couple of months. In the light of the above, one could argue that UMC continue to experience

unfair practices despite the developed legal frameworks aimed at protecting their rights and interests as enshrined in the South African constitution. This finding is in line with the previous research outcomes by Schreier (2013) that South Africa, despite having a well-developed legal and policy framework for securing the rights of UMC and separated foreign children, still has a number of critical child protection gaps that continue to exist in terms of the implementation of these frameworks. The International law obliges South Africa not only to have these legislations in place for the protection of UMC, but more importantly, to ensure that these provisions are implemented (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). The South African Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 also provides a comprehensive framework in relation to the protection of children who are deprived of family or parental care. However, evidence suggests that although the Children's Act has been applied to UMC over the years, the effectiveness of the care and protection system, as applied by social workers in addressing the needs of UMC, remains questionable.

- **Language barrier**

According to Littlechild (2011), social work practitioners should be knowledgeable about cultural diversities and respect thereof as essential features for effective interventions. The same author further argues that failure to take cognisance of diversity means social workers can find themselves unintentionally reinforcing oppression during the intervention process. What is revealed by the study findings is that social workers working with migrant children face numerous challenges due to the fact that UMC come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Gomez (2015) also warn that, because migrant children have different historical backgrounds, social workers need to be open-minded, be aware and sensitive to cultural diversity. Similarly, Littlechild (2011) opines that cultural differences require social workers to appreciate the strengths of different cultures.

Notably, most of the UMC arriving in South Africa do not have the knowledge of South Africa's local languages, thus a challenge for social workers to communicate with them especially if their use or comprehension of English is poor. In this light, the interpreter services are needed. Allot and Robb (1998) argue that although there are huge financial implications in making use of the interpretation services, it is a vital aspect to be considered, for better and effective service provisioning to the UMC.

As revealed in this study, some of the UMC speak only French, Portuguese, Lingala, Chewa or Shona, thus leaving the social worker with the burden to look for the interpretation services in those languages. Although this service is important for communication purposes, it is important to note that issues of confidentiality are often at stake. Although the use of the interpretation could be seen as the alternative or the best solution, the researcher perceives it as a threat to matters of client's confidentiality. Social workers have a duty to respect the principles of confidentiality that apply to their relationships with the clients and ensure that confidential information is only divulged with the consent of the client.

The participants' frustrations about the language barrier were verbalised in the following responses by different participants:

*"...the problem I face as a social worker is language differences, especially from those children from DRC, Zambia and Malawi. Some of them speak Lingala, some speak Chewa and as a social worker, I only know English as a medium of communication. However, we often make use of interpreters from home affairs. They are the ones who help us a lot especially with children who do not know English. Unfortunately, they are not always available when we need them. Their availability is limited to office working hours. This becomes a serious problem when a migrant child arrives after hours".*

*"...I can say the issue of language is a problem because in as much as these children are able to express themselves in English, sometimes it becomes difficult to clearly understand their story".*

*"...there was a time when I was tracing the family of one of the UMC from DRC. But, the process faced difficulties in that the family spoke French which I could not understand at all. It was so hard that the child ended up intervening by taking the role of an interpreter in trying to assist me to communicate with his family".*

Another social worker explained that the language problem goes beyond the social worker's office as it impacts on those UMC enrolled in local schools.

The following storylines expresses the social worker's emotions:

*“...the major problems we have with these children is language because they all speak their home language resulting in frustration; as both the child and social worker do not understand each other.*

Bamidele (2012) attests that language barrier is a huge problem for social workers as they are often overstretched and under-resourced and faced with an increased challenge of implementing practical and effective protection services for UMC. In this regard, DuBois, Miley, and O'Melia (2007:70) emphasise that while cultural sensitivity is a core requirement in the social work profession, it is vital that social workers are empowered and skilled to deal with a variety of cultures and traditions.

In corroborating the above findings, McCann-James (as cited in Share and McElwee, 2005) confirms that there are difficulties in cultural understanding when the client and worker do not speak the same language. Dryden-Peterson (2015:3) attests to the above in outlining that language issues, privacy concerns, stereotypes, and cultural misunderstandings are some of the concerns social workers have to deal with when working with UMC. Equally, Dettlaf (2012) concurs that the absence of suitable cultural and linguistic services limits the social worker's ability to address the needs of UMC and this often leads to miscommunication thereby impacting on the interventions rendered.

Emergent from the above finding is that social workers have an ethical duty to understand cultural diversity and how to work positively amid such diversity in order to avoid unfair discrimination on UMC.

- **Lack of emotional Support**

Being a social worker providing services to UMC produces stressors which each social worker is compelled to effectively cope with. A stressor is any event, experience, or environmental stimulus that causes stress in an individual. These events or experiences are perceived as threats or challenges to the individual and can be either physical or psychological (Kohli, 2006a). Therefore, in this study, the social workers expressed a dire need for emotional support when providing services to UMC. The majority of social workers reported to have been depressed due to a

lack of emotional support. Drawing from the study findings, this depression emanates from the traumatic nature of stories shared by UMC.

Of note is that the majority of the UMC on their way to South Africa experienced diverse challenges which leave them highly traumatised and scarred. On arrival in South Africa, social workers are thus obliged to intervene following the stipulation that after an unaccompanied migrant child had been identified and reported to social workers, the first step is for the social worker to conduct an assessment. An assessment includes the compilation of key personal data, identity and location of family members, reasons for being separated or unaccompanied, and an assessment of particular vulnerabilities and protection needs (DSD, 2009a). This information is needed to enable the social worker to develop plans for the child's future in order to meet the specific needs of the concerned child (DSD, 2009b).

While listening to traumatic stories as articulated by UMC, social workers reported feeling traumatized thus affecting the social workers' emotional functioning. What is ironic about this situation is that the very same social worker who is expected to service the traumatised child is equally, emotionally traumatised. It is thus, out of such context that the need for emotional support becomes vital. This finding is in line with the outcomes of the study by Biggart (2016) which strongly confirm social work as an emotionally demanding profession. Furthermore, it is suggested that the government, as employers of social workers, should pay attention to the workplace environment and social work support systems.

The following narrative confirms the above assumptions:

*"...these children will tell you stories that affect your mental state. If I can remember, one child told me a very sad a story of how he escaped the jaws of a crocodile and I had to intervene in this child. I saw this child limping and I got closer and asked what the problem with his leg was. That is when the child explained how he escaped the jaws of a crocodile. I can tell you.... I was traumatised for days. The government is not supporting us, no debriefings of some sort, we talk about these issues on our own, as colleagues, and otherwise, nothing is done to help us cope with these problems".*



Another social worker also lamented that:

*“...there is a government programme called the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). But we haven’t received any services out of that. We just know of its name but it is not functional. You have to find your own way of coping to deal with whatever stresses that you come across. We just have meetings with other staff and encourage each other even though the situation is tough. There is no one who can help you deal with your trauma. We survive through encouraging one other”.*

*“..... I personally don’t think the government is giving us all the needed support. I doubt if they care about us, let alone the kids”. No matter how you tell them about these stories, no one takes cognisance”.*

What is evident from the above illustrations is that, working with unaccompanied migrant children presents multiple challenges for social workers. These challenges are related to the traumatic migratory experiences of UMC, and thus, influence the emotional well-being of the social workers. As already articulated in the preceding chapter, the migration experiences of UMC differed from one child to the other. Thus, the social worker gets exposed to diverse traumatic stories. Given such exposure, it is the researcher’s understanding that these challenges often have the possibility to adversely affect the outcomes of the assistance rendered to migrant children. Under such circumstances, the capability and competence of social workers to render effective and efficient services becomes questionable. Thus, not only do social workers need to be prepared for the UMC traumatic stories, but also need to be aware of the impact the stories have on their personal emotional equilibrium.

The study conducted by Stanley (2012) highlight the plight of social workers in these kind of instances. Stanley interviewed 50 social workers who had experienced depression at work. His results revealed that 70% were using anti-depressants and almost all needed to take time off work. The majority considered heavy workloads to have contributed to their depression, whilst other factors were lack of support at work, bullying, violence and threats from people using the services. Over half of those interviewed felt that they had delayed seeking help because they were concerned about the consequences of disclosures at work, either because they felt they were letting down their colleagues or because they would be seen as not being able ‘to

cope'. The researcher opines that failure to understand and address traumatic experiences of the social workers may lead to negative outcomes with regard to their service provisioning to the UMC. This could further generate misinterpretations and misunderstandings of the focus of the profession in relation to UMC.

- **Documentation**

Social workers indicated lack of official identity documentation as a major obstacle in servicing UMC. This is backed by the evidence that everything in South Africa is centred on the possession of a valid identity document (Sloth-Nielsen and Ackermann, 2016). All the interviewed social workers expressed their frustration because of the absence of legal documentation for the UMC. A major concern for social workers was mainly directed to those UMC that were about to exit the care system. In South Africa, the child protection system caters for children until the cut off age of 18 years. After the age of 18, the child is now considered to be an adult and therefore could take care of him/herself. An important point to make, in this regard, is that the majority of UMC eventually leave the child protection system and face adulthood stage with completely no support whatsoever because of a lack of identity documents. Their non-documentation makes it impossible for social workers to come up with durable solutions that will help them survive post 18 years. As a result, these children may become affected physically, emotionally and socially. Under such circumstances, one would agree with this study that the protective capacity of South Africa's child protection system is currently dubious.

The following remarks illustrate social workers' frustrations:

*"...all these children do not have ID books.....when you go to South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) to apply for their grant, they will tell you that they need the child's birth-certificate and you know the birth certificate from their country is not considered in South Africa".*

*"...I can say maybe on an administrative level, we find a number of challenges in terms of securing places for the children for school because they don't have ID". The first thing they ask for when you are looking for a place to enrol the child is ID or a birth certificate. The tasks of getting documentation for the UMC and re-unifying them*

*are seen as the arduous tasks that designated/re-unification social workers are not willing to subject themselves to. The list is endless, but time constraints enable me to only go this far”.*

*“ ...you know some of these children when they are sick, they just stay home because when they go to the clinic, the first thing they have to produce is proof of their identity and you know... they are scared to go there because of that”.*

The above verbalisations echo Schreier's, (2011) contention that holds that the issue of legal documentation is one of the most challenging aspects in the protection of foreign unaccompanied or separated children in South Africa. Wade, Mitchell and Baylis (2005) equally argue that many UMC reach the age of 18 without having received a final decision on their legal documentation, whilst Schreier (2011) also acknowledges and put the blame on the limited authority for social workers rendering services to UMC in connection with documentation issues. This is attributed to the fact that the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) is the only department that is entrusted with the duties of issuing documentation which in most instances are not being carried out efficiently.

This study identified 16-17 year-old UMC as the ones for who the key task for social workers is to make preparations, before they exit the child care system, so that they can be self-reliant. Accordingly, Chase (2010) acknowledges this responsibility arguing that social workers have an important role to play in preparing and supporting young people leaving the care system using multi-dimensional planning in the context of the uncertainty of their immigration status. Notwithstanding this, the task continues to be a nightmare as social workers continuously battle to secure some form of identity documentation for the UMC.

The appalling evidence is that the DHA deliberately post-pone or delay the finalization of the UMC's cases until a child turns 18, partly as a result of their confusion or lack of knowledge regarding ways of dealing with such cases (Schreier, 2011). Arguably, this chaos relentlessly and negatively impacts on the life of vulnerable UMC whose future is solely dependent upon the efficiency of the officials and their departments such as the Departments of Social Development and Home affairs. Not only do these actions violate a child's basic right to identification, but also expose the child to all forms of

abuse and exploitation such as; being arrested and deported. Bhabha (2008) argues that although having a legal identity does not guarantee a good life, absence thereof is a serious impediment to it as it interferes with many fundamental encounters between the individual and the state. It affects the individual's capacity to make claims on the state, and it disrupts the state's ability to plan and provide resources and services to the individual (Bhabha, 2008). Clearly, if UMC attains the maturity age without having any documentation permitting them to stay in South Africa, such a child automatically becomes an illegal immigrant with a huge possibility of being arrested, detained and deported. This becomes a huge dilemma where UMC who have been in SA for many years, speak local languages, educated in SA and do not have any memories of or links to their country of origin (*Asylum seeker guide for separated and unaccompanied children*, 2015), classified as stateless, and defined, according to the international law, as "a person who is not considered a national by any State (Bhabha, 2008).

#### 5.4.1.2 Theme 2: Common challenges often reported to social workers by UMC

The UMC informed social workers of wide-ranging challenges they faced. Whilst acknowledging that social workers' intervention takes place at all micro, mezzo, and macro for the rights of all of them, through coordinating services relevant and responsive to their needs, so that they can achieve their goals and strengthen their quality of life, the following common challenges still maintain: the need for identity documents, food, shelter, and schooling opportunities. A detailed account of these challenges is deliberated below:

- **Need for Identity documents**

The need for a South African identity document has been identified as crucial for all the migrant children being serviced. This is notably because, for any child to be enrolled at school, access to grants, health care and all other rights, a valid ID is non-negotiable. However, the reality is that all the above-mentioned are unattainable if the migrant child does not have an ID.

Below, are some concerns of the social workers in this regard:

*“...these children bring quite a number of problems such that at the end of the day, you find your head spinning. The main problem they have brought to me is the issue of documentation, inability to access health care services, and wanting to be admitted to school. Although we make arrangements for their needs, the issue of documentation continues to hit them”.*

*“...of those that I have provided services to, all they needed was for me to help them apply for an ID and they will tell you that they want to be like South Africa children. They are nothing but kids, they are innocent and they think it is easy to get an ID”.*

*“... what these children want is an ID. They will tell you that they want to apply for a passport so that they can be able to visit their families in their countries. Most of them do not have passports and even if they want to go back home, it will be impossible....or else they have to use the same route they used to enter South Africa”.*

*“... although they are schooling, the majority of them will ask you to help them obtain an identity document. Some will tell you that they want to participate in sports, which required them to have a valid identity. As a social worker, you become helpless, as you know that they will never have it. Every social worker knows that it is not possible for these children to have a South African ID. Home Affairs does not care about these children”.*

The issue of documentation has been acknowledged by many authors as a challenging aspect faced by UMC in South Africa (Willie and Mfubu, 2016; Mahati, 2011). Worth underlining is the fact that this issue also generates a lot of challenges for the children as they are in no position to speak for themselves due to their young age and vulnerable status. Under such circumstances, the researcher believes that this is the time when social workers should exercise their advocacy role emphatically to protect the rights of the UMC. These sentiments are also echoed by Gomez (2015) who argues that social workers as agents of change should have the knowledge of the resources and services that are available to the migrant community and see to it that they are granted to them without prejudice. Gomez further argues that, being the minority group in the host country makes it difficult for migrant children to voice their

concerns, the social worker puts the blame on the DHA which they describe as an obstacle to providing documentation to UMC.

For example, one of the social workers commented as follows on the matter:

*“...the Department of Home Affairs fails us because we all know that they are in control of the whole documentation issues in the whole country and my role as a social worker is to write the report recommending that the child be granted documentation as he/she is need of care”. However, despite such efforts, no proper documentation ever come from them., It is when you are lucky that you manage to get a court order. But still, that court order is only valid until the child is 18”.*

From this quote, it could be understood that the Department of Home affairs' failure compromises and undermines the credibility and the reputation of the social work profession. In South Africa, the DHA is a unit of the state which is highly entrusted with the duties of issuing identification documents to all South Africans including the UMC. Such a failure has a negative bearing on the social work profession whose mandate is to enhance the care and the well-being of the vulnerable population groups such as UMC. While it is clear that the arrival of UMC has placed an unquestionable strain on local services, the principle of “in the best interests of the child” should not be compromised at all cost. Each child still deserves the best possible care and support and the social work profession should continue to set a positive professional example for the rest of the UMC within the borders of South Africa. According to Van der Burg (2009), these procedural gaps, in helping UMC, continue to occur despite the existence of the relevant international and South African legal framework, which should ensure protection of undocumented foreign migrant children in South Africa.

- **Need for food**

According to social workers, food is considered the most pressing need facing unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa. The issue of food shortage, as a problem for UMC, was highlighted in the preceding chapters of this study. This challenge is validated by studies such as the one conducted by Fritch et al., (2010) which reflect that some child migration to South Africa was solely driven by the need for food. It could also be noted that the issue of food is related to the push and pull

factors because for some children, the reason for coming to South Africa was the hope to get food.

Three of the social workers had the following to say on the matter:

*“...yeah the other problem which these children bring to us is the issue food. They will tell you that they ran away from home because of the shortage of food. As a result, they would be happy if they can get food.*

*Another social worker also shared the following:*

*“...when you talk to them, the first thing they will tell you is that they are hungry and they want food.*

*“ ...they will tell you they haven't had food for some time, you can tell even by their external appearance that they are indeed hungry. Some will be looking so pale due to hunger.*

What is important to underline is that, although food was a driving force for UMC, these migrant children do not get the luxury of a healthy meal as articulated in the first part of the findings that the children more often go to school without eating anything. Most of them have indicated that they only had one meal per day, which usually consist of two slices of bread or just plain porridge with sugar, in the morning. Although the UMC acknowledged being given food at the shelter, what could also be deduced was that the food did not have sufficient nutritional value, they ate for the sake of filling their stomachs.

According to Maslow, food is an important aspect for any individual. Maslow places an emphasis on meeting basic needs such as food. The physiological needs are identified by Maslow as the most essential needs in the hierarchy, followed by the safety needs which mainly centres on the issues of protection. As indicated by Maslow, an individual cannot feel safe before attaining complete satisfaction on the physiological needs. In essence, an individual is compelled to fulfil lower level basic needs before progressing on to meet higher-level growth needs or self-actualization needs. Once these needs have been reasonably satisfied, one may be able to reach the highest level called self-actualization.

Ironically, upon arrival in South Africa, evidence points to the fact that these children still suffer from a lack of food in the shelters where they are accommodated (Chiguvare, 2011). This is also reiterated by UMC who also indicated in the first part of findings that they go for days within the shelters without food.

- **Need for Shelter**

Social workers confirmed that one of the pressing problems for UMC at admission is the need for accommodation or place to stay. All the interviewed social workers confirmed that although migrant children have other needs, accommodation is the most important of them all. Broadly speaking, every child needs a place to call home. A home is a suitable place for a child to grow and be nurtured to become a better person in future. Absence of a home could be perilous for the growth and development of the concerned child as the child could resort to staying in the streets. According to the Constitution of South Africa, every child is entitled to parental and family care; whose responsibility is to meet all their needs. Owing to the fact that UMC are new in the host country and do not have any relatives or friends who can accommodate them, having a shelter thus becomes a vital aspect. According to Van der Burg (2009), the care and accommodation arrangements of migrant children have been a matter of grave concern for South Africa. Similarly, the literature evidence reveals that the US has been struggling to accommodate UMC as young as three years of age (IOM, 2011). Crisp and Kiragu (2009) also noted a lack of access to adequate food, water and shelter for UMC in host countries. Participating social workers lamented the situation as follows.

*“...during the assessment of all identified migrant children, we often ask them what is it that they want to be helped with? Most of them want a place to stay since they do not have families in South Africa”.*

*“...I was so surprised during my first contact with this child. The moment I greeted her, the first question that she asked me was if I would be able to give her a place to stay”.*



*“...this child said to me are you going to take me to your place so that I can stay with you. She went on to tell me that me he does not want to stay in the streets and how unpleasant staying in streets was”.*

The above verbalisations poignantly demonstrates the children’s dire need and quest for shelter so that they could be protected from all the environmental dangers. Be it as it may, South Africa has managed to accommodate some of the UMC in the shelters where they are taken care of.

- **Schooling opportunities**

Legally, UMC living in South Africa are entitled to education. However, evidence from studies such as those of Palmary (2009b); Magqibelo (2010); and, Chiguvare (2011) indicate that many are denied access to public schools. In the same vein, Van der Burg (2009) explains that while the majority of UMC came to South Africa in the hope of getting educational opportunities, most of them are turned away from public schools. Concurring with the research findings is the study conducted by Mahati (2011) on the challenges faced by UMC in South Africa. His findings have revealed that the major reason why UMC cross the borders is the need and quest for schooling or educational opportunities. This finding is in line with the assertion that lack of opportunities can have a huge influence in driving children out of their countries of origin (Gonzalenz, 2011).

On the matter, one social worker made the following comment:

*“.... most of the children will tell you I want a place to stay and go to school”. You can tell from their faces that they do not compromise when it comes to schooling. And for those that have enrolled at schools, they are doing very well. They pass with good grades”.*

From the lens of the strength perspective, social work services are aimed at guiding and developing the inner strengths of the migrant child through utilizing external resources in order to enhance the child’s social functioning. Therefore, in this light, social workers need to identify those resources that could enhance and strengthen the well-being of UMC such as affording them educational opportunities.

#### 5.4.1.3 Theme 3: Social workers' experiences and perceptions regarding services to the UMC

From the research findings, social workers depicted both positive and negative perceptions regarding services rendered to UMC. Despite challenges faced, participants indicated that they perceive the services they render to UMC as appropriate and relevant. They also regarded the services as equal to those that they render to South Africa children. Their articulation is evidenced by the following quotations:

*"...I do not think the services are different from the services rendered to the South African children because we are using the same policies to cater for all children. We don't segregate, but, we treat all children equally like we do to South African children".*

*"...all the children are treated equally, we use the same policies and treat all of them the same".*

*"...there is no discrimination directed to these children. They are all treated the same. As you can see, we are guided by the Children's Act to care for all the children in South Africa".*

From the researcher's observation coupled with evidence from the literature, this is not factual. Studies such as Willie and Mfubu (2016); Mboyisa (2014); Mahati (2011) and Sloth-Nielsen and Ackermann (2016) have all questioned the quality of the services provided to UMC. Similarly, the UMC themselves have indicated dissatisfaction with regard to the service they receive from social workers. However, what is important to emphasise in this regard is that the majority of UMC are grateful to South Africa for its generosity to assist them, notwithstanding their dissatisfaction of the services rendered.

While some of the social workers portray a positive perception as well as fair treatment about services they render to UMC, it is noteworthy to mention that in general, UMC perceive the service provision as poor. This is based on the finding that expresses discontentment among UMC about services provided by social workers. They furthermore highlighted that, they find interventions by social workers boring as

they are repeatedly asked the same questions, which are of no assistance to their course. Perhaps their negative views are strengthened by findings that suggest that 70% of UMC never had access to social work services, and that 30% of the participants received marginal social work services from non-governmental organizations (Maqgibelo, 2010).

#### 5.4.1.4 Theme 4: Social workers' experiences and perceptions with regard to existing guidelines on the UMC in South Africa

In order to test their knowledge of the existing guidelines, the, social workers were asked of their awareness of the guidelines developed by DSD for social workers working with unaccompanied and separated migrant children in South Africa. Responses to the question were varied, with some participants acknowledging knowledge thereof, whilst others did not know anything about them. Those who knew about them, were of the view that the guidelines were not very helpful due to their lack in clarity and precision.

The following are some of the different views expressed by the participants:

*"...the existing guidelines do not serve any purpose due to lack of clear protocol to follow during service provision to UMC."*

*"...yes I am aware of the guidelines. However, I feel they are less helpful in helping these children because of the continuous unfair treatment of UMC despite their existence and recognition. For example, most statutory organisations around Johannesburg do not want to remove/legally place unaccompanied foreign children despite the existence of these guidelines"*

*"...I am aware of DSD's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in terms of working with the UMC. However, I became aware of this through a case that I was working on; whose dynamics led to the DSD national social worker emailing me the SOP. I therefore feel DSD is not doing much in terms of disseminating this information to places of safety. Had I not worked on that particular case, I would still be in the dark. Practice experience has put me in a position where I had to guide a DSD social worker on what to do in working with UMC whom she had placed at Kids Haven, meaning that there is a huge loophole there"*

*“...yes I was aware of the guidelines, but I found them less useful because there are many things that are unclear and contradictory to me. For example, there are some of the things that they mention which are not achievable. They will tell you the child has to be documented when they know that foreign children cannot obtain a South African identity”.*

*“...I was not complying with the existing guidelines because I did not know about them, I am not aware of the guidelines developed by DSD”.*

*“...For me these guidelines are useless., They don't apply to these children. Although they clearly state their intention of helping these children, the truth is that they are not helpful. Yes... on paper they are good guidelines with good intentions, but impractical.”*

*“...I blame DSD for poor dissemination of information pertaining the guidelines. I only got to know of the guidelines subsequent to dealing with a case involving an unaccompanied child which I did not know how to handle”.*

From the above quotes, it could be deduced that while some of the participants were aware of the existing guidelines, they nevertheless found them less helpful due to a lack of precision and several other oversights. In the light of the above responses, the researcher contends that the existing guidelines, do not adequately and holistically serve the needs of UMC as mandated by the Children's Act. Instead, the guidelines lack systematic instructions on how social workers should effectively and efficiently attend and respond to the needs of UMC.

#### 5.4.1.5 Theme 5: Coping strategies of social workers working with UMC

According to Bride (2007), social workers face a high rate of professional contact with traumatised people. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to explore coping strategies applied by social workers after experiencing emotional instability subsequent to rendering services to the UMC. This is an important aspect to be examined, based on earlier discoveries that subsequent to traumatic stories told by UMC, social workers sometimes become emotionally affected. This statement is echoed by Kraemer (2013) who is also of the view that working with clients who are traumatised can be overwhelming and likely to generate high stress and burn out

rates among social workers. Given the above discussions, social workers suffer what Kraemer refers to as “secondary traumatic stress”. The term secondary traumatic stress refers to the observation that people who come into continued close contact with trauma survivors may also experience emotional distress (Bride, 2007). Secondary traumatic stress has been defined as the natural, consequent behaviours and emotions resulting from knowledge about a traumatizing event (Bride, 2007).

For this reason, it is of great importance to be familiar with how social workers cope with their stress levels and other challenging aspects they encounter during service provision to UMC. Bride (2007) further comments that social workers are exposed to working with different types of clients which exposes them to various traumatic experiences particularly when they are working with cases such as migration, abuse, and violent crimes. For the researcher, the traumatic nature of these children’s experiences can have a lasting personal and professional effect on the social workers if they are not dealt with.

Coping is defined as cognitive and behavioural responses to a stressful situation, as well as efforts to manage and overcome demands and critical events that pose a challenge, threat, harm, loss and/or adversity to a person (Lazarus, 1993). King (2008) adds more light to the conceptualisation of coping by describing it as the individual’s effort to manage stressful circumstances, expending effort to solve encountered problems and seeking to master or reduce stress. Coping mechanisms are described as responses of an individual, group or society to challenging situations (Kivaria, 2007).

The coping strategies applied by social workers are illustrated in the following storylines:

*“.....after handling such traumatic situations, I ask for day off from my supervisor and I have realised that the majority of us do the same. Taking a day off helps us to process the information and reduce all the stress”.*

*“.... there isn’t really much to do, we simply discuss among ourselves as colleagues and that is how we basically cope”.*

*“... yes, there is EAP, but it is not helpful at all. You have to find your own way out of any stressful situation. It is survival of the fittest”.*

*“...we cope through having meetings with staff and encouraging each other even though the situation is tough. There is no one who can help, more often, we cope through encouraging each other, nothing else”.*

These findings suggest that the participants use limited coping mechanisms as they make use of only two coping mechanisms. Accordingly, consultation among colleagues and taking a day off from work are common coping strategies often utilised by social workers. These findings confirm the view that most popular ways of coping with stress for professionals is talking to colleagues or friends and family (McGregor, 2013). The findings further confirm Bride's (2007) opinion that the psychological effects of traumatic events extend beyond those directly affected. Badger, Royse and Craig (2008) attest that consequences of the secondary trauma may negatively affect the health and functioning of the social worker. The indirect exposure to trauma proves problematic among social workers who work toward establishing the clients' process of healing and recovery (Kraemer, 2013). This finding is indicative of the realities of severe pressures and a lack of emotional support endured by social workers, subsequently leading to poor and biased service delivery to vulnerable children.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter presented data concerning the challenges experienced by social workers rendering services to UMC in South Africa, as well as the coping strategies often applied to deal with stressors. The emergent findings indicated the following: inadequate resources hamper efficient and effective functioning of social workers. This lack of resources violates the rights of UMC and also tarnishes the image of the social work profession entrusted with the responsibility of caring and protecting the vulnerable UMC. Furthermore, it emerged that social workers feel professionally neglected by the state. Generally, social workers also felt emotionally touched by stories shared by the UMC during intervention sessions, often leaving them emotionally helpless and traumatised.

The following chapter presents summaries of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The sole purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges, experiences, and coping strategies of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa, with the aim to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, as well as to develop additional guidelines for social work practitioners tending to the welfare of the UMC. The rationale for developing additional guidelines was to fill in existing gaps within the current DSD guidelines to equip social workers, generally, with enabling guidelines that would ensure effective and appropriate service delivery to all UMC, within the Republic of South Africa. The chapter starts with the presentation of the summaries of all the chapters, followed by a summary of the key findings of the study. It ends by drawing recommendations and conclusions based on the emergent findings, including propositions for further research, in the area of the UMC, and the descriptions of the limitations of this study.

Prior to provisioning of all the summaries, the researcher re-states the research question, goals and objectives to authenticate that they were successfully addressed.

#### **6.2 Re-stating the research question, goals and objectives of the study**

The rationale for re-stating the research questions, goals and objectives of the study is to firstly remind the reader about the main purpose of this study. Secondly, the approach enables the researcher to validate if all the research questions, goals and objectives were successfully addressed and accomplished.

Thus, the study was guided by the following overarching research questions:

- What are the challenges, experiences, and coping strategies of the UMC in South Africa?
- What are the challenges experienced by social workers in rendering services to the UMC?



The afore-mentioned research questions consequently dictated the study goals which are specified as follows:

- To gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges, experiences, and coping strategies of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa.
- To develop an in-depth understanding of the challenges experienced by the social workers in rendering services to the UMC.

In order to achieve the above goals, the following task objectives were formulated:

- To obtain a sample of UMC residing in South Africa.
- To obtain a sample of social workers who are working directly with unaccompanied migrant children (UMC).
- To obtain data from the samples by means of conducting semi-structured interviews aided by open ended questions, contained in an interview guide (see Addendum G).
- To explore and describe the challenges, experiences, and coping strategies of unaccompanied migrant children.
- To explore and describe the challenges faced by social workers in rendering services to the UMC.
- To sift, sort and analyse the data obtained from samples, by means of Tesch's 1992 framework (in Creswell, 2013), applicable to qualitative data analysis.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations relating to the challenges, experiences, and coping strategies of unaccompanied migrant children.
- To develop guidelines for social workers servicing the UMC.

Delving deeper into the afore-mentioned, the researcher concludes that this study successfully answered the research questions and also accomplished the goals and objectives, as specified above.

The following section thus provides a summary of this study, arranged per chapter.

### **6.3 Summary of the study per chapter**

Chapter one gave a general introduction and orientation to the study. It presented the problem statement, rationale and motivation for the study; the research questions,

research goals and objectives that guided the research process; as well as the research methodology adopted. The chapter concluded by providing ethical aspects that were considered, followed by definitions and clarifications of all the key concepts applied in the study.

Chapter two comprised of a detailed synthesis of various sources of literature reviewed on the challenges and experiences of the UMC internationally and nationally. The following theoretical frameworks underpinning the study were also explored, namely; the strengths based perspective, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, resilience and coping theories, and Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Treaties and legislations governing the caring and protection of UMC were also deliberated on in detail.

Chapter three provided a detailed research methodology which included the choice and application of the qualitative research approach, research designs, data collection methods, population and sampling techniques, preparation of participants for data collection, the analysis of data and the verification thereof.

Chapter four outlined the presentation of data and discussion of findings derived from the UMC, collected by means of the individual semi-structured interviews mentioned in the methodology chapter, analysed and interpreted according to Tesch's eight steps for qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2013). The chapter also discussed and analysed various challenges that pushed the UMC out of their countries of origin: the experiences endured enroute to South Africa; various pull factors attracting the UMC into South Africa; various experiences endured since arrival in this country; as well as the coping strategies adopted by the UMC for survival. Emerging findings on the plight of the UMC, were subjected to literature control.

Chapter 5 herein referred to as part-two, concerned the presentation, and discussion of findings derived from social workers servicing the UMC. Data from the social worker participants was collected through the individual semi-structured interviews and also analysed and interpreted according to Tesch's (1992) eight steps for qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2013). The outcome of the data analysis and interpretation resulted in nine themes and seventeen- sub- themes. The findings hereof were also subjected to literature control.

Chapter six provides a summary of the study's key findings and conclusions. Recommendations and suggestions for future research in the area of the UMC, and limitations of the study are discussed.

Chapter seven contains the updated guidelines, envisaged in the research goals and objectives of this study. The main objective being to improve on the existing DSD guidelines and to equip social workers in general and specifically those tending to the welfare of the UMC, with viable and enabling guidelines that would ensure effective and appropriate service delivery to the UMC in South Africa.

#### **6.4 Summary of the research findings and conclusions on the UMC**

This section presents a brief summary of key findings emerging from the qualitative data analysis of issues pertinent to the UMC, coupled with the researcher's conclusions. That is followed by the presentation of key findings from the social workers rendering services to the UMC. For the sake of clarity, the findings are categorised into themes and sub-themes,

##### **6.4.1 Theme 1: Findings emergent from factors that motivate UMC migration**

Emerging findings are that, there are several factors that facilitated the migration of unaccompanied migrant children to SA. This study established that UMC were drawn into migration due to a number of issues. The fact that UMC ended up in South Africa is an obvious indication of numerous difficulties they were confronted with in their countries of origin. Thus the researcher came to a conclusion that the UMC's migration to South Africa was motivated by both the push and the pull factors, here identified as: poverty, loss of parents\orphanhood; parental influence, peer influence, and lack of schooling. In addition to the above, the quest for education and a better life emerged as major pulling factors. Both push and pull factors are articulated below.

##### **Push factors**

Findings from the push factors are here discussed under the following sub-categories:

- **Poverty**

Poverty emerged as one of the leading motivational factors for children's decision to migrate to South Africa. Deducing from the findings of this study, nearly all UMC came from estranged families, caused by poverty which deprived them of proper care and protection in their countries of origin, forcing them to look for better life in other countries. In light of the above, it would seem migration has been adopted by UMC living in difficult circumstances as a coping strategy against poverty. For example, from an interview with some of the participants, it became apparent that UMC migrated in order to make money to support themselves and families they left behind in countries of origin, living in abject poverty. For these children, fleeing their home countries remained the only option to escape the harsh conditions of poverty they endured in their native countries. This finding is similar to the study conducted by Yaqub (2009) whose results postulated migration as a widespread coping strategy adopted mainly by economically poor households. In line with these views, is Gonzalenz (2016) whose argument also posits that the majority of households in the world depend on migrant remittances for survival with children routinely contributing to the economic maintenance of their households from an early age.

On the basis of the above finding, the researcher arrived at the conclusion that, although children have myriad reasons for migrating to South Africa, poverty had a huge bearing on their decision to do so. This meaning that poverty forced UMC to mature at a very young age thus indicating the child's capacity to grow and change and to develop unquestionable strength to survive under adverse conditions.

- **Loss of parents/orphanhood**

Loss of parents was found to be another pushing factor as the majority of children indicated to have lost their parents at an early age, leaving them with no one or with relatives to look after. Such situations often lead to children being abused by the extended family members, supposed to take care of them. This became a double-barrelled knock-back for UMC for they had to bear the loss of parents and the oppressive nature of the remaining caregivers. It is a widely acknowledged view that

a family is the first and most important point of contact for a proper upbringing of every child. Hence the absence of parents during this critical period of development could presumably be more stressful coupled with tremendous effect in the child's social-functioning.

On the basis of the above finding, it is concluded that parental loss had serious long-lasting implications and affect UMC in various ways. Subsequently, psychological, emotional, financial, and the general well-being of the child become negatively affected. It also emerged that difficulties endured by children often give rise to feelings of deprivation resulting in their decision to migrate, in order to attain a state of relative satisfaction. While the results of this study highlights the devastating effects caused by loss of parents, it could further be concluded that loss of parents and the absence of caring caregivers had a strong influence on the child's decision to migrate to South Africa.

- **Parental pressure**

In this instance, findings are that some children, whose parents are still alive were encouraged by them to migrate to South Africa, to work and contribute to the economic welfare of their families back home. What could be gathered from the findings is that although some parents had the desire to protect and care for their children, conditions beyond their control do often force them to resort to unfavourable decisions, such as, encouraging their children to migrate to foreign countries such as South Africa. Additionally, by observing other families in similar situations thriving from what children bring back home from their host countries make them more envious, and as such decide to put pressure on their children to do likewise. A thought provoking move was that, although some parents might have influenced their children to migrate, no planned routes were arranged to ensure that the child's journey to other countries, including South Africa, is safe. This could be attributed to the high degree of poverty and a state of overwhelming desperation and helplessness endured by UMC's parents.

- **Peer influence**

The findings of this study revealed a close link between UMC migration and peer influence. This finding is in line with that of Tamanja (2014) which reported that influence of peers has a strong bearing on the behaviour of children and motivations to migrate to other places. The findings show that migration of some children was heavily influenced by their peers, with some children emphasizing the positive outcomes of their migration to South Africa because of peers. In this regard, the researcher concludes that peer pressure is one of the driving factors for some UMC coming to South Africa. This conclusion is confirmed by Hashim and Thorsen (2011) whose observations are that death of parents, and peer influence among others are factors necessitating child migration.

### **Pull factors**

Findings from the pull factors are here discussed under the following sub-category:

- **The quest for education versus a better life**

Findings emergent from this category indicates that UMC came to South Africa with different goals and aspirations, compounded with the hope of securing better future prospects. What could also be drawn from the findings was that, the UMC shared a common goal of acquiring a better future for themselves upon arrival in South Africa. Some believed that their goals and aspirations could be achieved through access to education. An important point to remember is that the majority of UMC did not have the leverage to attend school in their countries of origin. Accordingly, education emerged as the prime pull factor for decisions to migrate to South Africa.

South Africa accords every child including UMC the right to free education. However, the study revealed that 70% of UMC were found to be attending school in South Africa, whilst 30% were not due to some administrative issues; such as lack of identification. Therefore, based on the number of those accommodated in schools, the researcher views this as a success for the UMC in South Africa. In the light of the above statements, it emerged apparent that South Africa has duly fulfilled its obligation of providing free education to some of the children.

Furthermore, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions: the decisions to migrate to South Africa were intrinsically driven by the quest for education; migrating to South Africa was the survival strategy, hoping to arrive in the country which would afford them opportunities to attain education and a better future. The fact that these UMC left their countries of origin to acquire education reflects a huge degree of autonomy, as they independently and generally unsupervised, sacrificed to live away from their families in a country where they know no one. For these children, education was an important mechanism and a tool for survival and a way to resist defeat. In essence, the above discussion presents the UMC as survivors than victims.

Taking cognisance of all the push and pull factors, the researcher arrives at a conclusion that the UMC motivations for fleeing their countries of origin are complex and wide-ranging.

#### 6.4.2 Theme 2: Findings emergent from the challenges experienced enroute South Africa

The findings in this regard shows that owing to unavailability of legal documents authorizing them to enter the borders of South Africa, the UMC resorted to illegal routes which did not only endanger their lives, but also exposed them to exploitation and abuse by the so called *Magumagumas*, who often forcefully took away their belongings, such as money and clothing. As already explained in previous chapters, children were robbed of their belongings, others forced to bribe the corrupt South African National Defence Force (SANDF) officials, in exchange for permission to come through. Thus, the findings attest to the notion that migration is often stressful and dangerous for children (Stretmo, 2014).

However, given all the risks they encountered on their journeys, UMC proved to be individuals with inevitable strength. An important point to be drawn out of this courageous move is that, children are in principle active role players in their lives. Such move demonstrates the children's sense of autonomy and therefore, one would argue that instead of being passive, they acted as agents of change to improve their own lives, as they passionately took the risk to get into the country. These children portrayed themselves as social actors who actively operate on and within their worlds (James and Prout, 1996).

Conclusions that could be drawn in this regard are that although the UMC successfully navigated the dangerous routes of migration to South Africa, and their journey was accompanied by numerous challenges, the deductions from these findings confirm that children's experiences were marked with suffering and exploitation, but they never gave up on their dream of reaching South Africa.

#### 6.4.3 Theme 3: Findings emergent from the challenges experienced since arrival in South Africa

Findings are that upon arrival in South Africa, UMC became exposed to complex challenges and experiences. Xenophobia and misconception, language barriers versus career setback; discrimination and intimidation; lack of safety and security and non-documentation were also key challenges that confronted them.

The following below are brief summaries of the findings derived from each challenge mentioned above, followed by the researcher's conclusions.

##### 6.4.3.1 Xenophobia and misconception

It has emerged that xenophobia and misconception occurred mainly within the school setting where some teachers and classmates would verbally utter xenophobic, offensive and derogatory words to the UMC. In the researcher's view, such behaviour, coupled with experiences of xenophobic attitudes, are likely to result in poor academic achievement on the affected children.

Furthermore, the inevitable conclusion that could be drawn from this finding is that xenophobic utterances and misconception generated feelings of sadness and fear among the UMC thereby threatening their freedom of a happy childhood, grossly compromising their schooling. Such actions further put additional strain on children who may, simultaneously, be battling other life challenges, and thereby making it even more difficult to concentrate in class.

##### 6.4.3.2 Language Barrier versus career set back

It also emerged that local official languages are huge barriers to the UMC within the school setting. The linguistic challenges were also found to be exacerbated by the fact that the majority of UMC do not speak the official South African local languages



or have no good command of English. Despite such linguistic challenges, it also emerged that the Department of Education does not provide any specific language support program to assist in the integration of non-nationals or migrants into schools (Buckland, 2011).

Therefore, the researcher arrived at the following conclusion that: language is one of the greatest barriers to learning; that the inability to speak the South African local official language could possibly result in the child's isolation from peers at school and community at large. These challenges further frustrate UMC's ability to integrate with their peers at school and within the communities in which they leave.

#### 6.4.3.3 Discrimination and intimidation

Findings under this sub-theme indicates that unaccompanied migrant children experienced high levels of discrimination and intimidation from their peers and teachers at school. However, despite all the adversities, the children endured. Further, the study revealed that some of the UMC managed to create heroism for themselves at school for they continued to obtain positive academic results. This is confirmed by some of the discoveries that emerged during the interviews with the tending social workers, who alluded that regardless of the challenges against the children, most of them were academically excelling, especially in science and mathematics. Poulou (2007) refers to the above alluded excellence as educational resilience which represents achievement in school despite adversities. In line with this finding is one of the principles of the strength-based theory which says "trauma, abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious, but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity". This proved to be true seeing that despite such adversities, UMC still managed to academically outshine.

In conclusion, the researcher is of the view that despite being subjected to discrimination and intimidation, the children emerged as survivors other than victims of their toxic situations. That is to say, the discriminatory behaviours by locals in the classroom setting did not shift the UMC's focus or deter them from achieving their goals of academic excellence.

#### 6.4.3.4 Safety and security

The research findings in this regard proved that safety and security were of great concern to the UMC. Serious safety and security problems in one of the shelters was identified due to unavailability of security guards within the premises especially during the night. This enabled undesirable outsiders to freely come in and out of the premises at freewill thereby exposing the children to various forms of abuse such as rape, robberies, and sustaining injuries at night. This form of negligence was found to leave these vulnerable children uncomfortable, scared and always at risk.

To the researcher, the above findings provoked her to conclude that every child has the right to be safe, secure, protected from harm and neglect, and to live in an environment that enables them to develop to their full physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social potential. As the shelters have done a remarkable job through offering UMC a place to stay, they are still far from complying with the norms, standards and the regulations of the children`s Act among which the existence of security is paramount. Furthermore, the conclusion alludes to the fact that failure to observe the above mentioned children`s rights is to be in contradiction with Article (27) of UNHCR, which postulates that children have the right to the standard of living which is good to meet their physical and mental needs. Poor security measures do not only disregard the view that children thrive better in a safe environment, but that no child should be placed in harmful institutions, as that is regarded as gross violation of the children`s rights.

#### 6.4.3.5 Documentation

Findings in this regard exposed that a lack of documentations is a major challenge for all UMC. Although they have been accommodated in shelters and some already attending school, most of them were found not to have legal documentations. The lack of documentation was also found to cause distress and anxiety among the UMC. Moreover, those over the age of 18 get more stressed as they are no longer regarded as children protected by the laws of this country. This brings up another dimension which revealed that without access to documentation, access to basic services such as schooling, health care and access to child support grants, also becomes an issue. Accordingly, such challenges were found to cultivate fear and uncertainty among

children. A deep-seated concern felt by the researcher was a question of what will happen to these children if they attain the maturity age without legal status authorizing them to remain in SA?. Without proper intervention, chances are that some children might resort to desperate survival measures to survive - criminal activities and substance abuse - thereby increasing the levels of crime and drug dependence within the country.

The researcher concludes that failure to provide some form of identification or some form of exit strategy for UMC hampers their access to further education (especially post matric) and make it difficult for them to receive fair treatment and services from different segments of the society such as health, education and social services. For example, it was also found that the UMC do not have full access to basic services received by South African children as stipulated in the Children's Act, which governs the protection of all children in South Africa. This finding is attested to by Willie and Mfubu (2016); Mboyisa (2014); and Mabudusha (2014).

It has also emerged that there is misalignment between the Department of Social Development (DSD) and the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), where they fail to talk to each other regarding how to deal with UMC on a long term basis. While DSD heavily relies on the DHA for documentation of UMC, DHA falls short of fulfilling this obligation.

Taking all the above expositions into consideration, the researcher arrived at a conclusion that; the challenges experienced by the UMC were quite varied, i.e. ranging from being in a new environment with no adult supervision, learning new ways of adapting to a new culture, making new friends in a hostile school and community environment, learning official local languages and new school curriculum.

#### 6.4.4 Theme 4: Findings emergent from coping strategies employed by the UMC

Despite the magnitude of challenges presented by the host country, it emerged that unaccompanied migrant children demonstrate a range of coping mechanisms to survive various challenges experienced within the borders of South Africa. Thus, it was found that such challenges necessitated the need for each child to develop some coping skills in order to handle the stress inducing situations, such as:

- Emotion focused coping, which include: religious coping, coping through distraction and avoidance, and accepting one's status quo.
- Problem focused coping, which includes coping through lying, through optimism and hope.

These coping mechanisms are briefly summarised below as follows;

### **Emotion focused coping**

Findings in this category are summarised as follows:

- **Religious coping**

With religious coping, it was found that in dealing with stressful events and difficult emotions, some UMC relied on religion. This entails reading the bible and prayerfully directing all their suffering to God, whom they believe listens to them. Not only did the UMC adopt a positive attitude towards God, but also developed an enormous belief that He is constantly watching over them, which made them feel safe and protected. In the same vein, a study conducted by Ní Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010) also acknowledge religious coping as a common strategy used by the majority of migrant children in Ireland.

- **Coping through distraction\ avoidance**

In order to make the best of their new environment, findings are that some UMC use distraction or avoidance strategies. On strategies for survival, some of the UMC brought to light that they simply keep themselves busy just to distract and avoid any stressful situations that might want to surface. Distraction\avoidance is considered a type of emotion-focused coping which involves minimizing the emotional distress through diverting attention away from a stressor and toward other thoughts or behaviors that are unrelated to the stressor (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Thus, some UMC engaged themselves in different forms of distractions such as playing football, car washing, and studying and gardening.

- **Accepting the status quo**

The study found that some children cope by accepting the status quo, acknowledging fate as it prevails. The main reason being the impossible difficulties in dealing with their situations, which is the existing state they find themselves in; hence the choice to cope through tolerance of their circumstances. Despite the magnitude of challenges presented by the host country, these children were quick and mature enough to accept their situations as they have no control over it.

### **Problem focused coping**

Problem focused coping is here discussed under the following:

- **Coping through lying**

It emerged, from the responses of both the UMC and social workers that lying is a survival strategy adopted by the majority of UMC. Accordingly, it was also found that, the motivation behind lying was driven by the need to protect their identity in fear of possibilities of being sent (deported) back home. Thus, lying was found to be a deliberate attempt to frustrate the re-unification process.

In the light of the above, the researcher is of the view that even if social workers were to try and re-unify them with their parents, it could have been impossible to do so because of dishonesty. Drawing from the above results, generally, findings are that the UMC further lied about their age in a bid to elongate and extend their stay at the shelter. This move is attributed to the fact that the South African child protection system only cares and protect children until the age of 18 which is regarded as the majority age to adulthood. Accordingly, it was found that reducing their age, gives them more time to be accommodated in the shelters.

- **Coping through optimism and hope**

In this regard, it was found that, in dealing with stressful events and difficult emotions, some UMC resorted to coping through optimism and hope. To deal with the hostilities suffered, they are found to have not been discouraged or given up on their dreams of a better future. They instead creatively adopted a positive attitude for a better future

in this country. It also emerged that the majority of children felt and believed that their lives would be better than those of their parents, and this was largely attributed to them being in South Africa. Instead of resorting to violence or any other delinquent behaviour, they dealt with all the excruciating challenges in a more mature and respectful manner. This confirmed, Raghallaigh and Gilligan (2010) findings that although UMC are often painted as extremely vulnerable and at-risk, they have however developed unquestionable resilience to challenges.

Based on the above findings, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions: Notwithstanding the challenges and experiences enumerated earlier, UMC successfully adopted strategies which they found necessary for their survival in the new and unfamiliar South African environment. Because new challenges and experiences elicited new ways of coping, which helped them to carry over from their past and painful experiences, and assertively applied them to their present circumstances, this initiative demonstrates the importance and value of their lived experiences as it relates to overcoming the challenges and barriers to their success in the host country.

It was also found that borne out of all these challenges and experiences is the tremendous amount of resilience which resulted in some UMC having prosperous lives. As indicated earlier, some were found to be excelling academically amidst the challenges they endured, which is indicative of their extraordinary resilience. The fact that UMC survived the traumatic experiences they encountered, including separation from their biological families, speaks volumes of their capacity, where possible, to successfully adjust in the host country. Given these kind of strengths, the UMC should therefore be perceived as survivors than victims. Being able to position themselves as survivors of adversities is remarkable.

It could also be concluded that although children might have been going through similar challenges and experiences, it has emerged that their coping strategies cannot be regarded as homogenous, as each child developed his or her own. This is attributed to the fact that while other children saw religion as a better coping strategy, others adopted distraction as the best option. This also serves to indicate that children are unique beings with each having his/her own coping style and ways of execution.

The above themes discussed the findings based on the data collected from 32 UMC from the Gauteng and the Limpopo provinces. The data was presented in terms of themes and sub-themes emanating from the data analysis. This approach enabled the researcher to provide a comprehensive picture of the participants' lived experiences in South Africa. The study thus concludes that unaccompanied migrant children have the strength, resources and ability to recover from adversity, where possible. Social workers should rather focus and pay more attention on developing children's strengths rather than emphasising challenges and vulnerabilities facing them.

## **6.5 Summary of the research findings and conclusions on social workers servicing the UMC**

The following section contains the summary and conclusions of the research findings on social workers servicing the UMC as discussed in Chapter 5 of this study. They too were thematically arranged as follows:

### **6.5.1 Theme 1: Findings emergent from challenges experienced by social workers servicing the UMC**

The duty to render services to UMC in South Africa was found to generate specific challenges for social workers. These challenges stem from the following aspects; inadequate resources to execute their duties (transport); lack of emotional support and lack of documentation among the UMC.

#### **6.5.1.1 Lack of transport**

The findings confirmed that social workers had irregular contact with UMC due to lack of transport facilities. This disturbingly hindered social workers' capacity to fulfil the obligations of caring and protecting the children. Notably, Social workers are duty bound to deliver a broad spectrum of social services to all children in South Africa including UMC. Hence, drawing from the research findings, it could be realised that lack of transport placed some degree of pressure on social workers.

This finding confirms the view that; the infrastructural challenges, such as vehicles, impede on the social workers' ability to adequately accomplish their day-to-day

duties (Sibanda, 2015). Remarkably, this study demonstrates the continued need for the government to provide social workers with sufficient transport resources if they are to provide effective services to the UMC.

In the premise of the above finding, the researcher arrived at the following conclusion: that lack of transport is both a challenge and a barrier to effective service delivery to the UMC, as it negatively impacts on effective provisioning of services, thereby exacerbating the plight of the UMC.

#### 6.5.1.2 Lack of emotional support

The findings further confirmed that working with UMC is mentally demanding and stressful largely due to social workers' lack of emotional support from the employer. Social workers expressed a need for a supportive working environment which will empower and strengthen their capacity to fulfil their obligations. What this entails is that emotional support is a vital aspect that should not be ignored, if social workers are to be productive in providing services to the UMC and their clientele at large. Drawing from the research findings, some of the social workers pointed out that they had on several occasions raised their concerns with the supervisors with reference to their mental and emotional needs. Nevertheless, their voices have fallen on deaf ears leaving them demoralised. In the researcher's opinion, the aforementioned concerns should not be experienced by social workers dealing with such vulnerable children.

Therefore, the study concludes that lack of emotional support could possibly create despondency among social workers and thus effectively destabilising service provisioning to the UMC, which indirectly undermine the children's rights and more importantly, overlook their interests.

#### 6.5.1.3 Documentation for the UMC

It has emerged that social workers do not have any professional power and authority to assist the UMC to secure documentation that legalizes them to stay in the country. This is aggravated by the fact that social workers are dependent on related departments, such as Home Affairs, to assist in this regard. This makes it difficult for social workers to develop short and long-term care plans for the survival of the UMC.



This also makes it difficult for social workers to access social grants on behalf of the affected.

In the premise of the above, the researcher concludes that: lack of documentation is not only a barrier in the lives of UMC, but also put the lives of all UMC on hold in the premise that all services are centred around possession of a valid South African identity.

#### 6.5.2 Theme 2: Findings emergent from services frequently required of by the UMC from social workers

Identity document, food, shelter, schooling opportunities were the frequently required services from social workers. Each of these aspects is summarised below.

##### 6.5.2.1 Identity documents

From the findings, it became evident that the identity document was important and all children desired to have it. This could be attributed to the fact that they knew it would determine their stay, stability, and access to all other social services they are entitled to in South Africa. However, obtaining an ID for UMC has proven to be an impossible task for social workers as mentioned throughout the document. Though UMC expect social workers to provide them with ID's, social workers continue to fail to meet the needs of UMC. This may have led to the general feeling that social workers were not being helpful.

##### 6.5.2.2 Food, shelter, schooling opportunities

Apart from identity documents, social workers confirmed that more frequently, UMC expect them to provide food, shelter and schooling. This, according to social workers does not come easy due to various challenges as mentioned in Theme 5 above. The findings revealed that unaccompanied migrant children had a strong need for food, shelter and schooling opportunities. Food and shelter are some of the universal human rights declared by the United Nations (UN,1948) and those who violate these basic human rights opens themselves to national and international condemnation (Chimbala-Kalenga and Meda, 2016). All the physiological needs are considered important for the children to survive as Maslow (1943) stresses the significance of

such needs on every human being. Maslow considered the physiological needs consisting of air, water, clothing, food and shelter as important for human survival. Educational needs proved to be a priority since all UMC demanded schooling opportunities from social workers.

Given the explications above, the researcher reached a conclusion that although UMC were offered shelter and food, these were not adequate due to lack of resources. Food at shelters was very limited and conditions within the shelters were not of acceptable standards. With reference to education, the study arrived at a conclusion that UMC achieved their need for schooling as evidenced by the finding that 70% of them were attending school.

#### 6.5.3 Theme 3: Findings emergent from social worker's perceptions of services they render to the UMC

It has emerged that, generally, social workers perceive the services they render to the UMC as satisfactory, for they treat the UMC like any other children under their charge. They were of the view that there was no discrimination in the provisioning of services. They purported to follow all the prescripts from the Children's Act. On the contrary, it also emerged that the UMC are of the view that social workers were not helpful and often failed to provide them with necessary social services. The researcher concluded that, although social workers perceived themselves as rendering effective services to UMC, the level of success and effectiveness of these services could not be clearly determined, particularly when one considers the above mentioned lack of required resources. The lack of co-operation mainly from DHA appears to frustrate all the efforts made by social workers in their bid to provide quality services to UMC.

#### 6.5.4 Theme 4: Findings emergent from social workers' experiences and perceptions of the existing guidelines

It has emerged that not all participating social workers are aware of the existing guidelines, by DSD on unaccompanied and separated children in South Africa. A remarkable finding was that those who were aware did not find the guidelines valuable, due to their lack in precision and several other oversights. The findings of this study further revealed that the existing guidelines do not adequately and

holistically serve the needs of UMC as mandated by the Children's Act. Drawing from these findings, the existing guidelines lack systematic instructions on how social workers should effectively and efficiently attend and respond to the needs of UMC. In this light, the results confirm that the lives of UMC can be strengthened amongst other things, through developing child-oriented and user-friendly guidelines. Based on the above findings, the researcher arrived at a conclusion that existing guidelines do not serve the needs of the intended recipients. Thus, Chapter 7 will focus on developing systematic and friendly guidelines to enhance service delivery to UMC.

#### 6.5.5 Theme 5: Findings emergent from coping strategies applied by social workers servicing the UMC

In this regard, the findings provided insight into the coping strategies adopted by social workers in response to work-related stress when servicing UMC. Those found to be in frequent use included: collegial support and taking a day off. As they experience similar difficulties, social workers were found to be supportive to each other; by sharing with colleagues their problems and how to overcome them. It can therefore be concluded that only two coping mechanisms were adopted by the social workers thus revealing the limited coping mechanisms available for them.

### **6.6 Summary of the recommendations**

Based on the emergent findings, above, the following recommendations are made:

- The Department of Social Development (DSD) should provide adequate support and resources to social workers for them to effectively and efficiently deal with challenges facing the UMC.
- Emotional and psychological support need to be availed for social workers servicing the UMC at all times.
- In order to monitor the plight of UMC, the state should embark on enforcing collaboration among related departments dealing with children matters like: Social Development, Safety, Education, Health, Human Settlements, and Home Affairs. This will ensure that in matters concerning UMC, they all work towards a common goal and vision, in the interest of the child.

- Given the traumatic nature of their migratory journeys, from countries of origin to SA, psychosocial support services for all UMC should be a requisite.
- Training should be made available for social workers with particular focus on the needs of the UMC as well as on how to better care and protect them.
- An array of programs should be developed by the DSD to enhance children's resiliency and lessen the risks of their vulnerability.
- Because UMC are unique, each child should be linked with interventions that meet and fulfil each child's individual needs.
- Also recommended are child-oriented approaches to protect the plight of UMC, formulated in line with all the treaties, laws and policies.
- Constant monitoring of shelters accommodating migrant children is encouraged.
- This is grounded on the evidence that some of the shelters were not well maintained, and are not child friendly.
- The South Africa government should fully commit itself in helping UMC to realize their identification rights. To remedy the situation, this study submits that DHA in collaboration with DSD must ensure that UMC get legal identity documents which will enable them to access basic social services. Currently there is operational misalignment between these departments.
- The government should allocate adequate resources for social workers to enable them to fulfil their duties without compromise and to meaningfully provide appropriate services to UMC. Resources such as transport should be treated as essential resource for social workers.
- In acknowledgement of the critical role that social workers play in the care and protection of UMC, the government should also play a major role in providing social work practitioners with *psychosocial support systems*. To that, the Department of Social Development, as an organ of the state entrusted with the protection of children in SA should start recognizing the importance of developing supportive systems for all social workers providing services to UMC.
- To curb the shortages of basic services such as food within the shelters, social workers should engage in more aggressive fundraising strategies. There is

need for DSD to relook at its funding strategy for all shelters accommodating the UMC.

- There is a dire need for a highly skilled team of social workers, specifically trained to work with the UMC. The social worker should be able to advocate for childrens' rights, link them with appropriate and relevant resources, and also ensure that children are not denied their right to the provisioning of services. This will help to minimize feelings of isolation and discrimination among the UMC and enhance their integration within the schools and communities in which they live.
- Before working and providing services to UMC, social workers should be trained and equipped with necessary knowledge and skills. Such will enable them to develop and implement appropriate intervention strategies which are responsive to the needs of the children. Allowing them to perform tasks about which they are not appropriately knowledgeable might impact negatively on their service delivery and compromise the needs of children.
- Given the diverse nature of UMC in the country, social workers need to be trained on cultural sensitivities and diversity management. This will empower them to respond and provide cultural sensitive services to UMC of all cultural backgrounds and ethnicities.
- To improve the living standards of UMC, special funds intended specifically at addressing the needs of UMC should be availed by DSD. This is based on the finding that while UMC are afforded the same right as local children, the truth is that the practicality of the matter is far from reality.
- The DSD should develop durable exit strategies for UMC before they reach 18 years; to avoid further complications post this age. Failure to do so, the state as the signatory of the UN Convention should be held accountable for any children who exit the child care system without any legal identity or authorization or any form of arrangement to remain within the country. This should include among other things programs to prepare them to be self-sufficient when they are no longer under the child protection system.
- The government should ascertain that all shelters accommodating UMC are constantly monitored to ascertain that they all uphold acceptable standards.

## **6.7 Suggestions for further research**

Based on the research findings, and the recommendations made, it is suggested that future researchers should consider the following:

- Since the study was limited to two provinces only, which is the Gauteng and Limpopo, a study including all the provinces may be necessary to get a total picture of child migration and care provisioning in South Africa as a whole.
- Based on the traumatic nature of migratory trajectory and the fact that the migration process might have a negative impact on the mental health of UMC, future researchers should consider investigating the post-traumatic stress disorders on UMC.
- Since this study focused only on UMC accommodated in shelters, more research is needed to focus on those who live on and off the streets.

## **6.8 Limitations of the study**

The following limitations need to be highlighted:

- The study participants sampled were from black ethnic groups only. Therefore, for the mere fact that the sample comprised of black participants alone, isolating others is considered a major limitation. In light of this, an opportunity to gather knowledge on the UMC from the perspective of other racial groups was missed.
- Although the majority of UMC could communicate in basic English, the issue of language should also be viewed as a limitation based on the possibility that some children would not have managed to express themselves clearly despite the simple communicative English the researcher employed.
- The study only focused on those UMC accommodated in two shelters, and in two provinces, excluding those who live on or off the streets.

## **6.9 Conclusion**

The concluding chapter provide summaries which incorporate summaries of all chapters, research process and methodology that was employed, and finally a summary of the key research findings. It ends by drawing conclusions and

recommendations based on the empirical findings; recommendations for social work practice and suggestions for future research.

The next chapter presents guidelines for social workers, envisaged in the topic of this study.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORKERS WORKING WITH UMC

### 7.1 Introduction

The phenomenon of unaccompanied migrant children (UMC) is not limited to South Africa, but is largely a global phenomenon. Common about the phenomenon is the migration of children moving from one country to another in search for better life prospects. Since 1994, with the onset of the new democracy in South Africa, the country has experienced the arrival of large numbers of UMC, which poses numerous challenges for the government and the limited financial resources available. It is also important to acknowledge endeavours taken, in response to the constant influx of UMC into this country by the Department of Social Development (DSD) in 2009 of developing some guidelines titled '*Guidelines on separated and unaccompanied children outside their country of origin in South Africa*' to assist social workers, in the Department, to fulfil their obligations with regard to separated and unaccompanied foreign children in the country (DSD, 2009a).

From the researcher's viewpoint, and based on the findings of this study, the guidelines are currently found to have gaps, and thus necessitating further development of additional guidelines. The process was preceded by identification and careful consideration of gaps within the existing guidelines. These were exposed in the literature review chapter corroborated by the responses of the participants in chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

As already mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the additional guidelines therefore seek to address amongst others, filling in the gaps identified within the existing guidelines. They are here listed as follows:

- Treating UMC as a homogenous group, thus ignoring the uniqueness of each child;
- Compromising the best interest of the child;



- Failure to provide sufficient and clear guidance to social workers on how to care, and respond to the needs of UMC;
- Limited focus on development of the psycho-social well-being of UMC;
- Absence of the development of durable exit strategies for UMC, from the child protection system;
- Discrimination in terms of service provision;
- Non-documentation of UMC;
- Lengthy stay in temporary care facilities; and
- Delays in investigating and attending to the child's needs.

Based on the afore-mentioned loopholes, it is imperative to develop a set of guidelines that will serve as a check-list for social workers when servicing the UMC.

## **7.2 Intended audience**

The Guidelines are designed for use by all social workers providing services to UMC country-wide, including those employed by Non-governmental organisations (NGO), Community based organisation (CBO's) and Faith based organisation (FBO's) to enhance service delivery to all UMC within the borders of South Africa.

## **7.3 Definition of unaccompanied migrant child**

UMC is defined by Save the Children UK (2007: 8) as a child under the age of 18 years who crossed borders of their own country, either alone or with another child, into a foreign country, subsequently finding him or herself living in a foreign country without the known adult caregiver.

## **7.4 Principles to be observed by social workers servicing the UMC**

The following overarching principles, underpinning the care and protection of UMC, should be observed and internalised by all social workers engaged with the UMC. These principles are adopted from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) and the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005.

**Table 6: Principles to be observed by social workers servicing the UMC**

<b>Principle one: The best interest of the child</b>
The best interests of each UMC should be a primary consideration at each stage and process that is undertaken by the social worker. In other words, every action taken should be without any compromise of the best interests of the UMC.
<b>Principle two: Non-discrimination</b>
No social worker should discriminate against an unaccompanied migrant child, either on the basis of race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. That is to say that each UMC ought to be treated with respect and dignity bearing in mind the values of social work, principles of social justice and the dignity and worth of each individual person.
<b>Principle three: Protection of rights:</b> All social workers have a duty to take all available measures to make sure that children’s rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. This involves assessing their social services, legal, health and educational systems, protect children’s rights, and create an environment where they can grow and reach their potential.
<b>Principle four:</b> Any UMC should be afforded psychological counselling, shelter, and health care as soon as they are identified

## **7.5 Objectives of the guidelines**

- To provide guidance to all social workers rendering social services to UMC in order to maximise the child’s sense of safety, realisation of their rights, strengthening service provision and minimising challenges impacting on effective service delivery is central.
- To serve as sources of guidance for both experienced and non-experienced social workers and to improve efficiency and effectiveness. For example, newly appointed social workers who have never dealt with UMC before, could consult the guidelines when seeking assistance with a particular procedural matter concerning UMC, mainly in cases where the supervisor is not readily available.
- To guide social workers on how to better address and respond to the needs of UMC, these guidelines will enable them to have a clear knowledge of what exactly is expected of them and what protocols to follow.

- To enhance the UMC psychosocial well-being and empowering them to be resilient to adversities.

## 7.6 Stages, steps and protocols/process to be adhered to by all social workers.

The following are stages, steps and protocols of intervention to be followed by all social workers rendering services to the UMC.

### 7.6.1 Stage 1: Training of social workers servicing UMC

For the effective management of the challenges and needs of UMC, a well-trained special team of social workers should be established. Working with the UMC requires a knowledgeable person who is specifically trained and skilled to deal with peculiar situations of the UMC. The training process should be supported by regular training, seminars and exposure to relevant forums in order to keep practitioners abreast with new developments concerning UMC. The above explications are indicative of the necessity for DSD to invest more in training of the social workers in order to strengthen service provisioning for the UMC, and implementing the best principles in the interest of the child.

The following aspects should be incorporated in the training of social workers:

- **Rendering services in a multi-cultural setting**

Since the UMC are from different countries, there is a need for social workers to be exposed to the kind of training that is in line with cross-cultural settings. Cultural sensitivity is an essential requirement in the social work profession, and entails the need for social workers to be empowered and skilled enough to deal with diverse cultures and traditions (DuBois, Miley, O'Melia and 2007). This form of training will enable the social workers to manage issues of diversity and cultural sensitivities.

In view that the migration trajectory exposes children to different forms of abuse and trauma, it is imperative that social workers are up-skilled to quickly identify such conditions in order to develop appropriate intervention strategies.

## 7.6.2 Stage 2: Steps to be followed in servicing the UMC

- **Step 1: identifying the UMC**

UMC can be identified by any responsible person in the community. Generally, they are identified by police officials and soldiers patrolling along the border and migration officials at the ports of entry. In the premise of the above, the guidelines should be made available to all community leaders such as councillors, police stations, migration officials and South African National Defence Force (SANDF) so that each official is aware and informed of what is expected of him/her in case he/she comes across such a child. More importantly, social workers should take a leading role in educating all the above, about such guidelines.

- **Step 2: Following identification**

As soon as an UMC is identified, a social worker must be notified. The designated social worker must as soon as possible make arrangements to immediately have the child assessed as s/he may have been traumatized during the migratory journey. The child should be attended to by a social worker at least within 24 hours of identification.

- **Step 3: Protocols and activities to be followed by the social workers servicing UMC**

***Table 7: Protocols and activities to be followed by the social workers servicing UMC***

<b>Protocol</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>1. Registration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All UMC that are identified and brought to the attention of social workers should be recorded\registered and immediately debriefed to alleviate any fears and insecurities.</li><li>• A suitable temporary accommodation must be identified to keep the child whilst the social worker makes arrangements for the child to appear before the Children's Court to be declared in need of care</li></ul>

according to the Children’s Act.

- Social workers should keep registers wherein they record/register all new UMC on arrival. A registration form to be filled by the social worker should contain, among other things, the following identifying details of the UMC: the child’s original name, age, gender, country of origin, date and year of arrival (See sample below).
- Personal data and as well as any other information should be recorded as accurately as possible in order to meet the specific needs of the child and to map out future plans.
- A more accurate and detailed information of each child is vital in order to establish the child's personal history and individual needs, and to begin to trace families of origin, in cases where such needs arise. More importantly, social workers must bear in mind that children are different and each has his/her own story to tell as well as personal needs. A copy of an unaccompanied child's file should always be kept by a designated social worker. Proper management of the children’s records is essential for the reason that, later in life, the child might wish to obtain information about his/her origins.

**Table 7.1: Unaccompanied migrant child registration form.**

Name	Age	Gender	Country of origin	Language	Date and year of arrival	Presenting problem	Short term planning	Long term planning	Assigned social worker

**2. Placement**

- As soon as the child has been recorded, the social worker should place the child in a registered, safe and secure accommodation. If a child has been placed in a temporary safe care, and whilst the social worker is

	<p>busy with the preparations for long-term placement, the child in question is not allowed to stay in a temporary shelter for more than 30 days. In other words, permanent or long-term accommodation should be arranged within 30 days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping the child for long can generate more anxiety and fear for the child. Every child needs some form of stability.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.Re-unification</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should repatriation be considered to be the option, the return to country of origin should only be carried out provided a suitable care-giver such as a parent, relative, adult care-taker, a government agency, a child-care agency in the country of origin has been contacted and agreed to take responsibility of the child. A written undertaking of commitment to the child should be provided in writing before repatriation takes place.</li> <li>• The decision on the return of a child to the country of origin for family reunification should strictly be based on the best interest of the child.</li> <li>• A child who cannot be reunified with his\her family should appear before a Children's Court within 30 days of intake.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Assessment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subsequently, the assessment process should commence, where the child is assessed for various psychosocial problems such as health needs, psychological, language and educational needs.</li> <li>• In this light, taking a holistic approach to assessment should be of primary importance.</li> <li>• The goal of assessment is to determine the child's needs which will inform future intervention processes.</li> </ul>

The significance of health, psychological and educational assessment are discussed below:

### **Health Assessment**

Health assessment is unquestionably vital and urgent in the light that the child may have been injured, raped, or contracted some illness on the way to their new destination, suffered psychological and physical stress triggered by the migratory journey. Therefore, it is extremely important that each child be tested for infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, STD, etc, without any delay so that they can start receiving medical attention if necessary.

### **Psychological Assessment**

- Subsequent to any traumatic migratory journey, every child will in one way or another show signs of trauma or psychological challenges. Therefore, psychological assessment should be considered a pre-requisite as it will help detect any emotional or psychological stresses which might have been triggered by the migratory journey.
- After the assessment has been successfully completed, any child with psychological challenges should be referred for counselling, subjected to relevant programs that will help deal with issues of trauma or distress.
- The purpose of counselling should be directed towards repairing the bruised emotional well-being of a child to enhance the child's coping abilities in his/her new environment.

### **Educational Assessment**

- All UMC should undergo educational assessment in order to determine their academic needs and

	<p>capabilities, since their education could have been disrupted due to migration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational assessment should involve among other things determining which grade the child should start at. For example, a child of nine years may have never had an opportunity of being enrolled in any school in the native country. Therefore, such a child may need to start in grade one notwithstanding the age. Failure to undergo the process may result in inappropriate educational placement of the child and poor academic performance.</li> </ul> <p><b>Language Assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UMC often arrive in the host country with little or no knowledge of the local languages. Therefore, social workers have to find ways to assess the UMC linguistic capabilities and the level of their competences in the language of schooling in order to design appropriate support materials and programs for learning and community integration.</li> <li>• Linguistic support programs should be designed to assist all those children with language challenges.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Enrolment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every child should be enrolled in school whether they have relevant documentation or not. No child should be turned away because they do not have the necessary documentation.</li> <li>• Since applying for any form of documentation might be a very long process, it is important that the child be enrolled in school first and not made to wait for the documentation.</li> <li>• As prescribed by the South African constitution, every school going child should attend school. Therefore, in</li> </ul>



	<p>the premise of the above, it becomes the role of the designated social worker to facilitate the enrolment of each UMC in the local school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner support programs to assist UMC with understanding the local language of the host country should be put in place especially for those who do not speak English and local language.</li> <li>• The social workers should facilitate team building and support groups involving both UMC and South African children to create and strengthen friendships and acceptance of each other. Such a move is likely to eliminate discrimination, stereotypes, hatred or lack of trust towards UMC.</li> <li>• While the child is in school, the social worker has to continue with the process of helping the child obtain an identity document or be it an Asylum or court order.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6.Identity document</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A child who has been identified as in need of care should be granted, by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), some form of official documentation (asylum or permit) which legally authorises him\her to stay in the country.</li> <li>• It is the sole responsibility of the assigned social worker to guide the child in every step towards obtaining some form of documentation.</li> <li>• Being in possession of some form of documentation will enable the child to be independent post the age of 18 and without one, they are at risk of arrest and deportation.</li> </ul>

<p><b>7.Children's rights</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worth underlining is the fact that in South Africa, UMC are accorded the same rights as South African children. It becomes critically imperative for the social worker to take this role of educating UMC about their rights seriously.</li> <li>• In the view that UMC are new and unfamiliar with the host country, educating them about their rights becomes vital. To that, they should be given accurate information on what their rights are and what services are available to them. This may alleviate exposure to exploitation and abuse.</li> <li>• Social workers should provide UMC with information that is age appropriate relative to their rights, using simple clear language with the support of an interpreter where necessary. In this regard, social workers should also exercise their role as advocates and advocate for the rights of the migrant children as they are too young to talk for themselves.</li> </ul>
<p><b>8.Intregation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settling in a new country can be difficult, therefore, an important part of the social work role is to support children to resettle successfully in this country. Social workers should help all the UMC to integrate within the school and community settings.</li> <li>• In order to achieve these goals, social workers should establish programs that give priority to the social integration of migrant children which include among others, different forms of community awareness campaigns and support groups.</li> <li>• This integration is important for the child's emotional development and identity formation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>9.Exit strategy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An exit strategy relates to the life of the UMC after the age of 18 where the child automatically falls out of the</li> </ul>

	<p>child protection system. The social worker should be able to help the child with both short and long term needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A durable exit strategy should be put in place by the social worker to avoid the child being thrown back on the streets on reaching the age of 18. In this light, UMC who have passed matric examinations should be afforded an opportunity to further their studies and those who did not should be afforded an opportunity to enrol in vocational training where they will learn skills such as carpentry, plumbing, upholstery, etc, so they can be self-reliant.</li> <li>• At the age 18, each child should have been issued with some form of documentation - be it asylum or permit, allowing them to stay legally in the country.</li> <li>• No child should exit the child care system without any form of documentation. This is because that will create more problems for the country as some children might resort to illegal means of survival such as substance abuse, prostitution, e.t.c, thereby increasing the crime rate in the country.</li> </ul>
<p><b>10. Monitoring &amp; evaluation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is the crucial stage in the intervention process as it entails monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention processes.</li> <li>• To encourage effective implementation of child protection measures, there must be accountability for persons involved. Therefore, the social work manager should oversee the monitoring and evaluation as a component of effective management. In this case, the social work manager manages the duties of the assigned social worker to check if she has complied with the proposed guidelines.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Social work manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department of Social Development should have a clear mandate to oversee and monitor whether the needs of UMC are being met by the designated social worker. As a result, the following duties should be performed by the social work manager;</li> <li>• To ascertain that the Guidelines are observed by the designated social worker without any compromise</li> <li>• Continuous monitoring that each child has been helped and prepared for successful exit.</li> </ul> <p>To put checks and balances in place for easy monitoring, the following questions need to be considered throughout the intervention process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the child safe?</li> <li>• What are the possible risks?</li> <li>• How are these risks going to be managed?</li> <li>• What will finally happen to the child after exiting the system?</li> </ul> <p>These questions will help the manager to check if the child has been fully prepared for exit or not.</p>
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## 7.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented new additional guidelines to assist social workers rendering services to the UMC, especially, in South Africa. The guidelines were developed out of recognition of several gaps within the existing ones and the responses from the study participants. The development of these guidelines is anticipated to bring improvement in dealing with the challenges facing UMC in this country and beyond, thus equipping social workers with effective knowledge and skills to provide effective and efficient services to the vulnerable UMC.

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## **LIST OF ADDENDUMS**

Addendum A: a preamble to an information and informed consent document

Dear Mr Motaung (Pseudonym)

I, Memory Mathe, the undersigned, am a Social Work Lecturer, and a part-time doctorate student in the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa. In fulfilment of the requirements for the doctoral degree, I have to undertake a research project and have consequently decided to focus on the following research topic: Experiences, challenges and coping strategies of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa: Guidelines for social work.

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. To help you decide whether or not to participate in this research project, I am going to give you information that will help you to understand the study (i.e. what the aims of the study are and why there is a need for this particular study). Furthermore, you will be informed about what your involvement in this study, which will entail (i.e. what you will be asked to do during the study, the risks and benefits involved by participating in this research project, and your rights as a participant in this study).

This research project originated as a result of an identified gap in the knowledge, practice, and in the capacity of social workers relative to working with unaccompanied migrant children, and the aim is:

To gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, coping strategies, and experiences of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa; and

To develop guidelines for social workers providing social services to unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa.

The information gathered from this study will provide an insight into the, coping strategies, and experiences of unaccompanied migrant children the South African context.

Should you agree to participate, you would be requested to participate in semi-structured interviews that will be conducted at the place and the time that is suitable for you. It is estimated that the interview(s) will last approximately one hour. The questions which will be directed to you during the interviews are attached as Annexure F.



As the research proceeds, you may be required to do the following activities:

- 1) Complete the schedule focusing on biographical information;
- 2) Share your expectations regarding the entire project;
- 3) Evaluate the value of every interview to check whether expectations are being addressed and by sharing the experiences gained; and
- 3) Read through the verbatim transcriptions of interviews to verify that they are indeed a true reflection of the conversation.

With your permission, the interviews will be audiotaped. The recorded interviews will be transcribed word-for-word. Your responses to the interview (both the taped and transcribed versions) will be kept strictly confidential. The audiotapes will be coded to disguise any identifying information. The tapes will be stored in a locked safe at my private house, and only I will have access to them. The transcripts (without any identifying information) will be made available to my research promoter, translator, and an independent coder with the sole purpose of assisting and guiding me with this research undertaking. My research promoter, the translator, and the independent coder will each sign an undertaking to treat the information shared by you in a confidential manner.

The independent coder is someone who is well versed and experienced in analysing information collected by means of interviews, and he or she is appointed to analyse the transcripts of the interviews independently of the researcher to ensure that the researcher will report the participants' accounts of what has been researched. The audiotapes 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 of which you may otherwise be entitled to. Should you agree to participate, please sign the information and informed consent and assent document herewith, as proof of your willingness to participate, and 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 participating without any loss of benefits. If you do withdraw from the study, however, you would be requested to grant me an 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 divulged is emotionally sensitive and upsets you to such an extent that it hinders you from functioning physically and emotionally in an

acceptable manner. If, furthermore, 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 has left you feeling emotionally upset or distressed, 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, please dial this number: 072-343 3488.

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 which have not addressed sufficiently clearly 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, Prof A.H (Nicky) Alpaslan, telephone number 012 429 6739, or email [alpasah@unisa.ac.za](mailto:alpasah@unisa.ac.za).

If, after you have consulted the researcher and the Research and Ethics Committee in the Department of Social Work at Unisa, their answers have 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,

Memory Mathe

Researcher

Cell No: 072 343 3488

Email: [mathem@unisa.ac.za](mailto:mathem@unisa.ac.za)

Addendum B: information and informed consent document

Title of research project: Experiences, challenges and coping strategies of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa: Guidelines for social work.

Reference Number:

Principal investigator: Mrs M. Mathe

Address: PO Box 213, Zakariyya Park

Contact telephone Number: 072-343-3488

<p>DECLARATION BY <b>OR</b> ON BEHALF OF THE PARTICIPANT:</p> <p>I, the undersigned, _____ (name),          [ID No: _____ the participant or in my capacity as          _____ of the participant [ID No          _____ of _____          _____(address)</p> <p><b>A. HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS:</b></p> <p>I/the participant was invited to participate in the above research project, which is being undertaken by Mrs Memory Mathe of the Department of Social Work in the School of Social Science and Humanities at the University of South Africa.</p>	<p>Initial</p>
<p>2. The following aspects have been explained to me/the participant:</p> <p>2.1 Aim: the study aims to develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges and coping strategies of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa: Guidelines for Social work.</p> <p>The information will be used for the following:</p> <p>To develop Guidelines for Social workers rendering services to unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa.</p>	<p>Initial</p>
<p>I understand that I am participating in this research project without any expectation of payment of whatsoever and that I will be interviewed on my experiences of challenges, experiences and coping strategies of unaccompanied</p>	<p>Initial</p>

migrant children: Guidelines for Social work.	
2.3. Risks: As the research proceeds I may be emotionally too overwhelmed to handle some of the experiences that I will be sharing.	Initial
A possible benefit: As a result of my participation in this study, I will be afforded an opportunity to share my, <b>coping strategies and experiences as an unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa and</b> , therefore, I would be playing a large role in making the voices of UMC heard.	Initial
Confidentiality: My identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description, or scientific publications by the investigators/researchers.	Initial
Access to findings: Any new information/benefit that develops during the course of the study will be shared with me.	Initial
Voluntary participation/refusal/discontinuation: My participation is voluntary. My decision about whether or not to participate will in no way affect me now or in the future.	Initial
3. The information above was explained to me/the participant by Mrs Mathe in English/ ? /Zulu, and I am in command of this language/ it was translated to me satisfactorily by Ms Mathe. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and all these questions were answered satisfactorily.	Initial?
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.	Initial
5 Participation in this study will not result in any cost to me.	Initial
B. I HEREBY CONSENT VOLUNTARILY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ABOVE PROJECT.  Signed/confirmed at/on _____ 2015  _____	
Signature or right thumbprint of participant	Signature of witness

Addendum C: consent form requesting permission to publish audiotapes or verbatim transcripts of audiotape recordings

<p>As part of this project, I have made a photographic, audio, and/or video recording of you. I would like you to indicate (with ticks in the appropriate blocks next to each statement below) which uses of these records are you willing to consent to. This is completely up to you. I will use the records only in ways that you agree to. In any of these</p>	<p>Place a tick [ ] next to the use of the record you consent to.</p>
<p>1. The records can be studied by the research team and photographs/quotations from the transcripts made of the recordings can be used in the research report.</p>	
<p>2. The records (i.e. photographs/quotations from the transcripts made of the recordings) can be used for scientific publications and/or meetings.</p>	
<p>3. The written transcripts and/or records can be used by other researchers.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of participant .....</p> <p>Signature of witness .....</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p>



Thank you for your/the participant's participation in this study. Should, at any time during the study, an emergency arise as a result of the research, or

you require any further information with regard to the study, or

the following occurs:

\_\_\_\_\_ (indicate any circumstance which should be reported to the investigator), kindly contact \_\_\_\_\_ (name) at telephone number

\_\_\_\_\_

[It must be a number where help will be available on a 24-hour basis.]

## Addendum E: request for permission to conduct research at kids haven & CMW shelter

Dear Ms Nkosi (Pseudonym)

My name is Memory Mathe. I am a Lecturer and also a doctorate student in the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa. In fulfilment of requirements for the doctoral degree, I have to undertake a research project and have consequently decided to focus on the following research topic: **Experiences, challenges and coping strategies of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa: Guidelines for social work.**

This research project originated as a result of an identified gap in the knowledge and practice in the area of UMC and the aim is:

To gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies, of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa.

To develop guidelines for social workers providing social services to unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa.

In view of the fact that participants are well informed about the topic, I hereby approach you with the request that you grant your permission to conduct a study among them.

The information gathered from this study will provide an insight into the, coping strategies, and experiences of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa and help in the development of guidelines for all social workers who are rendering services to UMC. The study will take a form of interviews, which will last for about 1 hour with each participant. As part of my ethical responsibility, I am obliged to treat the participant with respect, not harm any of them, not to force them to participate, to inform them about the practical details of the study, and to treat any information provided to me as confidential. Participants will sign consent and assent form through which they will be informed about the study in detail and through which, as a researcher, I will be committing myself to the required ethical principles. Your granting permission to conduct this study will, therefore, contribute towards closing the gap of knowledge regarding UMC, while also allowing the voices of UMC regarding their experiences, and coping strategies and their need for support from social workers to be heard.

Thanking you in advance,

Yours faithfully,

---

Ms Mathe



## Addendum F1: Consent letter: parent or guardian

Dear Participant / Representative of Participant:

I \_\_\_\_\_ the parent/ legal guardian/other, give permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the study concerning, coping strategies, and experiences of unaccompanied migrant children in South Africa

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian/other signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

## Addendum F2: Child's consent\assent form

Thank you for your participation in this study.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) understand that my involvement with this study is voluntary, and I understand that I may withdraw from participation in this study at any time without penalty and loss of benefit to myself.

\_\_\_\_\_: Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

## Addendum G1: The interview guide for UMC

<b>Biographical questionnaire for UMC</b>
Gender
Age
Race
cultural grouping
Country of origin
When did you arrive in SA?
How did you come or what mode of transport did you use to come to South Africa.

### **The following open-ended questions will guide the interview for UMC**

- What was your reason of coming to South Africa without your parents or relatives?
- When did you arrive in South Africa and with whom?
- Please share with me how it was for you to come to SA on your own?
- Tell me what is your view about being looked after in this institution?
- Explain to me what challenges do you face being an unaccompanied migrant child in SA?
- Explain to me how have you dealt with all the difficult situations that you experienced in coming to South Africa?
- Tell me more about what has kept you going throughout your journey from your home country to SA?
- Please tell me on what gives you courage to keep surviving in a foreign country without the protection of family or relatives?
- Explain to me how have you coped with challenges that you have encountered in South Africa?
- Can you tell me if you have had any contact with a social worker?
- How helpful was your contact with the social worker to you?
- Can you tell me ways in which a social worker can help and strengthen the well-being of UMC like you in SA?
- Explain to me any coping strategies/resources that you use when faced with problems/challenges?
- Provide me with a clear description of how do you deal with any challenges that you have encountered in South Africa?
- Explain to me what do you wish to happen to enable you to cope better?

From a social work point of view, it is believed that a person is an expert and more knowledgeable about his or her life than anyone else. In this case, it is believed that these

children will be able to tell their experiences, challenges and coping strategies according their experiential point of view.

## Addendum G2: Interview guide for social workers

<b>Biographical questionnaire for social workers</b>
Gender
Age
Race
Cultural grouping
Which organisation are you employed at
How many years of experience do you have in working with UMC
What kind of services have you rendered to UMC

- Provide me with a brief description of how long have you been working with UMC.
- Up to so far how many UMC have you worked with over a period of six months or a year?
- Briefly explain to me the kind of problems or issues that UMC bring to you?
- Explain to me the kind of mechanisms that you apply\ have applied in helping the UMC.
- Tell me more about help\services UMC require from social workers?
- Tell me more about the challenges you encounter when working\providing services to UMC?
- Briefly describe any mechanisms put up by the South African government in helping social workers who are rendering services to the UMC?
- As a Social Worker, what is your opinion of the services offered by social workers to UMC?
- Do you think the South African government is doing enough to help social workers who are working with the UMC please explain?
- Do you think UMC get the protection they deserve as described in the Child Care Act and the South African Constitution? Please justify your answer.
- Do you have any suggestions regarding better ways of how the well-being of UMC should be enhanced?
- From your own perspective, what are the experiences and challenges of the UMC?
- From your own point of view what coping strategies do they (UMC) employ in order to survive?
- According to the policy\legislation a social worker is expected to contact with a UMC (unaccompanied Migrant Child) within 48 hours of arrival in the shelter. Do you comply with that set standards? If not what hinders you from doing so?
- Are you aware of the guidelines developed by DSD for social workers working with these UMC.
- Do you think the provision of services to the UMC complies with the children's Act? Please explain.

Addendum H: approval letters to conduct the study.



**CWM CHILDREN'S PROJECT**  
**BOX 83, MUSINA**  
**0900**

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20 November 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION LETTER FOR MRS M MATHE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN CWM CHILDREN'S SHELTERS**

This letter serves to confirm that the above student would like to do research in CWM Shelters on the topic:

**THE EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES, AND COPING STRATEGIES OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN: GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK**

I Anna Mundanga (Project Manager) of CWM Children`s Project on behalf of management board and the chairperson of the Project, Prof L.E Matsaung authorize Mrs M. Mathe to carry out the research within our shelters.

I hereby grant her the permission.

As a shelter, we would appreciate if the researcher would be in a position to share some relevant findings with us for our policy development.

For more information, contact Prof L.E.Matsaung on 082 200 5336

Thanks for Co-operation

Anna Mundanga  
Project Manager

Addendum I: ethical clearance letter



**LIMPOPO**  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Confidential

Ref : S5/3/1/2  
Enq : Ledwaba MS  
Tel : 015 293 6466  
Date : 05 May 2015

To : Ms Mathe M

**RESPONSE ON THE REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY TITLED:  
EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF  
UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA: GUIDELINES  
FOR SOCIAL WORK SERVICES**

1. The above matter refers to the letter dated, **03 February 2015**.
2. The Department of Social Development hereby grant permission to conduct the above-mentioned research study, on the provision that the Ethics Committee for the University of South Africa provided clearance for the study.
3. **NB.** On completion of the study, a copy of the mini dissertation should be submitted to the Department in honour of your commitment.
4. The Department take this opportunity to wish you well during the period of research.

**SENIOR MANAGER: HUMAN CAPITAL  
DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY**

DATE 13/05/2015

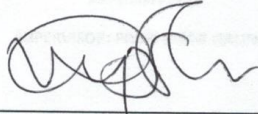
18 College Street, Polokwane, 0700, Private Bag x9710, POLOLKWANE, 0700  
Tel: (015) 293 6027, Fax: (015) 293 6211/20 Website: <http://www.limpopo.gov.za>

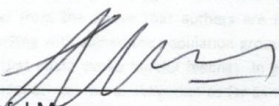
Open Rubric

The heartland of Southern Africa - *development is about people*

- 1) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Department of Social Work's Research and Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested of there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the participants.
- 3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

Kind regards,

  
Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Professor AH Alpaslan 02/02/15  
Chair: Department of Social Work Research and Ethics Review Committee  
alpasah@unisa.ac.za

  
Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_ 03/02/15  
Professor Prof J Murray  
Manager Postgraduate Studies: College of Human Sciences





