

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE NEGLECT AND ABUSE OF FOSTER
CHILDREN: SOCIAL WORKERS' PERSPECTIVES AND SUGGESTIONS**

by

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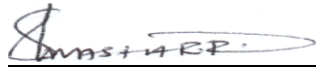
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May 2020

DECLARATION

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I declare that “Factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children: social workers’ perspectives and suggestions” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.


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15 May 2020

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my mother Elizabeth Lesheleba Masha and my late father Jim Mothoana Masha. The dissertation is also dedicated to my uncle Philip Phetla for his motivating words that have inspired and moved me to obtain an education.

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Abstract

The child protection system includes foster care. Yet some foster children are neglected, physically or emotionally abused and are used to obtain Foster Care Grants. The essence of this study is to develop a thorough and comprehensive understanding from the frame of reference of social workers on the factors that contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children as well as their suggestions about possible interventions.

The qualitative research approach was applied. The researcher utilised purposive sampling to select social workers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather information and data was analysed. It is clear from the findings that the foster care system needs to be reviewed to minimise or stop neglect and abuse of foster children.

Keywords: Abuse; Neglect; Foster children; Foster Care Grant; Contribution; Perspectives; Social workers; Suggestions; Factors; Foster parents.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DSD	: Department of Social Development
FCG	: Foster care grant
HIV/AIDS	: Human Immunodeficiency Virus or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organisation
NQF	: National Qualification Framework
SA	: South Africa
SASSA	: South African Social Security Agency
SAPS	: South African Police Services
SFCS	: Setshabelo Family and Child Services
UNISA	: University of South Africa

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM FORMULATION AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

In Chapter 1, the research study, problem formation and rationale are introduced. The research approach and design, population and sampling, methods of data collection, data analysis, data verification as well as ethical considerations are discussed. Lastly, key concepts are clarified and the structure of the research report is outlined.

In this section of the study an introduction to the study is provided and the problem under investigation is clarified.

1.1.1 General introduction

The number of children in need of care in South Africa is increasing. A briefing paper on foster care (Briefing Paper 2015:1) concurs that the Human Immunodeficiency Virus or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) is widespread and its shocking repercussions created a vast number of vulnerable children in need of care. This is because of the high mortality rate of both parents in the family which leaves children vulnerable and at risk. Mnisi (2015:1) attests that about one million nine hundred children in South Africa have no parents or are left with one parent because of HIV/AIDS. She further indicates that Human Immunodeficiency Virus or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome has contributed to the rising number of orphaned children. In addition, UNICEF (2006:3) indicates that in sub-Saharan Africa AIDS is the leading cause of death among adults aged 15–59. Furthermore, it is stated that a total of one million three hundred parents died of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa during the year 2009 (Chigbu 2019:17). Breen (2015:1) points out that the HIV/AIDS pandemic has led to a dramatic increase of orphans and that the need for alternative care placements has consequently increased.

Foster care is an alternative care placement and occurs when a child is placed by a children's court order with a suitable family or individual, who will become a foster parent to the child, being a person who has the ability to provide a conducive space that is safe for the child's growth and development (Children's Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008:

section 180-182). According to Webb (2011:234), foster care is an interim alternative for a child's care in an alternative home, especially when the biological parents fail to provide care to their own child for various reasons. Foster care placement is there to cater for children when their parents cannot take care of them due to certain serious difficulties. Mnisi (2015:32) explains foster care as a 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the government has a placement and care responsibility. In addition, Van Der Riet (2009:26) explains foster care as legal replacement care in a family for a child whose parents cannot provide care for him/her because of certain reasons.

Foster care is a prominent placement option that assists many children in the world. In America approximately 500 000 children are placed in foster care. This is confirmed by the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System Report (2015:1) which states that America has placed about 415 129 children in foster care. Furthermore, in England 51 315 children are in foster care placements (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted 2015:2). In addition, it was reported that Scotland had 7 869, Wales had 4 050 and the Netherlands had 1 687 children placed in foster care (Munru, Brown & Manful 2011:16). Breen (2015:2) reported that in the year 2014 SA had 512 055 children receiving the Foster Care Grant (FCG).

As stated in the Children's Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: section 181), the aim of foster care placement is to care for and protect children by furnishing children with a conducive and healthy environment with optimal support. Children qualify for foster care placement if they are orphans in need of care, neglected or abused, or for other reasons. The child is deemed as being in need of care and protection if the child is exposed to a situation that can be detrimental for the child and prevent the child from achieving his or her developmental milestones (Gil 2006:23).

The Children's Amendment Act No. 17 of 2016 (South Africa 2017: section 150 (a-i)) asserts that a child is regarded in need of care and protection when the child:

(a) has been abandoned or orphaned and does not have the ability to support himself or herself and such inability is readily apparent;

- (b) is showing a behaviour which is difficult to control by parents or caregivers;
- (c) stays or works on the streets or is begging for food for survival;
- (d) is addicted to substances and there is no one to support the child to get treatment;
- (e) was exploited or stays in a situation which can expose the child to exploitation;
- f) stays or is exposed to a situation that may be seriously detrimental to the child's social well-being, mentally or physically;
- g) will be at risk if reverted to parent/caregiver especially when there is belief that the child might be in a situation that may be seriously detrimental to the child's social well-being, mentally or physically;
- (h) is physically or mentally neglected by a parent or caregiver; or
- (i) is abused, neglected, or not treated well by a parent, caregiver or a person with parental rights and responsibility.

The Children's Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: section 180) states that a child may be placed in foster care with "(a) a person who is not a family member of the child, (b) with a family member who is not the parent or guardian of the child; or (c) in a registered cluster foster care scheme". A distinction is thus made between non-kinship foster care, kinship foster and cluster foster care. This study engages only foster children placed in non-kinship and kinship foster care.

Relatives, in particular grandmothers, care for large numbers of children. It is stated that most foster children in SA are placed with family members such as grandparents or related nuclear and single-parent families (Böning & Ferreira 2013:539). In African tradition/culture there is no orphan; children who have lost parents are normally taken care of by relatives. Foster (2004:67) agrees that "traditionally, there is no such thing as an orphan in Africa as relatives such as aunts and uncles have almost always taken on the parenting of orphaned children".

It is reported that there are cases of foster children being abused. Foster (2004:68) asserts that there have been reported cases of abuse, mistreatment or exploitation of fostered children. Dougherty (in Sanchez-Gomez 2012:24) states that in America the perpetrator is a foster parent in 5% of abuse cases. Tarren-Sweeney (in Biehal & Parry 2010:21) confirmed that in Australia 19% of foster children are maltreated. In England, data collected from social workers indicates that there is only a 3% incidence of foster children being maltreated (Sinclair in Biehal & Parry 2010:21). The researcher could not find any available statistics of cases of neglected and abused foster children in South Africa. The media refers to cases of abuse of foster children e.g. the Sowetan (Khumalo 2004:1) indicated that a 40 year old woman was arrested for neglecting her foster child of 8 years. It was reported that the child was locked up in a room for a week without food (Khumalo 2004:1). Media that have reported the neglect and abuse of foster children are the Sowetan, Star, Sabinet online and Daily Dispatch.

Foster children appear to experience physical abuse from their foster parents with the intention of disciplining them, which ends up in physical injuries. Pretorius and Pistorius (in Pretorius, Mhlokazi, Hlase & Jacklin 2012:10) explain physical abuse as non-accidental physical injury which includes severe beating, biting, broken bones, strangulation, welts and/or body injuries.

Emotional abuse is when a caregiver or parent separates him/herself from providing for the child's development, fails to support such a child mentally, isolates the child and refrains from providing a supportive environment for the child (World Health Organisation and International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect 2006: 10). Foster parents can also abuse children emotionally by not being supportive and can set unrealistically high or inappropriate expectations for the developmental level of these foster children (Berk 2006:588; Scottish Government 2010:13).

Many foster parents neglect their parental responsibilities towards foster children by not providing for the development and well-being of these children in the areas of physical health, not buying school uniforms, adequate food and sometimes they do not have proper houses or conducive living areas. Pretorius and Pistorius (in Pretorius et al 2012:11) thus

attest that neglect is a deliberate or non-intentional failure to provide for the child's basic physical, intellectual, emotional or social needs, including medical and educational needs. In addition, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006: section 1) concurs that neglect is failure in executing parental responsibility to provide for the child's basic physical, emotional or social needs. Ndamase (2016:1) indicates that some foster children are neglected whereby they do not have food and rely on hand-outs from villagers. Furthermore, Ndamase (2016:1) asserts that some foster children are chained to trees, while others sleep in tanks without blankets and others are locked in houses because they are said to be mentally ill, mischievous or troublemakers.

Foster (2004:68) indicates that girls in foster care, in particular, may be taken in by relatives because of their economic value in carrying out domestic chores or obtaining bride price. Female foster children are thus pressured to get married or to do work for the family. The National Policy Framework and Strategic Plan for Prevention and Management of Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation (Department of Social Development 2010:6) explains exploitation of a child is when advantage is taken of a child for the benefit of an exploiter. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006: section 1) defines exploitation as including all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, including debt bondage or forced marriage, sexual exploitation, servitude, forced labour or services, or the removal of body parts.

It is asserted that some caregivers are taking care of children whose parents are deceased only because of the foster care grant and without a love of children (Meintjes & Van Niekerk 2005:3; Ramadikela & Bongela 2003:1). The foster child grant was introduced as part of the child protection system and for alternative care, but seems to be abused by foster parents (Hall & Proudlock 2011:1).

There are also reports of sexual abuse of foster children. Ndamase (2016:1) attests that young foster girls are sexually abused and impregnated by the male members of the foster family. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006: section 1) explains that a child is sexually abused when: (a) sexually molesting or assaulting a child or allowing a child to be sexually molested or assaulted; (b) encouraging, inducing or forcing a child to be used

for the sexual gratification of another person; (c) using a child in or deliberately exposing a child to sexual activities or pornography; or (d) procuring or allowing a child to be procured for the commercial sexual exploitation of a child.

Child abuse and neglect affect a child's physical, psychological and behavioural development (Louw & Louw 2007:362). Lamont (2010:2) indicates that "child abuse and neglect can affect all domains of development physical, psychological, cognitive, behavioural and social which are often interrelated". Nziyane (2010:5) attests that psychological stress leads to the child displaying behavioural problems in school such as fighting with other children, not doing school work, causing class disruption, and being at risk of sexual activity. Physically abused foster children do not perform well in school, drop out of school, and display aggressive and oppositional or deviant behaviour and/or may attempt suicide (Pretorius, Kotzé & Lodge in Pretorius et al 2012:75-76). Bruskas (2008:71) confirms that foster children who often move from one foster home to another will miss many school days and, in addition, face the challenges of new schools. This affects their attendance and comfort level, which in turn can impact their school experience as well as long-term performance outcomes.

Emotional abuse has serious behavioural and emotional consequences in a child's life, such as low self-esteem, impaired or inadequate mental or emotional development, behaving like an adult or displaying regressive behaviour, fear of failure, setting overly high standards for the self, reluctance to play, mood swings, aggression, depression, overly controlled dramatic expression of emotions and attention-seeking behaviour (Pretorius & Pistorius in Pretorius et al 2012:75-76). Furthermore, Pretorius and Pistorius (in Pretorius et al 2012:77-78) add that children who experience neglect, steal or beg for food and school supplies from their classmates, may state that their needs are not met or that nobody cares, display self-destructive behaviour and/or may spend more time at friends' houses than their own home.

It is reported that in South Africa the backlog in foster care is leading to children remaining in potentially abusive situations (Jooste 2010:8). Knapp Van Bogaert (in Pretorius et al 2012:21) postulates that in most abusive relationships of children and foster parents, parents abuse children because of the power they have over foster children. He points out that an

abusive relationship involves a helpless child who is subordinated to a person who has more power and is in control.

In an effort to solve the problems of children and orphans being unsafe, the Department of Social Development has developed various documents and strategies that are implemented, such as the National Guidelines for Social Services to Children Infected and Affected by Human Immunodeficiency Virus or Acquired immunodeficiency Syndrome; the National Policy on Orphans and Other Children Made Vulnerable by Human Immunodeficiency Virus or Acquire Immunodeficiency Syndrome; and the National Strategic Framework for Children Infected and Affected by Human Immunodeficiency Virus or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (Schierhout & Nxumalo 2007:17). Although these documents and strategies focus on children who are not in protection or who are orphaned by HIV/AIDS, they do not specifically address the challenges, including neglect and abuse, faced by children in foster care.

The problem statement will be clarified in the next section.

1.1.2 Problem statement

It is explained that the research problem is the subject the researcher would like to study or address, whether illustratively or experimentally (McMillian 2004:22). Creswell (2009:98) indicates that the problem statement is the cause of a study to be undertaken. The author further mentions that the research problem can arise from the work experience of a researcher, personal reasons or because of debate in literature or policy debates.

Research done by Bungane (2007:1) states that placement in foster care is distinguished by difficulties in relationships that do not work between foster child and foster parent. According to Grietens (2007:7), foster care placement fails because the foster parents are not aware of the foster child's problems and background and/or could not meet his/her needs. Other children who find themselves in the environment of foster care are victims of family conflicts and other related violence. It is reported that HIV/AIDS has had huge effects on the lives of children (Smart 2003:7). The orphaned children carry this vast effect into the foster family. Caregivers forget that children who do not have parents are vulnerable and

need care and protection with the understanding that a child has lost his/her parents. It is stated that foster parents are inadequately trained to comprehend and assist with the difficulties arising in placements and agencies do not have the resources to deal with these problems and this situation has not changed (Durand 2007:2).

Research done by Sanchez-Gomez (2012:17) in California, indicates that the foster care system does not provide stability for children. In addition, it is stated that due to problems with the foster care system, children often bounce between different placements (Sanchez-Gomez 2012:17). In the United Kingdom, statistics indicate that approximately 10 000 children abscond from alternative care per year (Taylor, Rahilly, Hunter, Bradbury-Jones, Sanford, Carruthers & Ibrahim 2012:3). Sanchez-Gomez (2012:17) further maintains that caregivers with a history of maltreatment are also more likely to abuse their children and that there is a risk of child abuse if, as a child, the caregiver experienced abuse or witnessed abuse. Thus, it is reported that there are many parents who lack knowledge of child development and the expectations of parents for the child's age may contribute to child maltreatment (Sanchez-Gomez 2012:17).

It is said that fostered children experience feelings of separation and also feel they are maltreated whereas those in the family are treated well, in particular regarding access to education and doing household chores (Foster, Levine & Williamson 2005:26). Furthermore, Foster et al (2005:27) state that there is the possibility of a foster child being abused or exploited in the foster home.

Literature also indicates that the use of child protection as a method for managing grants to orphans has harmful effects. The South African Alternate Report Coalition (2015:21) points out that using the child protection system for the administration of a grant to orphans is problematic and has detrimental effects. Meintjes and Van Niekerk (2005:3) state that the foster care grant for orphans and vulnerable children puts these children at high risk. These authors further indicate that a number of cases have been documented in which orphaned children have been wrenched from relatives who love and care for them by others who are more powerful and who are motivated by the potential of accessing a foster care grant.

The researcher was assisted by the librarian of the Social Work Department at UNISA, to search for research done on the proposed topic. She confirmed that although the media have reported incidences of foster children being neglected and abused, there is little research on the subject of neglect and abuse in the foster care environment, particularly in South Africa. There thus seems to be a lack of research on factors that contribute to the neglect and abuse of children in foster care and suggestions on how this can be addressed. The researcher wished to develop a comprehensive and thorough understanding from the perspective of social workers of the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children.

In the following section the rationale for the study is outlined.

1.1.3 Rationale for the study

The researcher was employed as a social worker at Setshabelo Family and Child Services (SFCS) providing family preservation and foster care services in the Botshabelo Township, Free State Province, consisting of 18 sections. This non-governmental organisation (NGO) services only one section, section H, of the township in terms of foster care and family preservation services. However, adoption services are rendered in the whole of the Free State Province. The DSD provides services, including foster care services, to the whole of Botshabelo, except section H. In his capacity as foster care manager, many cases of foster parents abusing their foster children were reported to the researcher. When further investigating these cases, the researcher was able to pick up that there are poor relationships in the foster family and misuse of the FCG seemed to contribute to the abuse. The other social worker employed by the SFCS confirmed this trend. According to one foster care social worker in SFCS Botshabelo Township approximately 21 foster children section H abscond from alternative care per year indicating that they are abused by foster parents due to poor relationships and psychological abuse. These foster children were between 10 and 17 years. Some of them were in alternative care for two to eight years before indicating that they were being abused. These foster children alleged they are neglected and abused physically and emotionally while some stated that foster parents were misusing their foster care grant. Foster parents also often indicated that orphaned children are difficult to raise, care and protect. It seemed to the researcher that the foster parents did not understand the children's context. Mnisi's study (2015:82) confirm that foster parents are often struggling to manage the behaviour of adolescent foster children.

Research indicates that the caseloads of social workers are too large and the same social workers are not trained sufficiently to provide quality foster care services (Ngwenya 2011:73; De Jager 2011:3). Ngwenya (2011:73) explains that the social workers blame management for “reducing people to numbers”, “working on quantity rather than quality” and “deskilling them [social workers]”, leaving them unable to render a quality service to the clients. A study done by De Jager (2011:3) indicated that social workers do not have the time to train and support foster parents during in-depth pre- and post-placement services. She further asserts that many foster parents are not prepared to address the special needs of foster children.

Ngwenya (2011:73) highlights that social workers joining the Department of Social Development (DSD) are not trained to understand foster care policy and deliver and render quality services to the clients. The researcher has observed in his capacity as foster care manager that the systems and regulations used to encourage adults to take responsibilities for orphaned children e.g. the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 are inadequate. This is because there are cases of foster parents who default on the placement of a child even before the court order expires, while others will chase the child away immediately the placement lapses and the grant automatically stops. In this regard, there is no clear legislation to address behaviour of foster parents. Instead, social workers are expected to screen another suitable person to take over as foster parent.

The above experiences, as well as a lack of research in this area triggered the researcher’s curiosity and desire to investigate the factors that contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children by their foster parents and what can be done to address this situation.

1.1.4 Theoretical framework

It is stated by Zastrow (2013:100), that social work continues to use the ecological perspective to assess human behaviour. Mudavanhu and Schenck (2014: 371) indicate that ecological systems theory is about the environment and its immediate settings shaping the individual’s life. According to Teater (2014), the ecological perspective in social work

practice is perceived as human beings interact, they interact with their physical, social, and cultural environments. Further, the literature indicates that the significance of any theory used in social work is to take note of a person and the environment around him or her and is referred to as “person-and-environment concept” (Gitterman & Germain 2008:51).

This study was undertaken from an ecological systems perspective. The ecological systems perspective was useful in understanding the circumstances in which foster children are neglected and abused. This perspective highlights that individuals, including children, are viewed as resulting from the interaction between risk and protective factors at individual, family, community, cultural, and societal levels (DePanfilis & Salus 2003:12; Department of Health 2000:12). Paat (2013:955) explains that ecological perspective focuses on the “interrelationship between family and other ecological systems such as school, neighbourhood, and peer network”.

The ecological systems perspective indicates a connection between the social environment, human behaviour and social functioning, meaning that the personal, family and environmental factors constantly interact with each other to influence the family of which the foster child is part. Furthermore, Compton and Galloway (1994:119) indicate that the core “logic” of the ecological perspective is “an intervention at any point in the system will affect the entire system” because all parts of the whole are interrelated and reciprocally influence one another.

The safety and risk assessment of children in the field of child protection services (DSD 2012:39), points out that there is a “synergistic” interaction between child and environment. The individual goes through cycles of change because of the changing environment. The ecological systems perspective includes transitional points relating to the family life cycle and includes all complex relationships between foster child developmental needs, parental capacity, family and environment (Zastrow 2003:18-19). This study will reflect on foster children in the context of their families (foster parents/caregivers), the community and the culture in which the foster child is growing up.

Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried and Larsen (2006:18) explain that the ecological systems perspective requires focusing on the individual (foster child) and his/her total context by stating that the ecological systems perspective assessment needs one to have knowledge of the diverse system involved in interaction between human beings and their environment:

- Subsystem of individual (biophysical, cognitive, emotional, behavioural, motivation)
- Interpersonal system (parent-child, marital, family, kin, friends, neighbours, cultural reference group, spiritual belief system and other members of social network)
- Organisations, institutions and communities
- The physical environment (housing, neighbourhood environment, buildings, other artificial creations, water, weather and climate).

The ecological perspective assisted the researcher to develop a comprehensive and thorough understanding of neglected and abused foster children in their particular context. The researcher was able to identify factors that contribute to neglect and abuse of foster children. Themes, sub-themes, categories and subthemes were found in the use of ecological perspective.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The next sections will clarify the research questions, goals and objectives of the study.

1.2.1 Research questions

Research question is defined as a brief but comprehensive questioning statement developed to direct research studies (Grove, Burns & Gray 2013:708). Research questions seek to decide or find a process or describe experiences (Doody & Bailey 2016:20). Feldt (2010:1) explains that a research question is a question that a research study is about to answer.

In this study, the research question refers to the essence of the study and indicates its focus. The research questions originated from the researcher's work with foster children as a social worker at the Setshabelo Family and Child Services in Botshabelo Township.

The research questions posed were as follows:

- From the perspective of social workers, what are the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children?
- From the frame of reference of social workers, what suggestions can be made to address neglect and abuse of foster care children?

1.2.2 Research goals and objectives

Research goal is the end result of the research study the researcher intends to achieve (Fouché & De Vos in De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont 2011:104). A goal is about what the researcher tries to answer (Richards 2011:134). According to Creswell (2007:103), purpose is the assertion that gives the main intention or direction of the study. The research goal, in the researcher's view, is about what the researcher needs to achieve at the end of the investigation (the main intention of the study).

The following were the goals for this research:

- To explore from the perspective of social workers of the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children.
- To proffer suggestions from the frame of reference of social workers on how to address neglect and abuse of foster care children.

The researcher defines a research objective as the detailed process one would need to go through to reach the research goal. An objective is explained by Grove et al (2013:708), as declarative statements that are conveyed to direct a research. Research objective is described as an active statement that answers a certain research question (Farrugia, Petrisor, Farrokhyar & Bhandari 2010:280).

The researcher sought to satisfy the following objectives at the end of the study

- To inquire into the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children, as well as suggestions that can be made to address the neglect and abuse of foster care children from the perspective of social workers.

- To describe the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children, as well as suggestions that can be made to address the neglect and abuse of foster care children from the frame of reference of social workers.
- To draw conclusions on the factors that contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children and make recommendations to address this abuse and neglect.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is considered when the researcher looks at the theory of how the inquiry/investigation should proceed. According to Igwenagu (2016:4), research methodology is a structured theoretical analysis of the methods employed in the research study. It deals with the procedure that the researcher follows to describe, explain and predict the research (De-xin 2018:197).

1.3.1 Research approach

There are different types of research approaches namely; qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods of research (Creswell 2009:3-5). This author explains the difference by describing qualitative research as a method of discussing in detail the meaning a person or group attach to a social problem. The process comprises of questions, protocol, data collection in the setting of the participants; data analysis is inductive and the researcher provides an interpretation of the information collected. Quantitative research is about examining objective theories by testing relationships among variables. The numbered data and variables are analysed by statistical procedures whilst mixed methods of research uses both qualitative and quantitative research. Maree (2007:51) explains that qualitative research is to explore “why” questions through research.

The following characteristics of qualitative research are stated by Creswell (2013:201), Donalek and Soldwisch (2004:354-356), Fossey, Harvey and McDermott (2002:727), Leedy and Ormrod (2005:133), Meadows (2003:464-465) and Royse (2008:279):

- In qualitative research, researchers perceive data as useful when comprehended in the situation of participants’ lives rather than in an experimental setting.

- Qualitative researchers use relevant research participants who are affected by the research problem so that they can narrate well on their experiences of the topic being investigated.
- Qualitative methods utilise semi-structured interviews to explore a certain situation by making use of an interview guide.
- Qualitative methods use field work.
- Qualitative research methods are explorative and descriptive. The researcher inquires in detail on a problem, especially when there is not adequate information that brings new data.
- Qualitative research methods assist in collecting information to make conclusions after the findings.
- Qualitative research is more verbal and it uses what participants say to explain their life experiences.
- When doing qualitative research, the researcher is not an expert but a learner.

1.3.2 Research design

According to Babbie (2007:87), a research design is a proposal of scientific inquiry that is utilised to respond to the study's research question in order to reach the goal and objectives of the study. Furthermore, De Vos et al (2005:268) use the term 'research design' as "... those groups of small worked-out formulas from which prospective (qualitatively oriented) researchers can select or develop one (or more) that may be suitable for their specific research goal". The research design is a "plan or blueprint" for undertaking the research study (Babbie & Mouton 2008:74). The researcher views the research design as a strategic plan that states how and where the data will be collected from the participants to reach the goals and objectives of the study. The researcher applied the exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design.

- **Exploratory research**

The exploratory design is appropriate when a researcher investigates a new topic about which not much is known to create a starting point for general ideas that might be investigated in detail to reach conclusions (Babbie 2007:88-89). Additionally, Wiid and Diggens (2013:56) explain that in explorative research the objective is not only to get needed information, but also to develop insight and understanding of the research topic.

- **Descriptive research**

In terms of the descriptive research design, the researcher starts with a well-explained subject and then research is done to give it the correct description (Neuman 2006:35). Descriptive designs assist researchers to obtain a better understanding of the topic under investigation. Bhattacharjee (2012:6) explains that descriptive research strives to report about a situation, difficulty, problem, or study, or supply information about an area of research.

- **Contextual research**

It is explained that when a research study is undertaken in the context of the participants' lives, it furnishes a greater and more sufficient understanding of their experience (Mnisi 2015:40). According to Leong and Austin (2006:448), different groups of people and their habits, traditions and beliefs shape the meaning of the study.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods are specific research techniques that are applied in qualitative or quantitative research (Silverman 2010:110). Walliman (2011:1) adds that research methods are "the tools and techniques for doing research". The following subsection provides an explanation of how the population was selected, the sampling methods used and the procedure for data collection and analysis.

1.4.1 Population

Population is all people, environment, organisation, units, events or sampling units with which a research problem is concerned (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport 2011:223). Population is all people or objects that have the same characteristics in which the researcher is interested (Brink 2006:2007).

For this research study, the researcher described population as all social workers employed at the DSD and one NGO, SFCS that are providing foster care services in the area of Botshabelo, Free State Province, South Africa. The researcher selected the Botshabelo area which is located in the province of the Free State. It was because the researcher resides and

works in this area, with the result that the population was easily accessible and the costs of the research were manageable. The Botshabelo Township is divided into 18 sections. The Department Social Development renders foster care services for 17 sections and SFCS services only one section (H). These social workers are information-rich because of their first-hand experience in foster care as each social worker manages a caseload of more than 100 foster care placements

1.4.2 Sampling

Sampling is a subset of observed units that tells something about the large population (Royse 2008:203). Neuman (2006:219) explains that a sample is a small number of selected cases from a huge pool which represents the population. The inclusion criteria for the sample were designated foster care social workers at the DSD and at the NGO SFCS who:

- Are male or female
- Have more than one year's experience in working with foster care
- Are willing to participate
- Use Sesotho or English
- Reside within Botshabelo and Bloemfontein in the Free State Province but also work in Botshabelo.

The inclusion criteria focused on social workers with first-hand information of and experience in foster care. The interview guide was formulated in English and participants were able to answer in both Sesotho and English.

The exclusion criteria for the sample were designated foster care social workers at the DSD and at NGO SFCS who:

- Have less than one year's experience with foster care
- Cannot communicate in Sesotho or English
- Do not work within Botshabelo in the Free State.

Twenty two social workers of DSD and two of SFCS fulfilled the selection criteria.

1.4.3 Sampling methods

A sampling method is the procedure taken to select a group of people, events, behaviours or other parts that represent the specific population that is being studied (Burns & Grove 2009:349). Non-probability sampling is the “grab or convenience sample and are usually justified by showing the sample fits certain demographic characteristics of the targeted population” (Krathwohl 2009:186). Non-probability sampling is a method that does not follow the principle of random selection and can be applied if the researcher intends to employ exploratory data (Denscombe 2010:25).

In one method of non-probability sampling, namely purposive sampling, only participants that meet certain criteria are selected for the purpose of the study (Dudley 2011:145). In addition, Denscombe, (2010:34) indicates that the researcher can get better data by focusing only on a small number of cases and intentionally selecting them because of their known characteristics. Purposive sampling was employed by the researcher; only participants who had information because of their experience in foster care and who had the knowledge and capacity to describe the factors that contribute to neglect and abuse of foster children, were included in the study.

In the next section, the method of data collection is discussed. The preparation for data collection, which included gaining access and preparing the participants, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

1.4.4. Method of data collection

Data collection is the process of collecting and measuring information from a specific sample in an established, systematic fashion to be able to answer the research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes (Kabir 2016:202). Data collection is focused on choosing the participants and collecting information from them (Burns & Grove 2009:393). The method of data collection is a process which the researcher conducts during the research study, including the tools to be used to collect data (Dawson 2006:28). According to Donalek and Soldwisch (2004:354) the aim of doing qualitative research is to understand the problem that is investigated at the individual level. This study, aims to collect information that will

provide an answer to research questions. Data collection in qualitative research is thus the process whereby the researcher conducts a study utilising tools to collect information with the main purpose of developing an in-depth understanding of issues at an individual level. In this study, the researcher used face-to-face interviews and specifically semi-structured interviews to collect data from the social workers working with foster care.

▪ **Semi-structured interview**

A semi-structured interview is a type of interview used by a researcher to elicit data so that an understanding of participants' views can be achieved. It is also referred to as a thorough and comprehensive interview or a merely extended and formalised conversation (De Vos et al 2011:348). It is a way of getting a deep understanding of participants' situations by means of a formal conversation. The researcher used Sesotho or English to conduct interviews. The semi-structured interview method can be used in exploratory and descriptive designs, especially when there is not enough knowledge of the topic or study (Alston & Bowles 2003:116). According to Fossey et al 2002:727), an interview guide is a tool which directs an interview to concentrate on the topic and allows participants to discuss with flexibility.

Denscombe (2010:186-187) asserts that a researcher must not rely only on his/her memory when interviewing, as it may not be reliable, but that data obtained should be recorded. Furthermore, he alludes to two paths of recording information as being:

Field notes which refer to the researcher taking notes while interviewing participants. This involves environment, place and atmosphere of the interview. Audio recordings that are fixed records. Both these methods were utilised by researcher.

After recording the participants' gender, the following questions were asked to social workers who provide foster care services as part of the interview guide:

How many years of experience do you have as a social worker?

In the field of foster care, how many years working with foster care?

Describe your role in relation to foster care placements.

What is the number of foster care placements in your caseload?

How many cases of neglect and abuse of foster care children by their foster parents have you encountered during the last year? Discuss the type of neglect and/or abuse you encountered.

- What, from your perspective, are the factors contributing to neglect and abuse of foster children? Factors relating to: Subsystem of individual child and parent/s (biophysical, cognitive, emotional, behavioural, motivation)
- Interpersonal system (parent-child, marital, family, kin, friends, neighbours, cultural reference group, spiritual belief system and other members of social network)
- Organisation, institutions and communities
- The physical environment (housing, neighbourhood environment, buildings, other artificial creations, water, weather and climate)

What suggestions can you make from a social work perspective to address the neglect and abuse of foster care children, referring to each of the factors identified?

Before implementing the interview guide, the researcher undertook a pilot study as described in the next section.

1.4.5 Pilot testing

The researcher tested the practicality of the interview guide to be used in the study during a pilot study. The researcher undertook a pilot study in smaller areas with fewer participants who did not form part of the actual study. It was a process of asking people the questions that were to be used and checking to see whether the questions were clear (De Vos et al 2005:331-332). In addition, De Vos et al (2011: 394) concur that the pilot study in most cases is not formal and involves only a few participants who portray similar characteristics to those of the main investigation of the study just to ascertain trends. This process can also improve the quality of the data gathering instrument (Neuman 2006:191). The researcher thus runs a trial to test the questions in the interview guide with a few participants who were not included in the study to ensure that the needed information is obtained. For this research, three social workers working with foster care who fit the inclusion criteria were used to test the research questions. The researcher gauged his qualitative interviewing skills during the pilot study, as he was the main instrument of data collection.

1.4.6 Method of data analysis

Data analysis is a process, protocol and/ or procedures which the researcher uses to dig and extract explanations, understanding or interpretation from the collected qualitative data. According to Polit and Beck (2008:508), qualitative data analysis is the process of fitting information together, by making the invisible obvious, linking and attributing consequences to antecedents, process of conjecture and verification, correction and modification, suggestion and defence. It is indicated that qualitative researchers want to study the complications of people's experiential worlds and the approaches of data analysis are concerned with developing relationships and meanings that include these complications (Alston & Bowles 2003:206). The main goal of the data analysis is thus to look into the meaningful content of the qualitative data collected. It refers to comprehending the way participants attach meanings to a certain study by analysing emotions, perceptions, viewpoints, comprehension and events.

The following eight steps were applied by the researcher in the qualitative data analysis, as suggested by Tesch (in Creswell 2009:186).

- The researcher perused all the records carefully to make sense of it all and made a list of thoughts that came to mind.
- From the transcribed interviews, the researcher took one record to peruse and look for the meaning and wrote down his thoughts.
- The researcher read several transcripts and made a list of all identified topics. These subjects were grouped in terms of their similarity and were highlighted as 'major subjects', 'unique subjects' and 'leftovers'.
- The subjects were given codes that were written next to the suitable pieces of text.
- In the study, the researcher found explanatory wording for the subjects to describe them as themes or categories. The subjects linked to each other were grouped to reduce the total number of themes.
- The researcher coded each theme which was given an alphabetical code.
- The researcher grouped all the data material that belonged to each category in one place and a preliminary analysis was done.
- The data was recoded by the researcher.

The methods of data verification are discussed in the following section.

1.4.7 Methods of data verification

The trustworthiness of the study is about the trust the researcher has in the research; the way in which the study will be evaluated; and what evidence endorses the claims (Marshall & Rossman 2011:40). It is stated by Martin, Rogers, Shelton, Pittman and Evans (2018:10) that the verification strategy is the procedure of checking, confirming and making certain. The authors further state that methods of data verification help to increase the “reliability and validity of qualitative research”. The researcher applied the verification methods described by Maree (2007:113-115). The following are postulated techniques to ensure trustworthiness of the research:

- **Verifying raw data**

After the interviews were completed the researcher verified the raw data with the participants for accuracy. This was done during subsequent interviews, where the participants were given the opportunity to view the recordings of the previous interviews to confirm the data. This was an opportunity for the researcher and participants to add more information.

- **Keeping notes of research decisions taken**

The researcher kept a record of the decisions made during the research process, including data collection and analysis. The recordings were to assist in cases where there are some deviations in the techniques for data collection and when final decisions on the findings need to be made.

- **Stakeholder checks**

After data was analysed, the independent coder, the researcher and the supervisor met to discuss and compare the results of the data analysis by both the coder and the researcher. This assisted in ensuring the trustworthiness of the research findings. Verifying of data is also referred to as member checking (Leitz, Langer & Rich 2006:448).

- **Avoiding generalisation**

Qualitative research is said to be aimed at providing an understanding from the participants’ perspective more than from the larger population to avoid generalisations. The main reason

is to understand the participants' experiences, attitudes and behaviours. The researcher was careful to avoid generalising findings.

In the next section the ethical considerations will be discussed.

1.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics are explained by Fouka and Mantzourou (2011:4) as being about the requirements of day-to-day work, protecting the dignity of people and publishing the data. It is indicated that it is important to protect people by applying appropriate ethical principles in all research studies (Arifin 2018:30). The essence of ethics is to control the relation between the research, human beings and faculty studied (Flick 2006:45). Ethics can thus be described as codes of conduct that a person adheres to in a given profession and that are followed when research is conducted. The ethical considerations focused on in the study are shortly discussed in this section, while the researcher will illustrate how they were applied in Chapter 2 section 2.4.

1.5.1 Informed consent

Informed consent guarantees the total understanding of participants and it resolves or relieves any stress, anger, self-doubt participants may have (De Vos et al 2011:118). Respect for the person means that participants are allowed to decide what could happen to them or what could not happen (Grinnel & Unrau 2008: 37). In a research study when obtaining consent, participants are supposed to be informed about the study, understand the information and be allowed freedom of choice to participate in the study or not (Arifin 2018:30; Scott 2013:79; Research Ethics: A Handbook of Principles and Procedures 2018:10).

1.5.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is explained by De Vos et al (2011:119) as an agreement between people limiting others to not have access to confidential information. According to Padgett (2008:67) and Strydom (in De Vos et al 2011:119), confidentiality is assured by respecting participants' privacy. Arifin (2018:30) points out that privacy and confidentiality in the

interview environment need to be managed carefully during data analysis and dissemination of the findings.

1.5.3 Anonymity

Anonymity gives the assurance that no-one will identify responses given by participants (Babbie 2005:64). In this study, the researcher guaranteed anonymity of transcribed interviews; no-one identified participants as the researcher utilised pseudonyms. In addition, the researcher ensured that all the information was secured and remained confidential to ensure adequate anonymity, as indicated by Wengraf (2011:187). Anonymity is about protecting the participant by hiding his/her name and identity in the process of collecting information, analysis and when reporting the findings of the study (Arifin 2018:30).

1.5.4 Debriefing of participants

Participants should be given the opportunity to be part of debriefing sessions, if necessary (Babbie 2005:69). Ngwabi (2014:47) points out that there is a need to debrief participants after completed data collection to ensure “no emotional disturbance” has occurred.

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Clarification of concepts can be referred to as “conceptualisation” of steps taken by researchers to explain in detail the meaning of a certain term or concept (Babbie 2007:124-125). Conceptualisation is about defining the meaning of certain terms by the researcher. In this section “foster children”, “abuse”, “neglect”, “perspective”, “factor”, “contribute”, “suggestion” and “social worker” are defined in detail.

1.6.1 Foster children

A child is defined by the Children’s Act No. 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006: section 1) as a person who has not yet reached 18 years. According to the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006: section 180), a child is placed in foster care only if the child is in the care of a person who is not a biological parent or guardian of the child through:

- (a) a Children's Court order, or
- (b) a section 171 transfer in this Act.

This child should be in need of care and protection as stipulated by section 150 (a-i) of the Children's Amendment Act No. 17 of 2016 (South Africa 2017: section 150). This definition is adopted in this study. The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997:63), explains that foster care is about giving priority to the interests and needs of children. Foster children in this research study refer to children who are orphaned or abandoned who stay with the maternal or paternal families. A child can be defined as a boy or a girl of ages between 0 to 18 years (Smart 2003:3). For this study the foster children are those who are placed in an active foster care placement by a social worker. This included all foster children who are above 18 years but still in the foster care placement.

1.6.2 Abuse

Pretorius and Pistorius (in Pretorius et al 2012:10) define abuse as "bullying by another child and labour practices that exploit or coerce a child, all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, including debt bondage or forced marriage, servitude, forced labour or services and the removal of body parts". Abuse is any detrimental treatment that is deliberately inflicted on a child and this includes any behaviour that may be detrimental to the child physically or psychologically. The Children's Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: section 1) states that a child is abused if any form of detriment or maltreatment is intentionally inflicted on a child such as-

- (a) beating a child or deliberately injuring the child;
- (b) abusing the child sexually;
- (c) child bullying by another child;
- (d) making the child work or employing a child; or
- (e) subjecting a child to behaviour that may impair the child psychologically or emotionally.

The children that are reported in the researcher's study were abused physically, emotionally and sexually by foster parents or person staying in the foster family.

1.6.3 Neglect

Pretorius and Pistorius (in Pretorius et al 2012:11) explain neglect as “intentional or non-intentional failure in the exercise of parental responsibility to provide for the child’s basic physical, intellectual, emotional or social (including medical and educational) needs”. According to the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006: section 1) in relation to a child, neglect means a failure in the exercise of parental responsibility to provide for the basic physical, intellectual, emotional or social needs. In this study, both these definitions were used.

1.6.4 Perspective

A perspective can be explained as the way of internally visualising the viewpoint of another (Litchfield & Gentry 2010:187-188). The Oxford South African School Dictionary (2010, sv “perspective”) refers to perspective as the capacity to reckon about problems and decisions in a rational way without exaggerating them. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2005, sv “perspective”) defines perspective as “a particular attitude towards something; a way of thinking about something”. The explanation by Litchfield and Gentry applies to this study.

1.6.5 Factor

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2005, sv “factor”) a factor is “one of several things that causes or influences something”. In this study a factor refers to something that influences something else, specifically focusing on aspects that influence the neglect or abuse of foster children.

1.6.6 Contribute

‘Contribute’ means “to be one of the causes of something” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 2005, sv “contribute”). Within the context of this research ‘contribute’ refers to causing or influencing something.

1.6.7 Suggestion

‘Suggestion’ refers to “an idea or a plan that you mention for somebody else to think about” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 2005: sv “suggestion”). In this study, ‘suggestion’ refers to the plans or ideas social workers identify on how neglect or abuse of foster children can be prevented.

1.6.8 Social worker

Social work is defined by Morales and Sheafor (2004:35) as the professional work that assists communities, groups or individuals to increase or bring back their ability for social functioning and create societal conditions that favour their goal. Social work is a helping profession that assists individuals, groups or community to increase their capacity for social functioning. As quoted by the Children’s Act No. 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006: section 1), a social worker is considered only if registered as a social worker in terms of the Social Service Professions Act, 1978 (Act 110 of 1978). Furthermore, South African legislation and in terms of section 1 of the Social Services Profession Act 1978 (Act 110 of 1978, as amended) a social worker means a person registered under section 18 of the Act, namely “any person who holds the prescribed qualifications and satisfies the prescribed conditions, and practises the profession of social work”. Van Der Riet (2009:28) defines a social worker as someone who is doing statutory work, supervising and providing support services to foster children and foster families. The definition by Van Der Riet refers to the social workers that participated in this study.

1.7. STRUCTURE/ FORMAT OF THE REPORT

The dissertation is divided into the following 4 chapters:

Chapter 1 includes the introduction and problem formulation, general introduction, problem statement, rationale for the study, research approach and design, population and sampling, methods of data collection, data analysis, data verification, ethical considerations, the clarification of key concepts and the structure of the research report.

Chapter 2 focuses on application of the research methodology and the qualitative research process in the research project.

Chapter 3 consists of the findings of the study and literature control.

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

1.8 CONCLUSION

In chapter 1 the study outlined the introduction and motivation for the study, the research goals and objectives as well as the research methodology utilised in the study. The key concepts of the study were defined and ethical considerations were explained. In the following chapter, the researcher discusses how the proposed research methodology was executed during the research study.

CHAPTER 2

A DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 will elaborate on the motivation of the study, its goal and objectives. This chapter focuses on how the study was conducted to meet the goals and objectives of the research.

2.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are two ways of categorising research studies according to the research methodology: one is focusing on the methodology used; and the other on why the research is being conducted. Research methodology is “the primary principles; procedures and practices that govern research” (Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger 2005:22). Research methodology refers to the researcher’s general approach when executing the research study (Babbie & Mouton 2008:74; Leedy & Ormrod 2010:12). Research methodology is the process in research that outlines the procedure and methods that are to be utilised in a research study.

2.2.1 Research approach

This research was conducted within the qualitative research paradigm. According to Silverman (2010:109), the research approach can be different, such as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method. Again, Silverman (2011:4) explains that the qualitative research is focused on being interested in how people see things and their behaviour. Qualitative research aims to explore and understand “... the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell 2014:4).

Furthermore, Maree (2007:51) adds that qualitative research is one of the research methodologies that aims to explore the “why” questions of research. Qualitative research is interested in the behaviour of people and how they see things (Silverman 2011:4). Qualitative research is therefore chosen by the researcher to explore and describe social

workers' frame of reference regarding the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children and their suggestions on what can be done to address this issue.

In Chapter 1 section 1.3.1 the researcher alluded to the characteristics of qualitative research as stated by Creswell (2013:45); Donalek and Soldwisch (2004:354-356); Fossey et al (2002:727); Leedy and Ormrod, (2005: 133); Meadows (2003:464-465) and Royse (2008:279). Now in this section, the researcher will outline how these characteristics were applied.

- In qualitative research, researchers perceive data as fruitful when understood in the situation of participants' lives rather than in an experimental setting. The researcher was able to create a safe climate for research participants, to get to understand people's actions when they make meaning of their experiences in their own settings. The researcher comprehended the meaning which the social workers attached to their perspectives relating to the neglect and abuse of foster children within the environments in which they work.
- Qualitative researchers use appropriate research participants who are affected by the research problem so that they can narrate well on their experiences of the topic being investigated. Social workers with at least one year of experience working in foster care were interviewed.
- Qualitative methods utilise semi-structured interviews. The researcher obtained data from participants using semi-structured interviews guided by an interview guide.
- Qualitative methods use field work. In this study, the researcher went to the Botshabelo Township FDC building (offices of DSD) and section H (SFCS) in the Free State Province to conduct interviews.
- Qualitative research methods are exploratory and descriptive. The researcher inquires in detail about a problem, especially when there is inadequate information bringing new data to light. In this study the goal was to develop a comprehensive and thorough understanding of the neglect and abuse of foster children from the perspective of social workers and to learn from them as the experts. Words were used instead of numbers to communicate what was learnt in the research study.

- Qualitative research methods assist in collecting information to make conclusions after the findings. In this study, the information was gathered to form themes and sub-themes.
- The data was also analysed to draw conclusions to develop a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the reasons why foster children are neglected and abused and what suggestions can be followed to overcome these problems.
- Qualitative research is more verbal and it uses what participants say to explain their life experiences. The participants were able to verbalise their experiences with regards to factors that contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children.
- When doing qualitative research, the researcher is not an expert but a learner in the topic under study. The researcher was a learner throughout the study by allowing participants to be the experts.
- In qualitative research, the researcher is viewed as a key “instrument” in the research process. The researcher undertook one-on-one interviews with the participants as he was merely the “instrument” of data collection.

Considering the characteristics of qualitative research and the fact that there was a lack of information on the neglect and abuse of foster children in alternative care, the study was conducted from the qualitative approach to achieve the goals and objectives as indicated in section 1.2.1 in Chapter 1. The following section explains how the research design was applied.

2.2.2 Research design

It is explained that research design is a proposal of scientific inquiry that is utilised to respond to the study’s research question to reach the goal and objectives of the study (Babbie 2007:87). Research design is a plan that shows how a researcher proposes to study the defined problem (Alston & Bowles 2003:65-66; Creswell 2013:49). Furthermore, Green and Thorogood (2014:36) describe ‘research design’ as when the researcher takes decisions on how to conduct the study, how the information will be collected, created and analysed. The researcher employed an exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design.

- **Exploratory research**

The exploratory research design is selected when a researcher investigates a new topic about which not much is known to create a starting point for general ideas that might be investigated in detail to reach conclusions (Babbie 2007:88-89). Brink (2006:120) describes explorative research as research that is done with the purpose of discussing in detail the in-depth knowledge and comprehension of perceptions and experiences of people by asking a certain question and applying probing to the point where data saturation occurs. Wiid and Diggins (2013:56) highlight that exploratory research is not about collecting relevant information, but also about expanding and comprehending the topic under investigation. Exploratory research is applied when there is not much information on a new study or problem to expand new understanding.

The exploratory design was utilised in this study to develop new theory and a comprehensive understanding of factors that contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children about which little is known. The exploratory research used was relevant, as it aided the researcher to gather information needed for the research study.

- **Descriptive research**

In terms of descriptive research, the researcher starts with a well-explained subject and then research is done to give it the correct description (Neuman 2006:35). Further, Wiid & Diggins (2013:56) state that descriptive research stresses comprehensive and thorough explanation of the topic under investigation. Bhattacharjee (2012:6) explains that descriptive research strives to report about a situation, difficulty, problem, or study, or supply information about an area of research.

Descriptive designs assist researchers to obtain a better understanding of the topic under investigation. In applying this design, foster care social workers with more than one year of experience were interviewed as they had rich information on the topic. In using descriptive research, the researcher was able to collect important and relevant data on factors that contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children as well as suggestions on how to address the issue from a social work perspective.

▪ **Contextual research**

According to Leong and Austin (2006:448) different groups of people and their habits, traditions and beliefs shape the meaning of a study. Grove et al (2013:632) allude to contextual research focusing on a certain event in “naturalistic settings”. A contextual research design was used, i.e. the participants were interviewed/ studied in the context of their worlds. In this study, the researcher interviewed social workers with foster care experience, who were in different settings and therefore provided unique meaning to their perspectives.

The researcher used contextual research to explore the factors that contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children in the specific context of Botshabelo community, specifically from social workers’ perspectives. The research was conducted in the offices of the DSD in Botshabelo and in SFCS’ offices in Section H of Botshabelo.

The above research designs were applied to achieve the purpose of the study and it is concluded that the research designs used in this study were effectively applied.

2.3 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods are about how information will be gathered, who will be the sample and about how to get the information (Green & Thorogood 2014:57). According to Flick (2002:147), research methods are particular procedures that are utilised in a research study. The following section explains how research methods were used, which population was targeted, the way the population was sampled, also how information was collected and analysed.

2.3.1 Population

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a population is all people, environment, organisations, units, events or sampling units with which a research question is concerned (De Vos et al 2011:223). A population is all people or objects that have the same characteristics in which the researcher is interested (Brink 2006:2007). Denscombe (2010:23) adds by defining population as all group members that the researcher is studying.

For this research study, the population was all social workers working at the DSD and one NGO, Setshabelo Family and Child Services (SFCS) who are providing foster care services in the area of Botshabelo Free State Province, South Africa. Botshabelo Township is divided into 18 sections. The DSD renders foster care services in 17 sections and SFCS services in only one section, namely H. These were social workers who were information-rich because of their first-hand experience in foster care as each social worker manages a caseload of more than 100 foster care placements. The Department (DSD) had 22 foster care social workers and the SFCS two. As the researcher worked for SFCS, only one social worker from SFCS specifically working with foster care, could be invited to participate.

As stated by Wiid and Diggines (2013:181), it is impossible to conduct interviews with all people in the population so it is imperative to identify a sample. Yegidis and Weinbach (2002:181) state that because of the lack of adequate time and resources researchers will not study all of the population they wish to study. Furthermore, Alston and Bowles (2003:81-82) add that a researcher samples only a selected portion of the population in which he is interested. For this study, it was noted that the population was too large to reach as there were too many social workers complying to the selection criteria, so the researcher had to rely on a small group which is referred to as a sample (Gravetter & Forzano 2012:138).

2.3.2 Sampling

Sampling can be explained as choosing a subset of individuals or things from a larger group of people, also known as a sampling frame with the purpose of representing a certain population (Gall, Gall & Borg 2007:166; Neuman 2011:246; Scott & Morrison 2007:219). Royse (2008:203) states that sampling is a subset of observed units that tells something about the large population. Wiid and Diggines (2013:183) state that a sample is a specific selected number of the people who will reflect the population that the researcher is keen to study. Creswell (2007:128) suggests that the researcher may utilise sampling criteria to choose participants who can represent the population through their experience of the topic under investigation.

It was alluded to in Chapter 1 section 1.4.2 that the inclusion criteria for the sample were designated foster care social workers at the DSD and at NGO SFCS who:

- Are males or females
- Have more than one year's experience in working with foster care
- Were willing to participate
- Used Sesotho and English languages
- Reside within Bloemfontein and Botshabelo in the Free State Province. When selecting participants, it became apparent that only some resided in Botshabelo and Bloemfontein, but that all provided services to the Botshabelo community, meaning they work in Botshabelo.

The exclusion criteria for the sample were designated foster care social workers at the DSD and at SFCS who:

- Had less than one year's experience with foster care
- Cannot communicate in Sesotho or English
- Do not work within Botshabelo in the Free State Province.

2.3.3 Sampling methods

As indicated by Dudley (2011:144), non-probability sampling is utilised in exploratory studies with the intention of gaining insight from the people included in the sample. Non-probability sampling is a method that does not follow the principle of random selection and can be applied if the researcher intends to employ exploratory data (Denscombe 2010:25). Non-probability sampling is the “grab or convenience sample and is usually justified by showing the sample fits certain demographic characteristics of the targeted population” (Krathwohl 2009:186). Purposive sampling is one method of non-probability sampling. Furthermore, non-probability sampling is a method that does not use the rules of probability theory; it is also referred to as a rudimentary approach that is taking on all cases until the sample reaches the desired size (Babbie & Mouton 2001:166; and Bless & Higson-Smith 2000:92 and Sarantakos 2005:163).

In purposive sampling, only participants that met the set criteria are selected for the purpose of the study (Dudley 2011:145). In addition, Denscombe, (2010:34) indicates that the researcher can get better data by focusing only on a small number of cases and intentionally selecting them because of their known characteristics. Purposive sampling was used by the researcher; for the reason of specifically wanting to select social workers with more than one year of experience in foster care (Padgett 2008:53; Strydom in De Vos et al 2011:232). Moreover, Wiid and Diggins (2013:190) describe purposive sampling as “judgement sampling” by explaining that chosen participants are selected to stand for a population because the researcher believes they have rich information and experience in foster care. While Green and Thorogood, (2014:121) maintain that this method is appropriate for qualitative research. Hence the researcher employed this technique. The researcher conducted in total 15 interviews with social workers from both organisations (DSD and SFCS). Three of these were for the pilot study but one of the interviews was incorporated in the main study. In other words, 13 social workers participated in the actual study.

2.3.4 Data collection

According to Creswell (2007:118), data collection is a number of related activities with the aim of gathering information to address the research problem. Data collection has steps such as putting boundaries to the study, data collection with unstructured or semi-structured interviews and observation, documentation materials and commencing with procedures for recording the data (Creswell 2009:178). To collect appropriate data for the study, the researcher commenced by applying a pilot test to assess the interview guide and the interviewing techniques of the study. This is explained in detail under the following subsection. Furthermore, a detailed outline of the preparation for data collection and the methods of collecting data follows.

2.3.4.1 Preparation for data collection

Researchers need local permission from a gatekeeper to gather data from individuals (Creswell, 2013:57; Flick, 2002:55). Roller (2015:16), points out that gatekeepers are the best people to build relationships with and to gain access to the participants from whom the

researcher is going to collect data. Feldman, Bell and Berger (2003:23) assert that a written letter is the key to gain access to gatekeepers so as to open doors for the researcher and to develop new relationships. The researcher compiled a brief letter to the DSD to request them to allow him access to participants because the Department has full control of the participants they employ, i.e. social workers (see Addendum A). Another letter (see Addendum B) was issued to the Director of SFCS the only NGO in Botshabelo rendering foster care services. Permission was duly granted on 06 June 2017 by DSD (see Addendum F) and on 04 April 2017 by SFCS (see Addendum G).

In qualitative research it is crucial for researchers to create a trusting relationship with participants to make sure that participants feel free and safe when they divulge their stories (Donalek & Soldwisch 2004:354). Nziyane (2010:74) points out that it is crucial to prepare participants, to establish a relationship with them and in that way their willingness and ability to co-operate will improve. Again, Nziyane (2010:75) explains that rapport building is paramount in this exercise and researcher and participant should have a trusting relationship with one another. Devers and Frankel (2000:4) state that in qualitative research, when you know your participants, you can form a close and harmonious relationship which should precede data collection. The researcher made the first contact with each participant in their offices to build a trusting relationship with them and as preparation for data collection. The explanation of the aims of the study and the ethical considerations were explained (see Addendums A and B) and appointments were made. In qualitative research, the researcher is perceived as the main instrument in the research process: collecting data; conducting interviews; and observing people in their natural environment (Babbie & Mouton 2001:72). The researcher assured the social workers working with foster care of confidentiality as explained by Green and Thorogood (2009:69).

2.3.4.2 Method of data collection

Method of data collection is a protocol which the researchers follow during the study and also includes the tools used to collect information (Dawson 2006:28). According to Donalek and Soldwisch (2004:354), the aim of doing qualitative research is to understand the problem

that is investigated at the individual level. Data collection in qualitative research is thus the procedure which researchers follow when conducting a research study utilising tools to collect information with the main purpose of developing an in-depth understanding of issues at an individual level. In this section, the researcher will elaborate on how data was collected and which methods were used.

Denscombe (2010:175-178) states that there are different kinds of research interviews such as structured interviews, one-on-one interviews, group interviews, focus groups, internet interviews and unstructured interviews. Nicholls (2009:640) indicates that interviews might be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. According to Kabir (2016:208), some of the main primary data collections include interviews, questionnaires, focus group interviews and observation. On the other hand, Denzin and Lincoln (2005:643) describe an interview as talk whereby people express themselves by asking questions and listening. The researcher utilised face-to-face interviews and specifically semi-structured interviews to collect information from the participants.

▪ **Semi-structured interview**

As described in Chapter 1, a semi-structured interview is a type of interview used by a researcher to elicit data to gain an understanding of participants. It is also referred to as an extended and formalised conversation (De Vos et al 2011:348). The semi-structured interview method can be used in exploratory and descriptive designs, especially when there is not enough knowledge of the topic or study and it is a way of getting a deep understanding of participants' situation (Alston & Bowles 2003:116). According to Fossey et al (2002:727), an interview guide is a tool which directs an interview to concentrate on the topic and allows participants to discuss with flexibility. Nicholls (2009:640) explains that a semi-structured interview is based on defined questions and topics that guide the researcher to decide if new information is needed or not. The participants in this study were of various ethnic groups that included Sotho and Xhosa. All the participants could however speak Sesotho and English which the researcher used to conduct interviews. In all 13 interviews, participants communicated in both English and Sesotho. There was no interview that was conducted only in English or Sesotho; both languages were mixed in the interviews. Some of the interviews were difficult as the participants did not understand the questions. In six interviews Sesotho

was used to translate the question from English, while some participants understood the questions and the interviews flowed smoothly. Most of the social workers use Sesotho almost every day and the majority of the social workers' clients are Sesotho speaking people.

The qualitative researcher needs to have skills to conduct interviews (Pope & Mays 2006:16). For this study, the following interview strategies were applied to collect data from the social workers working with foster care services, as indicated by Babbie (2007:245-268); Batmanabane and Kfourri (2017:21); Creswell (1994:71-74); Feldman, Bell and Berger (2003:x); and Meadows (2003:465-466):

- **Good appearance and demeanour**

The researcher wore acceptable clothes that enabled participants to feel comfortable. He dressed in formal clothes i.e. suit, shirt, tie and black shoes. The offices of the social worker were used to do interviews (professional context).

- **Creating an enabling environment**

The researcher created a trusting relationship by keeping eye contact with participants. The researcher stated to the participants the starting time and end time of the interview.

- **Asking relevant questions**

Questioning was the main skill used to collect information from participants. Probing skill was used to get data for the topic under investigation. The skill was useful because it enabled the researcher to question contradictory statements of the participants. For example, one participant stated that children in foster care are not neglected or abused financially as this was only an issue relating to the child support grant, but later he said some foster parents in his area mismanage grants. The researcher used probes to address such discrepancies as it was imperative for him to know and understand accurate information on the subject under investigation.

- **Empathy as a communication skill**

Empathy was used as a skill by the researcher to understand participants from their own frame of reference. Empathy means being able to understand someone's situation the way he/she understands it. The participants were understood within their experiential world.

- **Attending skills**

Body language was used by the researcher to assist participants to feel free when talking. He used verbal and non-verbal cues to encourage the participants to share more. The researcher used eye contact, relaxed posture and leaning forward. The use of minimal encouragement was useful; the use of nodding of the head, or saying okay or uh-huh or yes.

- **Listening skills**

Listening attentively and actively is very crucial when gathering qualitative data. The researcher listened to verbal and non-verbal messages from the participants, such as facial expressions, body behaviour and verbal behaviour. The researcher employed these skills to take full control of the interview and keep participants focused on the subject or question. The researcher was also able to use reflective listening to focus participants.

- **Ending the interview**

The researcher thanked each social worker for their valuable time and their contribution to this study. The researcher highlighted to the participants that they might be contacted if there is a need for more information regarding the study. The researcher needed to go back to a few participants for clarification. For instance, one participant's age was not recorded or was omitted, so the researcher reverted to the participant for clarity.

It is stated by Pope and Mays (2006:18) that when you collect information in interviews the researcher might record or take some notes to avoid missing information. The researcher used both to record the participants' narratives and their non-verbal gestures.

As mentioned earlier, interviews were conducted in Sesotho and English. The researcher thus had to translate the transcriptions to English. Since the researcher is fluent in English

and Sesotho, his mother tongue, it is believed that the translation did not compromise the information collected.

2.3.4.3 Pilot testing

The researcher tested the feasibility of the interview guide to be used in the study during a pilot test. As stated in Chapter 1, a pilot test is done in smaller areas with fewer participants who will not form part of the actual study and this can be described as a process of asking people the questions that are to be used and checking to see whether the questions are clear (De Vos et al 2005: 331-332). The pilot test is usually not formal and involves only a few participants selected by using the same inclusion criteria (De Vos et al 2011: 394). Green and Thorogood (2014:57) explain that when conducting qualitative research a pilot test is used as a trial for feasibility and it anticipates obstacles with the data collection method. The researcher conducted a pilot test with participants who had the same characteristics as those who were going to partake in the main study (Turner III 2010:757).

The researcher planned to employ a pilot test with three participants. However, the third participant shared useful information and was included in the actual study. The researcher was pre-testing the questions prior to the main research study.

The interview guide's questions were changed after the pilot study was done. The researcher noted that some questions were not understood by the participants. e.g. "What in your perspective are the factors contributing to neglect and abuse of foster children? Factors relating to: Subsystem of individual child and parent/s (biophysical, cognitive, emotional, behavioural, motivation)". Therefore, the researcher and research supervisor agreed to change one question with its sub-questions so that they would not create any threat or confusion to the participants.

The questions as listed in Chapter 1 section 1.4.4 were amended to the following:

-What in your perspective are the factors contributing to neglect and abuse of foster children?

-What factors within the parent or the child, e.g. physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioural or motivational factors, contribute to neglect and abuse of foster children? Please provide examples.

- What factors within the relationships, e.g. between parent-child, marital, family, kin, friends, neighbours, cultural group, spiritual belief system or other social network, contribute to neglect and abuse of foster children? Please provide examples.

- How do organisations, institutions and communities contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children? Please provide examples.

- What factors within the physical environment contribute to neglect and/or abuse of foster children, for example housing, neighbourhood environment, buildings, other artificial creations, water, weather and climate?

The pilot test assisted the researcher to look back on his role as researcher when listening to the recorded information. It enabled the researcher to identify the stumbling blocks and provided an opportunity for the researcher to have the confidence to commence with the main study.

Methods of data analysis and data verification are discussed in the following sections.

2.3.5 Method of data analysis

Data analysis is, according to Swanborn (2009:14) all about “compressing data” that is gathered and giving it explanation taking in to account the research question. In qualitative research people’s experiential worlds and its meaning are investigated (Alston & Bowles 2003:206). Maree (2007:99-100) highlights that this procedure gives permission to reflect on collected data, to find gaps in the information and to allow the researcher to reflect back to obtain more data where necessary. The main goal of data analysis is thus to look into the meaningful content of the qualitative data collected. It refers to comprehending the way participants attach meanings to a certain topic by analysing emotions, perceptions, viewpoints, comprehension and events.

The eight steps of data coding were employed by researcher as suggested by Tesch (in Creswell 2009:186) as stated in Chapter 1 section 1.4.6. According to Green and Thorogood (2014:247), when conduct coding is conducted it needs to be “open coding”. As stated by these authors, the researcher included an expert social worker with extensive experience in research, as an independent coder to confirm or challenge information gathered by the researcher and to offer an opinion. The independent coder was previously employed as a lecture at UNISA for many years. The expert identified additional themes, sub-themes and categories. The independent coder, the researcher and supervisor had a consensus discussion and a decision was taken on the final version of the themes, sub-themes and categories. In this study MS Word was used to do the coding of data and commercial qualitative data analysis software was utilised.

In chapter 3 the themes, sub-themes and categories are given to describe the findings.

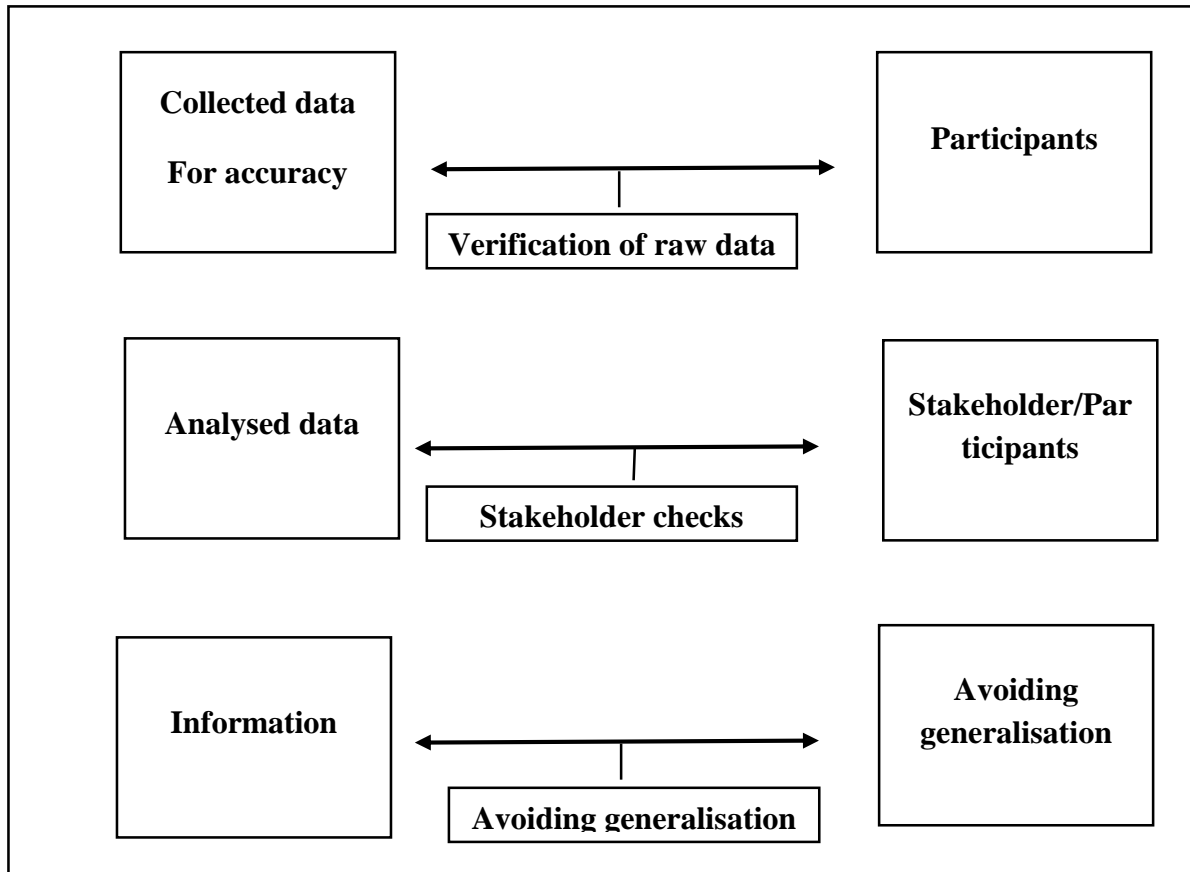
2.3.6 Methods of data verification

As mentioned in the previous Chapter, the trustworthiness of the study refers to the trust the researcher has in the study; the way in which the study will be evaluated; and what evidence endorses the claims (Marshall & Rossman 2011:40). According to Wiid and Diggins (2013:231), it is possible to encounter errors when coding data. The authors mention that a need may arise to correct those errors. Monette, Sullivan and De Jong (2002:388) argue that it is impossible not to encounter errors, no matter how careful you are. It is for this reason, that the researcher applied data verification.

The researcher utilised the verification method described by Maree (2007:113-115). In Chapter 1 section 1.6.7, the researcher mentioned verifying raw data, keeping notes of research decisions taken, stakeholder checks and avoiding generalisation as the methods to verify data.

The following figure depicts the data verification methods:

Figure 2.1 Data verification methods



- **Verifying raw data**

The researcher verified the raw data with the participants for accuracy after the completion of the interviews. This was done during subsequent interviews, where the participants were given the opportunity to view the transcriptions of the previous interviews to confirm the data. This was the opportunity for the researcher and participants to add more information, if the need arises. However, the participants were content with the transcribed interviews.

- **Keeping notes of research decisions taken**

The researcher kept a record of the decisions made during the research process, including data collection and analysis. This recording could have assisted in cases where there were some deviations in the techniques for data collection and when final decisions on the findings

needed to be made. This was however not necessary, but assisted the researcher to provide a detailed description of the research process.

- **Stakeholder checks**

After data was analysed, the independent coder, the researcher and the supervisor met to discuss and compare the results of the data analysis by both the coder and the researcher. The stakeholders agreed to the format of data analysis as presented in Chapter 3. This was done to ensure the trustworthiness of the study findings.

- **Avoiding generalisation**

Qualitative research is said to be aimed at providing an understanding from the participants' perspective more than from the larger population to avoid generalisations. The main aim of the research is to understand the participants' experiences, attitudes and behaviours.

2.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics are explained by Fouka and Mantzorou (2011:4), as being about the requirements of day to day work; protecting the dignity of people; and the publication of the information in the research study. It is indicated that it is important to protect people by applying appropriate ethical principles in all research studies (Arifin 2018:30). The essence of ethics is to control the relation between the research, human beings and faculty studied (Flick 2006:45). In social research, informed consent; deception; confidentiality and anonymity; physical or mental distress and fraud in sponsored research need to be considered (Monette et al 2002:55). The researcher considered research ethics taking into account informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and the debriefing of participants.

2.4.1 Informed consent

Informed consent implies that the participants have the ability to decide for themselves whether to partake in the study or not (Green & Thorogood 2009:68-69). These authors emphasise that participants should not be forced as they have the capacity to make sound decisions. The participants in this study participated voluntarily with an understanding of

their contribution. Informed consent guarantees the total understanding of participants and again it resolves or relieves any stress, anger, self-doubt in participants (De Vos et al 2011:118). Respect for the person needs that participants to be allowed to decide what can happen to them or what cannot happen (Grinnel & Unrau 2008: 37). Bernard and Whitley (2002:68) indicate that the principle of informed consent means that participants are supposed to receive information prior to data being collected to decide whether they wish to participate in the research study. The researcher provided written information on the study (see Addendum C) and participants signed a form indicating that they give informed content to part of the study (see Addendum D). The intentions of the study were also communicated with each participant before the interviews. Gravetter and Forzano (2012:84) state that informed consent must help participants to comprehend the aim and the procedure of the research study as well as their voluntary participation.

2.4.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is explained by De Vos et al (2011:119) as an agreement between people that limits others to having access to confidential information. According to Padgett (2008:67) and Strydom (in De Vos et al 2011:119), confidentiality is assured by respecting and keeping participants' privacy. Further, Marvasti (2004:137) asserts that maintaining confidentiality and anonymity is about hiding the identities of participants. Surmiak (2018:2) describes confidentiality as not sharing what the participants said and hiding their identity.

In this regard, the researcher made sure that confidentiality was maintained by the following actions:

- The researcher only recorded personal data needed to achieve the goal of the study
- The data was stored in a secured area (lockable cabinet) and on a computer with a password.

The researcher maintained confidentiality by not divulging the data collected from interviews with other participants or persons.

2.4.3 Anonymity

Anonymity gives assurance that no-one will identify responses given by participants (Babbie 2005:64). According to *Research Ethics: A Handbook of Principles and Procedures* (2018:12) anonymity is about keeping the personal information of research participants confidential and secure. In this study, the researcher guaranteed anonymity of the transcribed interviews by making sure no-one could identify participants as he utilised code names as described in the previous section. The supervisor, independent coder and editor were unable to identify the participants. The researcher communicated to the participants the researcher's legal and professional obligations in the letter inviting participants (see Addendum C), as well as verbally when he first met with them.

2.4.4 Debriefing of participants

Participants should be given the opportunity to be part of debriefing sessions if necessary (Babbie 2005:69). According to *Code of Human Research Ethics* (2014:26), it is crucial to provide debriefing to participants after research data gathering is completed, especially if there was deception or withholding of information. Picardi and Masick (2014: 35) argue that debriefing is applied in two ways namely:

- The researcher must not leave participants with negative feelings
- The researcher needs to receive feedback from the participants on their experience of the data collection process.

The services of a debriefer were arranged before the study, should it be required (see Addendum E). The researcher explained the aims of the study to participants. They thus understood the intentions of the study and did not feel threatened.

The researcher not only shared the option of being debriefed with participants when informing them of the study, but also reminded them of possible debriefing after they later confirmed the content of the transcripts.

After the interviews, participants shared that they are were thankful as they gained knowledge about the ecological systems perspective of neglected and abused foster children and reported that there were no emotional issues or problems. No debriefing was thus necessary.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This Chapter 2 shared a thorough and comprehensive explanation about the execution of the project. A detailed description of the research approach, research design and research methodology, including techniques of sampling, the data collection methods, the methods implemented to analyse the data, as well as the strategies followed to ensure data verification were included. The ethical considerations and how it affected the study were also outlined.

The following chapter will elaborate on the research findings and literature control.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

From the outset of this research study, the goals were to develop a comprehensive and thorough understanding from the frame of reference of social workers of the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children and to proffer suggestions on how to address these factors. This chapter concentrates on the discussion of the research findings. The participants' biographical data is presented in a table form. The themes, sub-themes, categories, as well as the sub-categories, are presented in a table and in narrative form. Literature control is applied to compare information with existing literature or knowledge.

3.2 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Table 3.1 below provides a summary of the biographical data of the participants.

TABLE: 3.1 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF THE PARTICIPANTS

CODE	AGE	GENDER	EXPERIENCE	SECTOR
1	39	Female	3 Years	DSD
2	37	Female	7 Years	DSD
3	32	Female	4 Years	DSD
4	32	Female	7 Years	DSD
5	32	Male	4 Years	DSD
6	29	Female	3 Years	DSD
7	34	Female	6 Years	DSD
8	32	Female	6 Years	DSD
9	31	Female	3 Years	DSD
10	43	Female	6 Years	DSD
11	32	Male	2 years	DSD
12	26	Male	1 (8 months)	SFCS
13	34	Female	4 Years	DSD

In this study, the sample consisted of 13 social workers working with foster care; and who have more than one year of experience. The social workers were from DSD (12) and SFCS (1) residing in both Botshabelo and Bloemfontein. The majority of participants were females (77%), while 23% were males. Fischl (2013), confirms that females dominate the social work profession. In addition, in Australia the figures from 2011 demonstrate that the majority of social workers were women, namely 83% (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2013:364). This trend thus seems to be a world-wide phenomenon.

3.3 DISCUSSION OF THE THEMES, SUB-THEMES, CATEGORIES AND SUB-CATEGORIES

During the process of the data analysis, agreement was reached between the researcher, and independent coder on the themes, sub-themes, categories and sub-categories for this study. Table 3.2 presents the summary of these themes, sub-themes, categories and sub-categories.

TABLE 3.2 Summary of the themes, sub-themes, categories and sub-categories

TABLE OF THEMES: NEGLECT AND ABUSE OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE		
THEME 1 SOCIAL WORKERS' TASKS IN RELATION TO FOSTER CARE		
Sub-Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
Intake of prospective foster parents as a specific social work task		
Intake of prospective foster parents includes various methods of assessment relating to foster care	Home visits to prospective foster parents	
	Interviews with prospective foster parents and others	
		Record checks
	Various aspects relating to prospective foster parents to be assessed	Importance of the foster care grant (FCG) as the motivation for foster care
		Physical environment

		Knowledge about the responsibilities of foster parents
		Existing relationship between the foster child and foster parents
		Other aspects
Investigation of the foster child's background		
Compiling and submitting the court report		
Post-foster care placement supervision and support		
Review of foster placement for continuation or change in care situation		
Change of the foster child's care situation		
	Reasons for change of the care situation related to the child	
	Reasons for change of the care situation related to the foster parents	Misuse and mismanagement of the grant
		Neglect and abuse of the foster child by foster parents
		The lifestyle of foster parents
		Foster parent abandoning the foster child
		Death of the foster parent
	Reasons for change in the care situation related to biological parents	
THEME 2: NEGLECT AND ABUSE OF FOSTER CHILDREN		
Reported incidences of neglect and abuse		
Various types of neglect and abuse encountered	Physical neglect	

	Physical abuse	
	Emotional neglect and abuse	
	Sexual abuse and rape	
Social workers' perception of factors contributing to neglect and abuse	Factors related to foster parents that contribute to neglect and abuse	Misuse of the foster care grant
		Inappropriate disciplining of foster children
		Poverty and unemployment of foster parents
		Foster parents' own experience of abuse
		Foster parents' lack of understanding of foster care
		Foster parents lack of understanding of foster child's needs
	Factors related to the foster child that contribute to neglect and abuse	
	Factors within the foster parent-child relationship that contribute to neglect and abuse	
	Factors related to the foster child's family that contribute to neglect and abuse	
	Factors related to the community that contribute to neglect and abuse	
	Factors within social work foster care services that contribute to neglect and abuse	High foster care caseloads per social worker

		Shortage of manpower and too few resources to do social work effectively
		Forced foster care placements
		Inadequate assessment and training of foster parents
		Inadequate monitoring, supervision and support of foster care placements
		Inadequate provision for differences between foster child and foster family during placement
	Factors related to other organisations that contribute to neglect and abuse	
Social workers' observation of signs of neglect and abuse	Observation during contact with the child	Neglected appearance and condition of clothes
		Child's physical well-being
		Child's behaviour when with the foster parent
		Child's behaviour and revelations when interviewed alone
	Observation during the review process	
	Reports of possible neglect	
THEME 3: SUGGESTIONS AND IMPLIED SUGGESTIONS TO ADDRESS THE NEGLECT AND ABUSE OF FOSTER CARE CHILDREN		
Foster care system not to be used to alleviate poverty		
Statistics to play a lesser role in the assessment of foster care social workers' performance		

Increase human and other resources for social workers	Appointment of more social workers, social auxiliary workers and administrative assistants	
	Provision of adequate resources to social workers	
Decrease foster care caseloads	Decrease foster care caseloads by allocating less files	
	Decrease foster care caseloads by being more judicious in deciding fathers are unknown	
	Decrease foster care caseloads by considering strategies other than foster care placement for children in need of care	
Interdepartmental and inter-organisational relationships to be improved	Improve relationships to demonstrate unity and teamwork to the community	
	Improve relationships to increase support for social work services	
More thorough pre-placement screening of foster parents		
Ensure a better match between foster parents and foster children		
Implement pre- and post-placement parental training and support	Importance of training	
	Include various topics in training	What foster care is/entails

		Foster care financial management
		Management of the foster child's behaviour
		Relationship and communication with the foster child
Social workers to provide foster parents with more support after placement		
Social workers to work with and support foster children		
Foster care supervision to include exit programmes for foster children and foster parents		
Social workers to involve biological family members as support for the foster child to where possible		
Communities to be informed on various topics	What and where to report neglect and abuse	
	Revive the Ubuntu notion that children belong to the community	
Community work programmes form part of a holistic foster care system		
Integrate more social and economic development programmes into foster care services		

In the following section themes, sub-themes, categories and sub-categories are discussed according to existing literature. Theme 1 refers to social workers' tasks in relation to foster care; in Theme 2 neglect and abuse of children in foster care are discussed; and Theme 3 provides suggestions on how to address this neglect and abuse.

3.3.1 Theme 1: Social workers' tasks in relation to foster care

Social work participants were requested to “Describe your role in relation to foster care placements”

From the responses, the findings revealed that social workers perform a variety of duties related to foster care placements. These include starting with opening a file, completing an intake form and allocating a foster care file to the area social worker for investigation, assessment, court proceedings, placement and supervision. The DSD (2009:20) states that social workers have to provide foster care services by undertaking a central role in co-ordinating and managing social service activities such as assessment, investigation, statutory services, rendering of psycho-social programmes, monitoring, evaluation, supervision and support of the placement. Carter (2013:57) concurs that social workers have a key role of making sure that the placement is stable. Moreover, the Information Guide on the Management of Statutory Services (DSD 2012:41), indicates that there are tasks in the Children's Act No 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006) that can only be fulfilled by a designated social worker working within child protection and statutory services.

For children to be placed with foster parents, social workers have to undertake a certain procedure and follow a specific way of working together with the prospective foster parents to finalise the placement. Social workers are supposed to develop intervention plans and compile reports for the children's court with recommendations (DSD 2009:49). Ngwabi (2014:28) asserts that when a case is reported, a social worker follows certain steps. This procedure was reflected in the following sub-themes extracted from the interviews with the participants.

- Sub-theme 1.1: Intake of prospective foster parents as a specific social work task

The social workers within the DSD and SFCF are assigned duties according to sections. A distinction is made between social workers doing intake (opening the file) and social workers rendering foster care services, including assessment of potential foster parents. Specific social workers are entrusted to do intake of foster care cases (opening of the file) and then referring them to the area social worker. The intake social worker is the one who makes the first contact with the prospective foster parent, listens to the problem of the client and after

preliminary assessment of the problem as falling in the category of foster care, refers it to the area social worker. The area social worker will conduct an investigation and finalise the case. The Information Guide on the Management of Statutory Services (DSD 2012:27) coincides with the above by pointing out that early intervention of services covers the processes of reception, assessment and referral by suitably trained personnel, including the social worker.

Participants narrated that they only take over after the file of a new prospective foster parent was referred to them. The following were verbalised by social workers:

“There are officers that do intake”.

“They are the ones that open files and they refer them to us area social workers so that we can conduct investigation or further investigation, so we can see the home circumstances of the clients”.

However, when participants talk about “intake of new foster parents” they refer to the process of assessment of the suitability of the person.

“My role in relation to foster care placements is to do what we call the intake of new foster parents, assessment for suitability and fitness to can take care of foster children, and also compiling a report that has to go to Children’s Court in placing children in their care”.

Assessment is the first activity that a social worker undertakes when the foster care case is reported (DSD 2009:40; Information guide on the management of statutory services 2012:134). Furthermore, literature reports that social workers, when placing children in foster care, have the responsibility to consider prospective foster parents’ ability to meet the needs of the foster children (De Villiers 2008:59).

- Sub-theme 1.2: Intake of prospective foster parents includes various methods of assessment relating to foster care.

When participants attended to the suitability of foster parents, they used various methods of assessment and shared a variety of aspects which they took into consideration. Findings indicated that participants used home visits, interviews with the prospective foster parents and others, as well as record checks to determine the suitability of prospective foster parents.

Category 1.2:1 Home visits to prospective foster parents

The assessment of home circumstances is the first and pivotal part of the investigations before the legal placement of the foster child with the foster parents. As stated by Carter (2013:61), prospective foster parents should be thoroughly assessed before the foster child is placed in their care. Ngwenya (2011:66) advises that “social workers need to be trained to do thorough investigations.” According to literature, the Information Guide on the Management of Statutory Services (DSD 2012:29) and Ngwabi (2014:29), the first assessment in pre-statutory services includes gathering information on the foster parents’ environment, income, family composition and health. As stated by Meintjies, Budlender, Giese and Johnson (2003:22), home visits are imperative when investigating the home circumstances of children as this helps to verify the caregiver and make sure the child is in conducive and comfortable living arrangement.

The following story lines indicate that the social workers utilised home visits as a method to confirm the residence of the child where a child is already staying with a family and to analyse the situation of the family before the placement:

“Okay, my role is...to do a background check to where the child stays, to see the home circumstance of the family before I could place the child with the prospective foster parent”.

“In my visit I confirm the application by checking the children if they really stay in the family and their names”.

“I do assessment; I assess home circumstances of the person I’m going to place the child with, whether they are suitable for the best interest of the child”.

It is stated by Zastrow (2013:100) that social work continues to use the ecological systems perspective to assess human behaviour. The potential influence of the environment and the typical behaviour patterns of the prospective foster parents and foster family on the foster child need to be assessed.

Category 1.2.1: Interviews with prospective foster parents and others

The participants conducted interviews with the prospective foster parents and also relied on other people beside the foster family. The family, relatives, neighbours and church were used as other sources of information consulted in the investigation.

“I do investigations, assessments and interviews... [I interview] prospective foster parents, children and in some cases relatives.”

“Normally we ask neighbours, we don’t rely on the information of only prospective foster parents, even the church is consulted”.

As part of the interviews, the social workers have to ensure, according to the Children’s Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: Section 182 (2) (a-d). that the prospective foster parent is a fit and proper person to be entrusted with the foster care of the child; willing and able to undertake the responsibilities of such care; and has the capacity to provide an environment that is conducive to the child’s growth and development. De Jager (2011:50) indicates a suitable person is “someone with a similar background to that of the child”.

Sub-category 1.2.1.3: Record checks

The other essential elements in the assessment of prospective foster parents, are the completion of form 30 for checking in the National Child Protection Register for people who

abused or neglected children in terms of section 119 of Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006) and obtaining a police clearance (criminal record check). The participants narrated that if the name of a prospective foster parent appears in the register, it means the prospective foster parent is not suitable or is unfit to foster the child. The police clearance inquiry is used to check whether someone has been convicted of child abuse or neglect, assault or murder. In terms of the Guidelines for the Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa (DSD 2009:34-35), when screening a foster parent, the social worker needs to check his/her criminal background. Scannapieco and Hegar (1996:571) concur but add additional aspects that must be taken in to consideration such as roles of family members, employment history, financial stability, background checks for child abuse, approaches to parenting and discipline.

“Yes, if the foster parent had a case of abuse in the Child Register part B, such a person cannot stay a foster parent because of a history of abuse. If I realise that the prospective foster parent has a problem of abusing substances as an example or there is domestic violence issues or case, in that way it won't be easy to place a child with such person, she won't qualify”.

“Again we see if the prospective foster parent has criminal record or not, as it is a very important thing.

“We also fill a form to the police to check if the person has [a] pending case or [is] charged. This helps to see the suitability but specifically we check cases such as assault but when it is theft I don't have much of a problem to place the child and if it is domestic violence related it is a no going area”.

“...child molestation, child abuse crime (whether physically, emotionally or sexually) it is very, very serious”.

It seems that the assessment methods reflected in the narratives of the participants are in line with requirements set in literature. As indicated by the Guidelines for effective management of foster care in South Africa (DSD 2009:33), social workers assessing prospective foster parents, need to check criminal backgrounds, do home circumstance investigations, conduct interviews with prospective foster parents, assess for substance abuse and their ability to accept responsibility. The investigation of social workers is crucial as they use critical methods to check the suitability of the prospective foster parent.

Category 1.2.2: Various aspects relating to the suitability of prospective foster parents to be assessed

During the research, various aspects relating to the suitability of the prospective foster parents were considered, namely the role of the FCG in the motivation of the parent to foster a child; physical circumstances; the knowledge of the responsibility of foster parents; the relationship between foster child and foster parent that is already existing; as well as characteristics of the foster parent.

Sub-category 1.2.2.1: Importance of the foster care grant (FCG) as the motivation for foster care

An article in The Daily Dispatch, highlights that foster children were removed from foster parents because they were not looked after and foster parents were only happy to receive the money (FCG) (Ramadikela & Bongela 2003:1). De Jager (2011:47) warns that “people become foster parents for many reasons, and it is important to know what motivates them. The motivation of foster parents can predict the outcome of a placement to a large extent.” Participants in the study by Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017:170) point out that the FCG is not used for the interest of children and that foster care is motivated by love of money. The FCG is seen by social work participants as a motivation for foster parents to take in children and not necessarily for the needs of the foster care child:

“You also need to make sure the person is emotionally fit to take full parental responsibility because some people are only looking for the grant for financial gain....some foster parents who come to us are only looking for the grant for financial gain not realising if they will be

capable to cope and help with the child's development (emotionally) because is not only about finances...."

"It will give me a red light if the foster parent has been arrested for anything very important; secondly that's when you go to home circumstances, housing, are you renting, economic factors here I check whether you are not going to misuse the foster care grant or see it as business, those are some of the most important."

"To them the idea of foster care is foster care grant even when they come to apply; I always ask my foster parents, when you first came to the social worker what was your idea? Did you come to apply for the child to be under your care as guardian or did you come to apply for foster care grant?"

What participants have alluded to, is in contradiction to the Children's Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: section 181), outlining the purpose of foster care, namely "to protect and nurture children by providing a safe, healthy environment with positive support". Fernandez (2013:31) is of the view that families have many reasons why they take a decision to foster a child. Those reasons involve wanting to protect children from child abuse; physical abuse: and biological parents who abuse substances. The researcher is of the opinion that not all prospective foster parents apply for foster care placement with good intentions; some may be looking for financial gain.

Sub-category 1.2.2.2: Physical environment

A study by De Villiers (2008:59) mentions that the physical environment has an important influence on the development of children and the social worker needs to consider that when making placement decisions. Participants considered the physical environment in terms of housing and a caring family, where diversity relating to the foster family and child is considered as crucial when placing the child with a foster parent

“We check the environment the child will be staying in, we check if the child is fitting well in the family and we also consider the cultural diversity because sometimes you might bring a challenge between foster child and foster parent so it is one of the things we check”.

“Umm, I check whether the environment is conducive for the child and consider the child’s best interest, the relation between the child and person that I place the child with... the child’s basic needs are attended to”.

“I investigate the background and focus on the foster parent first. The background of the family, the family circumstances, their appropriateness of their home to the child”.

As mentioned in subcategory 1.2.1.1 by Meintjies et al (2003:22), home visits are important to verify the caregiver when investigating home circumstances of children and ensuring that the child is in comfortable living arrangements. Further, the story lines from participants correlate with De Villiers (2008:59) and the Guidelines for the Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa (DSD 2009:34-35), indicating that the home circumstances of prospective foster parents are investigated to assess family composition, income, conduciveness of accommodation and the general environment to ensure child safety. De Jager (2011:68) mentions that a conducive environment contributes to the foster child’s growth and development. The researcher in this regard, is of the view that physical environment of the foster parent especially where the child will be placed is very important just like factors such as housing, neighbourhood environment and buildings can contribute to the development of the child. Paat (2013:955) explains that the ecological systems perspective focuses on the “interrelationship between family and other ecological systems such as school, neighbourhood, and peer network”.

Sub-category 1.2.2.3: Knowledge about the responsibilities of foster parents

Social work participants in their assessment asked foster parents about their knowledge of their parental responsibilities. They also checked with the prospective foster parents if they understood and had knowledge of the rights of children. According to the Children’s Act No. 58 of 2005 (South Africa 2006: section 1 (a) (i-iii)), care of a child is explained as when

a parent is able to provide the child with a suitable place to live; living conditions that are conducive to the child's health, well-being and development; and the necessary financial support.

“Does the person understand the parental responsibility of the foster parent like the point of caring for the child, her roles and responsibility of foster parent and then that is part of assessment.”

“To say this is what is expected of them as foster parents, maybe they take it very light; ... and the knowledge of their parental rights and responsibility and also the rights of the children”.

The literature is in line with the above story lines. De Jager (2011:62) states that social workers should prepare foster parents in the form of formal or informal training sessions before finalisation of the placement. The above author also maintains that preparation is a self-reflection procedure. The Guidelines for Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa (DSD 2009:34) indicates that prospective foster parents should be orientated to the foster care programme by getting training that includes “clarification of expectations about foster care, roles and responsibilities of foster parent.”

Sub-category 1.2.2.4: Existing relationship between the foster child and foster parents

The participating social workers pointed out that the existing relationship between the foster child and the foster parent is crucial. They assessed whether there is a good relationship in the foster family where the child stays. This is done specifically before the social worker can finalise the placement in kinship foster care.

“First of all I check relationship between foster child and prospective foster parent, whether is it a good relationship, you see. How they relate, the relationship and interaction are the most important, you see. Also from the foster child’s side ask how long she has been staying with the foster parent and since that time they start to stay together how is the relationship. If the child is comfortable in staying with prospective foster parent.”

“We usually pick up situations where the children are already in the family, meaning they are related, so most of the time there are no much of problems when placing the child because he already has a bond with the family. It is the person who already grew up in the family, their relationship is already stable”.

It is stated in the Children’s Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: section 180(3) (b)) that a foster child may be placed with a family member who is not a parent or guardian of the foster child. This is confirmed by De Jager (2011:44) when explaining kinship care where children live with the people they know and trust. Kinship care prevents the breakdown of sibling relationships and helps children to keep or develop relationships with their extended family (Hegar & Scannapieco 1996:568).

Sub-category 1.2.2.5: Other aspects

Various other factors are assessed by participants to determine the suitability of prospective foster parents. Social workers considered the age gap between the foster child and foster parent. For instance, if the prospective foster parent is too old or frail it might be seen as a hindrance. Another essential aspect is the fitness or suitability of the prospective foster parent in terms of emotional fitness, cognitive capability and educational background as is reflected in the story lines below:

“If we find that the prospective foster parent is too old, like a grandmother who is frail, so you can’t place a child with such person because she can’t”.

“You also need to make sure the person is emotionally fit to take full parental responsibility”.

“The other thing that I use with a foster parent, is Bethany Christian church has given us the method, we assess the cognitive capability of a person of a certain age, the thing of...let me give an example of a person of 20 to 30 years, his reasoning should be concrete, be able to elaborate, when you ask him something be able to explain and give reasons. Another part

of the assessment is to check the educational background of the prospective foster parent, why, because let's say she is going to foster a child of two years and now if you check clinic cards and other things are completed in English. So we need to make sure that you can understand English, for the reason that when the child is at the point where the child has to visit the clinic and the instructions of nurses are understandable to the foster parent, there has to be a basic understanding of English, because clinic cards are written in English”.

These story lines correspond with what Bungane (2007:23) and Mathebula (2012:7) indicate, that when an elderly foster parent, because of old age, suffers from physical ailments, experience deteriorating health, it makes it difficult for him/her to provide care for foster children, especially small babies. De Villiers (2008:59) states that in foster care placements, it is important to select foster parents who will be able to provide children with an atmosphere endorsing their development. De Jager (2011:68) points out that there is a need to check whether foster parents will have the ability to provide a safe home to the child as this contributes to the child's growth and development. The researcher is therefore, of the opinion that factors within the parent such as physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioural or motivational are imperative and help to make sure that the child's best interest is considered. Hall (2013:11) points out that the ecological systems perspective considers the fit of individuals and their environment in their life space. The same author further indicates that life space covers all parts of the social and physical environment which have an impact.

▪ Sub-theme 1.3: Investigation of the foster child's background

The Children's Amendment Act No. 17 of 2016 (South Africa 2017: section 150 (1) (a)) declares a child in need of care and protection when the child has been abandoned or orphaned and does not have the ability to support himself or herself and such inability is readily apparent. In addition, Jamieson (2013:48) indicates that a social worker investigates whether the child is in need of care and protection or not. De Villiers (2008:59) warns that a decision taken to place a child in a certain foster family should be taken seriously. The participants viewed an orphan as a child whose parents are deceased or who was abandoned. The participants mostly worked with orphans:

“Yes my role is to make sure that the child is an orphan, so our orphan is in two types. The first orphan is one that his/her parents are deceased; the second orphan is the one that was abandoned. So such children are covered by the Children’s Act”.

“They are our main clients; when I’m speaking of an orphan, I’m referring to someone whose both parents are deceased. First thing foster care is broad and most of the time we work with orphans”.

The participants investigated whether the biological father of the foster child was unknown or whether his whereabouts were unknown. Organisations such as the church were utilised as part of the investigation to find where the father might be or was before.

“Yes if it is true they have not seen the child’s father when that is the case because sometimes they baptise children with their fathers in the church. Yes, they say the child’s father was here when the child was baptised and if he was found at the time when the child was baptised so she [social worker] has to find him even now for foster care”.

▪ Sub-theme 1.4: Compiling and submitting the court report

Social workers who participated in the research explained which documents are required for the child to be placed in foster care, namely the death certificates of the foster child’s biological parents, the birth certificate of the child (under 18 years), ID book/card of the prospective foster parent and an affidavit that the child is in his/her care. Form 30 and a police clearance form are also part of the required documents. According to the participants, a comprehensive report is compiled after the social worker’s investigations. When the report is ready, it is then submitted to the children’s court and a court order is issued. With the court order the foster child is officially placed in the care of the foster parent with or without recommendation of a foster care grant.

“For orphaned children I’m going to need both death certificates, birth certificate of the child (under 18 years), ID book of the prospective foster parent and affidavit indicating that

the child is under her care. Form 30 is completed (it goes to the part B register to check if the parent has never been involved in any case of abusing children) then also police clearance certificate to check if there is no criminal record relating children. Those are the most important documents we need.”

“My investigation is about the report of the foster care applicant then the home circumstances and decide whether I should place the child.”

“After compiling a report to, the supervisor then it goes to children’s court and then refer the client to SASSA placement for payment of foster care grant.”

The findings of this research are in line with literature. Ngwabi (2014:30) points out that by the time investigations are finalised, the social worker will submit a report in terms of section 155 (2) of the Children’s Act No 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006) to the children’s court. Foster care placement with a foster family is a court-ordered process (Jamieson 2013:95; De Jager 2011:69). The Guidelines for Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa (DSD 2009:43) also indicates that the social worker has responsibility to bring the case before the magistrate to decide if a child is in need of care and protection or not.

▪ Sub-theme 1.5: Post-foster care placement supervision and support

Social workers are obliged to provide foster care supervision (Children’s Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: section 156 (3) (a) (i)). The Guidelines for Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa (2009:62) state that the aim of supervision is to empower and support the foster family, foster child and biological family or family of origin through regular supervision. Ngwabi (2014:31) explains that foster families and foster children need supervision and aftercare services that include supportive aid and therapeutic services. De Jager (2011:54) indicates that the purpose of a foster care plan is to provide the social worker, foster child and foster parent with an understanding of everyone’s responsibility including supervision services and monitoring of placement.

“After the placement I should run supervision services.”

Participants stressed that foster children who are neglected or abused, cannot just be removed to an alternative placement - social workers resort to removal or transfer of a foster child as the last option in the event where the child is neglected. Foster parents are first engaged in developing parenting skills or resolving the matter around the table. Participants found it difficult to transfer foster children as they struggle to find a family that would accommodate the child. One participant indicated that some neglect cases in foster are not intentional.

“It is rare to remove a child from the foster parent who is neglecting the child because when you remove from that person, where will you place the child. You have to deal with them by helping the person with parenting skills not just to remove.”

“Most of the time it is something that we are able to talk to our clients and fix the issue, but sometimes our clients neglect foster children by leaving the children in Botshabelo alone to stay in Bloemfontein because of work reasons, and not intentional. When I arrive in the family the child is alone with no one to care for the foster child, but then you make the client aware that according to the law the child has to be with you all the time because we placed the child with you and whenever I need the child I should find him with you.”

“I don’t transfer them immediately [in that regard], you see, we sit down and try to solve the problem, see what can be done. I try to intervene by providing counselling and getting to the root of the problem, and then if problem is unsolvable then I remove”.

▪ Sub-theme 1.6: Review of foster placement for continuation or change in care situation
Social workers conduct reviews of foster care placements guided by the Children’s Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: section 159 (1)) which states that an order made by a children's court in terms of section 156 will lapse on expiry of two years from the date the order was made or may be extended for a period of not more than two years at a time. The children's court can place the child until he/she reaches 18 years (Children’s

Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 South Africa 2008: section 186 (1)). Section 176 (2) of this Act allows a person to remain in care until the end of the year in which he/she reaches the age of 21 years on condition that the current alternative caregiver is willing and able to care for that person; and the continued stay is necessary to enable him/her to complete his or her education or training.

“Yes after six month I compile a progress report, that’s when I can see that the child’s placement is not working”.

“Through review, I like to do my interview separately with foster parents and foster children, because normally when we interview both of them they normally get scared to talk about what’s happening. However, when you go to talk with the foster child alone that is when she will express herself on what is happening”.

Literature advises social workers to undertake continuous evaluation of the foster care process to detect problems (De Villiers 2008:67). According to Mathebula (2012:117), social auxiliary workers can help by monitoring the placement and providing social workers with a report on their findings. It is recommended that the court should play a role in monitoring the foster care placement by requesting social workers to report back to the court timeously or requesting foster children and/ or foster parents to inform the court about compliance with the court order (Children’s Institute (UCT) and National Association of Child Care Workers 2011:47; Mathebula, 2012:117).

However, the Children’ Act 38 of 2005 placed additional work on social workers to obtain new court orders for children with expired court orders. This has resulted in several thousands of children having their FCG cease because of expired court orders. This crisis led to the repeated intervention of the North Gauteng High Court to prevent the lapsing of FCGs. The expired court orders were extended administratively from 2011. On 28 November 2019 the North Gauteng High Court again granted an order to keep thousands of foster care orders valid for another 12 months. The Minister of Social Development was granted two years to develop a legal solution (Andes 2019:1)

- Sub-theme 1.7: Change of the foster child's care situation

Participants mentioned that foster children are transferred to other foster parents if the placement is not working or if the foster parent dies. In terms of section 171 of the Children's Second Amendment Act No. 18 of 2016 (South Africa 2017: section 171) a foster child can be transferred to another foster parent. The current circumstance of the new foster parent is assessed or a request is made to the area social worker for a background report. The researcher could not find any literature for this sub-theme.

"It is when I'm able to transfer the child to another alternative care".

"With children that are already in foster care we don't remove, we transfer them according to section 171 and I have never removed a child from a [foster] parent, I just transfer".

"Let me speak of transfer as it depends on what you found such as that the child is moving from aunt to uncle depending on their reasons. You also do a background check. Sometimes in my caseload you find that the child is moving from F section to A section (my area is F section)."

It is significant that the participants only mentioned changing the placement from one foster parent to another and did not mention removal from foster care or reunification with parents. Many foster children are orphans or their paternal family was not involved from the start of the placement. However, the removal of foster children to other placement options and even reunification with parents were implied in answers to other questions.

The reasons for a change in a foster child's care situation can relate to the child, the foster parents or the biological parents, as discussed in the next paragraphs.

Category 1.7.1: Reasons for change of the care situation related to the child

In most cases foster children are either removed or transferred to other family or temporary places of safety because of their behavioural problems and foster parents' struggle to cope with the behaviour. This is confirmed by a study of Bungane (2007:24) which found that

many foster parents complain about the behavioural issues of foster children. The DSD (DSD 2012:111) notes that foster children are placed in foster care for a number of reasons such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse, or birth parent's incarceration. Foster children often exhibit their feelings related to these experiences, through mild behaviours such as tantrums, while some of this behaviour might be extreme, like stealing or running away. The findings in Mnisi's study (2015:82) confirm that foster parents were struggling to manage the behaviour of adolescent foster children. The story lines of participants correlate with these findings:

"He is an 11 years boy child, who was fighting the foster parent by insulting her with bad, bad, bad words (vulgar words). He was peeing in the bed, breaking things, lighting fire on things, and he was doing bad things."

"... Let me put it this way, foster parent in most cases feel that they no longer want to stay with the foster children because of the reason that foster children are delinquent".

"For children in most cases again, it is that reason of that the child is in classified box of an orphan and what, what, he acts out."

"Behaviour is the problem because teenage foster children demand expensive clothes not realising how much he is getting and he has to prioritise his needs, because you can't buy R1 500 shoes while getting R740, so their level of thinking is the issue, they are unable to read the situation."

The Guidelines for the Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa (DSD 2009:34) advises that social workers placing children in foster care need to be aware that some children come from complicated family backgrounds where they might have experienced trauma and others have special needs. Participants' insights correlated with that mirrored in literature:

“The foster child is the child that has lost his/her parents so the child needs to deal with the death/loss of his parents. The child needs to adapt in the new family. We are not helping the child to cope so to say it will depend on how the child will act out.”

“Umm, sometimes foster children deal with a lot whereby the child has lost both parents and when you have lost both parents you are taken to be placed in a new environment that they don't understand you. You are unable to do things that you were able to do and you have not dealt with the loss yet; so now you deal with many things, One, you lost your parents, Two, you are in a new environment It is difficult for you to attach to the family and you don't feel like you belong.”

“Yes, the child is emotionally affected by being unstable because he/she does not know where he belongs, you see...Cognitively, he does not see and know how to do wise decisions, the foster child will smoke, drink and other things that are out just to prove that there are problems, they are told how their parents died so they will smoke, drink and have intimate relationships.”

Category 1.7.2: Reasons for change of the care situation related to the foster parents

Various reasons relating to the foster parents can lead to the change of the foster child's care situation including the misuse and mismanagement of grants; neglect or abuse of the foster child by the foster parent; the life style of foster parents; foster parents abandoning the child; as well as the death of the foster parent/s.

Sub-category 1.7.2.1: Misuse and mismanagement of the grant

The secretary of the Ministerial Committee on Foster Care, Pauline Maketa, made a plea to parents that they should not foster children only because of money but they must show love and proper care (Ndamase 2016:1). The foster care grant is misused when foster parents fail to understand the purpose of the grant. Bungane (2007:24) is of the opinion that some foster family including foster children are incapable of utilising the FCG. A study by Mnisi (2015:90) on factors contributing to the breakdown of foster care placements of adolescents,

reports that foster parents had disagreements on the use of the FCG with adolescents (foster children) and/or other families. The author further found that foster children questioned how the grant is used and accused foster parents of misusing the FCG for their own gain or the grant being utilised on the other children within the foster family. The following story lines reflect the misuse of the FCGs to such an extent that social workers transferred the children to other foster parents:

“I did transfer many children; reason being it was the misuse of foster care grant. They take the grant as a source of income, that’s where I can see that I have to remove the child by transferring the child to another foster parent”.

“The grant is caring for the whole family where the child resides. The foster parent was using the foster care grant to buy alcohol, so I will call it physical neglect because the child was not having food, going to school without proper uniform, school teachers were complaining about the child’s uniform.”

“The foster parent used the money to pay for stokvel/society so as to share the money in December. At other times she will lie to the foster child that your money has stopped, “I’m no longer receiving it”. On the other hand, she will be gone with the money to other places, left the child, so in that case I had to transfer the child to another placement.”

In this study, participants reported that foster parents used the grant for alcohol, buying personal stuff, using the income for the whole family or not residing with the foster child. One foster parent used lies to convince foster children that their grant has stopped so she (foster parent) can benefit to pay the stokvel society. Foster children were assisted by community members to meet their daily basic needs such as groceries, clothes and sanitary pads, while foster parents utilised the grant for their own needs. The social work participants reported that they transferred foster children to other foster parents in cases where children were neglected physically and the grant was misused. The researcher came to the conclusion that the FCG often does not serve its purpose, but benefits foster parents.

Sub-category 1.7.2.2: Neglect and abuse of the foster child by foster parents

This study indicated that foster parents abused foster children emotionally by articulating painful words towards foster children. Foster children were compared and labelled with the weakness of their deceased parents. A form of physical abuse was used on foster children as a means of discipline. Foster parents failed to be responsible foster parents by using detrimental methods to reprimand foster children.

“Emotional abuse, in this way foster parent was using painful words on the child. It also includes neglect because she was used to insult and demoralising the child that she is nothing like her father who was a drunkard doing that and that; this words were uttered by the foster parent.”

“Yes I did [transfer the child] reasons are, foster child was beaten by a street committee lady who was called by a foster parent so she can discipline the child. So she beaten up the child and was having marks because she was using a sjambok. I had to remove the child.”

According to Bungane (2007:25) foster parents are often focused on getting a FCG while the emotional needs of foster children are neglected. As stated by Mathebula (2012:91), orphans (foster children) viewed foster care placement as negative and were not content because of experiencing abuse from foster parents. In the study of the Mathebula, participants (foster children) felt anger because of the bad treatment they received from the foster family.

Sub-category 1.7.2.3: The lifestyle of foster parents

From the findings, it seemed that foster families exposed foster children to harmful environments without considering the best interest of the child. The Children’s Act No. 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006: section 9) stipulates that in all matters relating to care, protection and well-being of a child, his/her best interest as stated by section 7 of this Act is of paramount importance and must be applied. It emerged that the lifestyle of the foster parents including their (foster parents’) belief system was imposed on the foster children, without being considerate of that of the foster child. According to Sanchez-Gomez (2012:17), children in foster care may lose their own culture and struggle to adjust to a new way of life.

The study by Minisi (2015:89) confirmed that adolescent foster children did not fit well within the family structure, rules and lifestyle. The following story line was uttered by a participant:

“I had an incident where the child was telling me that when they arrived at the foster family they were told to smoke dagga for the reason that they [were] fighting evil spirit. I realised that the placement was not conducive for the child and it was not only the dagga issue but the home circumstances also counted where the family was staying with dogs in the house.”

The lifestyle of the foster parents appeared to be detrimental to the foster children. The participants shared that the use of alcohol contributed to the neglect and abuse of foster children. The foster parents seemed to mistakenly or intentionally forget their parental responsibilities because of using alcohol.

“It is substance abuse, in sense the foster parents are drinking alcohol, leave the children alone in the evening when going to drink. There are cases in my caseload that are reported as foster parents have left a child alone to drink alcohol.”

“...for parents alcohol use, cognitive and emotional stress, a lot of stress contribute to neglect and abuse.”

Sub-category 1.7.2.4: Foster parents abandoning the foster child

In Chapter 1 of the Children’s Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: section1) an abandoned child is defined as a child who has been deserted by the parent, guardian or caregiver and had no contact with the parent, guardian or caregiver for a period of at least three months. The abandoning of children is reported to create risks for the well-being of children, and compromise “their prospects for social adjustment and advancement” (Thabane & Kasiram 2015:1).

Participants pointed out that foster parents abandoned foster children deliberately. Foster parents reached the point where they were reluctant to continue caring for foster children and came up with mechanisms to escape from the responsibility. Foster children were abandoned in situations which put their lives in danger, for instance being left in a public area or alone at home.

“I have recently transferred a child because the foster parent relocated to an unknown area where I couldn’t reach her.”

“I have placed the child with a community member because his grandmother felt she does not need the child. She dumped the foster child in Johannesburg. The foster parent took the child from here to Gauteng to buy clothes; when they got there at Park Station she told the child to stay there as if she was coming.”

“The foster parent went to Welkom and claimed that she left the children under the supervision of her biological child who said when she arrived from school, she found that her mother was gone.”

According to international literature, children are abandoned when the parent’s identity or whereabouts are unknown; when the child was left alone in a situation that is dangerous; when the parent has failed to keep contact with the child; or failed to provide support for a specified period of time (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2019:3). Foster parents who abandon foster children show that they do not understand the role and responsibility of foster parents. This kind of situation gives one an idea that vulnerable and orphaned children are often placed with people who do not have the children’s interest at heart. The researcher is therefore of the opinion that the foster care system as part of child protection does not serve its purpose and there is a need to empower foster parents about the meaning of neglect and its consequences.

Sub-category 1.7.2.5: Death of the foster parent

Social workers transfer foster children who are under 18 years to another foster parent in the event whereby the current foster parent passed on. Death of the foster parent dictates the placement of the child to be transferred to another (new) foster parent. This is done in terms of the Children's Second Amendment Act No. 18 of 2016 (South Africa 2008: section 171) as mention in Sub-theme 1.7: Change of the foster child's care situation.

“It [transferring the child to another foster parent] happens when the foster child is still under age and the foster parent is deceased.”

“Yes, I have a large number of children that I transferred to other foster parent, the reason being that foster parent is deceased.”

“... most of the time you find that the foster parent has passed away, and the children are still in the system; then there is somebody who is willing to take care of that child, normally that's how that programme will be done.”

Category 1.7.3: Reasons for change in the care situation related to the biological parent

Literature indicates that foster parents are not always honest about the whereabouts of the biological parents of the foster children. Ngwenya (2011:72) points out that “clients are dishonest and give false information about the children's parents”. The study by Ngwabi (2014:60) concurs that prospective foster parents often submit fake documents. In Ngwenya's study (2011:41), participants mentioned that the reason for foster parents to falsify or fabricate information is to receive the FCG.

Participants in this study shared that foster parents in the initial stage of applying for foster care placement often lie about the whereabouts of the foster child's father:

“Most of them [removal from foster care] were reunification with their fathers because foster parents have a style of when you ask them where the father of the child is, they say “my child was never married”... They stop the child’s father’s access to his child and [sometimes] in most cases fathers show up in our offices to report that this is my child. Explaining that [when] the child’s mother died, the grandmother denied me access to my child.”

“...it was two cases whereby I removed children from foster care. As you know a child can be placed in foster care if he was abandoned or an orphan so in in my cases it was reported that the children’s fathers are unknown and their biological mother is deceased. So I had to remove the child from the foster care system so that the father can take full responsibility.”

It became apparent from the utterances of the participants that fathers are often intentionally denied access to their children by foster parents. When the father was not married to the biological mother, he was not allowed to take full parental responsibility after the death of the children’s biological mother. However, unmarried fathers have full parental responsibilities and rights in terms of section 21 (a), (b) (i-iii) of Children’s Act No. 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006: section 21): “(a) when the father at the time of the child’s birth is living with the mother in a permanent life partnership; or (b) (i) regardless if he has stayed or not with the mother but consent to be identified or has applied according to section 26 of this Act as the father of the child or has paid damages in terms of customary law; (ii) he has contributed in good faith to the child’s upbringing for a reasonable period; (iii) he contributed in good faith towards expenses in connection with maintenance of the child for a reasonable period.” With this indicated by the Act, the researcher is of the opinion that foster parents are not aware of parental responsibilities and the rights of unmarried fathers. There is a need for social workers to empower prospective foster parents about Section 21 of the Children’s Act.

3.3.2 Theme 2: Neglect and abuse of foster children

From the findings, participants were able to observe signs in foster care that foster children might be neglected or abused. Participating social workers were also able to share their perspectives regarding factors that contributed to neglect and abuse of foster children.

Research revealed that a child of four years went missing from her foster home and the foster parent did not report the disappearance for 15 months; the investigation showed that the case manager (social worker) did not supervise the case during foster care placement (Sanchez-Gomez 2012:7). Literature confirms that neglect and abuse occur in foster care and that foster children are not treated well in foster families. It seems that it is mostly neglect, physical and emotional abuse of foster children which occur (Farmer & Moyers 2008:20,175-176; Mnisi 2015:101-102). Furthermore, foster children are reported to label their foster parents as cruel and abusive, while adolescent foster children recounted their experiences of neglect and abuse by foster parents which put them at risk for negative behaviour (Cabrera, Auslander & Polgar 2009:273, 282; Mnisi 2015:93)). The findings of Theme 2 link with the ecological systems perspective and refer to the sub-system of an individual child and the influence the neglect and abuse has on his/her biophysical, cognitive, emotional, behavioural and motivational functioning (Hepworth et al 2006:18). The factors which lead to the described neglect and abuse fall mainly within the interpersonal systems of the child, namely the parent-child, marital, family, spiritual belief system and the wider community of the foster child (Hepworth et al 2006:18).

In the following sub-themes the reported incidences and types of neglect and abuse are discussed, as well as factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children. Participants also shared how they became aware of the neglect and abuse.

- Sub-theme 2.1: Reported incidences of neglect and abuse

Participants were asked how many cases of neglect and abuse of foster children by their foster parents they encountered during the year preceding the research. The social workers who formed part of the study appeared to have no statistical record or register of the neglect and abuse of foster children served by their offices. Some participants reported more than five cases of abuse and neglect of foster children:

“I think 40% (205 files) of my caseload....my caseload is 527 plus 14 new files that I did not place.”

“I think what I can remember so far I have dealt with eight cases that include both neglect and abuse.”

“I do have numbers I think is about six, speaking from October last year to August is about six cases”

“I remember...plus or minus seven cases last year but this year, I think is close to....six cases of misuse of foster care grant.”

Other participants encountered less than five incidents of neglect and abuse of foster children in the previous year:

“I can estimate, the new ones, this year is four and last year were two, which is six cases.”

“So far I when I estimate it is three neglected [foster children] that I remember correctly.”

“Last year I had two.”

The table below provides a summary of the number of cases of neglect and abuse identified by the participants for the year 2016-2017. It is crucial to note that the table below does not refer to statistical findings but it is information from the memory of the participants.

TABLE 3.3 ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CASES OF NEGLECT AND ABUSE IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS

Social worker participants	Number of cases reported of neglect and abuse
Social worker 1	Two hundred and five (205) cases were reported as neglect and abuse.
Social worker 2	One (1) case was physical abuse, one (1) case was sexual abuse and six (6) cases were neglect.
Social worker 3	Six (6) cases including physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

Social worker 4	Six (6) cases were reported as neglect and one (1) case was sexual abuse
Social worker 5	Six (6) cases of neglect and abuse
Social worker 6	Three (3) cases of neglect
Social worker 7	Two (2) cases of physical and emotional abuse and neglect
Social worker 8	One (1) case of neglect
Social worker 9	One (1) case of physical
Social worker 10	Two (2) cases of neglect
Social worker 11	One (1) case of neglect
Social worker 12	One (1) case of emotional abuse
Social worker 13	Two (1) cases of neglect and physical abuse

The findings reported that about two hundred forty four (244) cases of neglect and abuse of foster children were reported during the year 2016 and 2017 in Botshabelo Township. Social workers reported many cases of neglect and abuse of specifically foster children. It is not clear why so many cases were reported by social worker 1.

Participants did not keep a statistical register of abuse and neglect of foster children in their offices so that they can track down how many case of foster children experiencing abuse and neglect are encountered in a year. The researcher is of the opinion that this is a serious gap in foster care services and indicates a lack of awareness of the extent and implication of existing neglect and abuse of foster care children. If there is no awareness and an account of a problem, no steps can be taken to prevent and address the problem. So far the researcher did not encounter literature on numbers of abused and neglected foster children.

- Sub-theme 2.2: Types of neglect and abuse encountered

Participants were requested to discuss the type of neglect and/or abuse they encountered during the previous year. They reported physical neglect, physical abuse, emotional neglect and abuse as well as sexual abuse and rape.

Category 2.2.1: Physical neglect

It was reported in the media, as well as in research findings that a foster child was locked in a room for weeks without food and that foster children were forced to sleep in old water tanks without blankets and food (Khumalo 2004:1; Ndamase 2016:1). From utterances of the participants, it is apparent that foster parents neglect foster children to exploit the FCG. It is evident from the view of the social work participants that foster parents do not buy groceries and toiletry for foster children.

“Even when the child has no proper clothes, it is a form of neglect. When it is winter the child wore a t-shirt that is not warm”.

“The child was not clean, the child did not have food, and was just left the child alone, and it is neglect.”

“Yes, like that one I mentioned, the uncle as a foster parent, he was receiving the grant but the foster children were not having clothes, food and toiletry.”

Based on the story lines above, it is the opinion of the researcher that these foster parents neglected their parental responsibilities and did not protect the children in their care.

Category 2.2.2: Physical abuse

In her findings Ndamase (2016:1) reported that foster children were chained to trees in the Eastern Cape Province. Physical abuse of foster care children was confirmed by participants in this study. Foster parents beat foster children to a point where there are visible marks or scratches:

“The child was physically abused with some marks.”

“He [foster parent] was beating him [the foster child] with his hands, like when he speaks to him he was beating him with fists and slapping him, he was not using the belt, that is the case of physical abuse I have encountered.”

“Another case of physical abuse, the foster child was brutally beaten. The child ended up in hospital.”

There is consistency between what the participants shared and the definition of physical abuse in the literature. Physical abuse is described as non-accidental physical injury which includes severe beating, biting, broken bones, strangulation, welts and/ or body injuries (Pretorius & Pistorius in Pretorius et al 2012:10). In addition, physical abuse is described “as the act of causing physical injury, ranging from excessive discipline to beatings and scalding” (McGuinness & Schneider 2007:298).

Category 2.2.3: Emotional neglect and abuse

According to the Scottish Government (2010:14), foster parents emotionally neglect and abuse their children by not being supportive and setting up unrealistically high or inappropriate expectations for the developmental level of foster children. Foster children in this study were emotionally neglected and abused in their foster families and they were affected negatively. Further, emotional abuse is failure of the parent or caregiver to provide a developmentally appropriate and supportive environment for the child, which may have a detrimental effect on the child’s physical, mental, social and spiritual health (World Health Organisation and International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect 2006:10).

The view of Pretorius and Pistorius (in Pretorius et al 2012:10-11) correlates with that of the participants, indicating that emotional abuse are acts of omission and commission. The authors explain that acts of omission (what is not done) may be a lack of interest or support for the child, lack of physical contact and acts of commission (what is done) may be making the child the scapegoat; criticising and constantly belittling the child; name calling; making negative comparisons to others; shaming a child, telling a child he/she is not good, worthless, bad are in the end damaging.

“No, it was emotional [abuse] because the child was not getting love from the foster parent and when the child was from school the foster child would find no one in the house with no food. The uncle was out looking for a job so they can have food.”

“Some [foster parents] abuse foster children emotionally by saying, ‘I’m not your mother, I’m not the one who caused your mother’s death’, those painful words are uttered by foster parents.”

“Foster parents have bad words they utter to foster children like ‘your mother is dead you see, you are irritating’; these are said to foster children. For example girl foster children are told that they are going in the same path as that one of their mothers, ‘you will die like her because she was doing exactly what you are doing’”.

These story lines show that foster children are being burdened by emotional abuse by their foster parents. The foster family thus does not serve its purpose for some of the foster children.

Category 2.2.4: Sexual abuse and rape

This study revealed a shocking incident of sexual abuse of a foster child where the child was raped 52 times by one perpetrator without help to such an extent that the child was hospitalised. In this regard, the perpetrators were family members or partners of the foster parent.

“It happened that I was not involved as the area social worker, the police came to report to me by requesting a report from me. The perpetrators raped the foster child 52 times. The child is still hospitalised.”

“Because I remember in 2014 I dealt with a sexual abuse case whereby the foster child was sexually abused by partner of a foster parent.”

“Foster parents should stand up for the foster child, they [foster parents] normally leave many abuses happening to the foster child because perpetrators are their children, even the rapes are there, the uncles rape foster children and tell them to be silent about the issue.”

The literature, as well as the media, confirm incidences where foster children were abused physically, emotionally or sexually (Jooste 2010:10; Nziyane 2010:216). Ndamase (2016:1) indicates that foster children in the Eastern Cape Province, were sexually abused and impregnated in the foster family. Pretorius and Pistorius (in Pretorius et al 2012:11) describe sexual abuse as “when a developmentally immature child or adolescent is sexually exploited or allowed to be directly or indirectly involved in unwanted sexual activities they do not fully comprehend by force, intimidation or deception”.

- Sub-theme 2.3: Social workers’ perceptions of factors contributing to neglect and abuse
- The participants highlighted various factors which can contribute to neglect and abuse of foster children e.g. factors relating to the foster parents, the foster child, the foster parent-foster child relationship, the community, social work foster care services and other organisations like SAPS and SASSA. It is highlighted by Hall (2013:11) that people are the products of their environment. Hepworth et al (2006:16) assert that the ecological systems perspective provides a “person-in-environment” perspective which recognises the impact of environmental factors on human functioning.

Category 2.3.1: Factors related to foster parents that contribute to neglect and abuse

There are factors relating to foster parents that have contributed to the neglect and abuse of foster children such as foster parents’ misuse of the FCG; poverty and unemployment of the foster parent; a lack of understanding of the responsibilities of fostering a child; and a lack of insight into the needs of the foster child.

Sub-category 2.3.1.1: Misuse of the foster care grant

This discussion also refers to sub-category 1.7.2.1 and sub-category 2.3.1.3, focusing on the mismanagement of the FCG as a reason why the care situation of foster care children is changed and the poverty and unemployment of foster parents as a factor contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children. According to Ngwenya (2011:52-53), social workers are not applying the ethics of the social work profession. The author states that foster care service is offered to ensure that the FCG is made available to the children. In addition, Dr Jackie Loffell in a newspaper article by Jamieson (2015:2) points out that “social workers are doing paperwork to renew grants, and are therefore insufficiently available to respond speedily to calls for protective services”. In addition, Martin (2010:68) is of the opinion that the high caseload in foster care applications is not manageable, because the social worker’s role is currently an administrative role just to complete the process of foster care placements so that foster parents can receive the grant. At this stage family members looking after orphaned children need to apply for foster care. This overburdens the system. It is suggested that legislation be amended to provide family members, but especially grandparents, with additional grant funding, without having to apply for foster care placement (Andes 2019:2).

“There are cases where foster parents just vanish without supporting foster children financially, so in this case it is more of financial abuse.”

“The fact that foster children bring income in the family, parents force that the children be placed under their care for the reason of getting the income (grant). As a result of that, foster children had no support and no love from foster parents.”

“Foster parents use the foster care grant as an income generator; hence the abuse enters because the parent has no time for the child.”

“You know, our society appreciate foster children because of money, they don’t care for the children, especially when the children start to be vocal, by reporting that I’m not taken care of. That is when they start to abuse and neglect them, saying to the foster child you told the social worker that I don’t provide for you, see for yourself what you can eat....”

The literature supports the opinion that foster parents take in foster children for the grant. There are allegations that some foster parents are only taking care of orphaned children because of the FCG and without loving the children (Meintjes & Van Niekerk 2005:3; Ramadikela & Bongela 2003:1). According to the Guidelines for Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa (DSD 2009:55) the purpose of the FCG is to help the foster parent to meet the needs of the foster child. The guidelines further highlight that foster parents should take into consideration that the FCG might not fulfil the foster child's needs but should be seen as supplementing the income of the foster family. The DSD (2012:112) indicates that it becomes a critical challenge, whenever foster parents lack the means for financial support and rely on the FCG, as the grant will not be adequate to accommodate the whole family. This study found that the FCG is not seen as a supplement to support the placement, but as an income or money to boost the foster parent.

Sub-category 2.3.1.2: Inappropriate disciplining of foster children

Feedback from the participants indicated that foster parents appear to be unskilled or unable to parent foster children. Foster parents seem to be confused on how to handle or discipline foster children. The DSD (2012:32) describes discipline as "...not a single act but a process which is aimed at teaching children self-discipline. Discipline is different from punishment which is unacceptable and includes spanking, withholding food, name calling, etc. Parents need to always think of different alternatives to disciplining their children in a positive manner." Durand (2007:1) points out that fostering a child who is not biologically yours is a challenging and complicated task. The author adds that foster parents are not trained sufficiently to understand and help with the arising issues in placements and that organisations do not have the resources to deal with such problems.

"They don't know the meaning of abuse and discipline, they mix them, and it resulted in using fists on the child saying 'I'm disciplining the child'."

"According to the cases I explained to you, you may find that foster parents feeling that it is not their biological children, they don't discipline them. I will say foster parents don't know how to handle foster care children because they have already classified the children, they put them in a box, which is the thing that is angering the foster parents."

“The child should not make any mistake; the foster children’s mistakes are the contributing factor. Let’s say the child didn’t wash the dishes, I usually say to foster parents if it was your child what is it that you were going to do. She will say ‘I was going to deny the child television’, I will say ‘Apply that to the foster child’.”

It is therefore, the opinion of the researcher that foster parents are not properly trained or not trained at all, hence the confusion on how to handle a foster child. Mnisi (2015:132) postulates that a good parenting skills programme should be developed to help foster parents to manage the children during different developmental stages and to become better skilled as parents. This author found in her study, that foster parents are struggling to manage the behaviour of foster children in the adolescent stage.

Sub-category 2.3.1.3: Poverty and unemployment of foster parents

This sub-category also refers to the sub-category 1.7.2.1 and sub-category 2.3.1.1. A study was conducted on the topic of the Child Support Grant versus the Foster Care Grant. It is said that the FCG is part of the child protection system and is not a poverty alleviation grant (Kanyane 2015:42). It is reported that the FCG has been used as a poverty alleviation grant for orphans in kinship care (Jamieson, Berry & Lake 2017:108). This study revealed that unemployment of foster parents affects foster children negatively. The needs of the foster children are not catered for as the foster parents are unemployed and depend on the foster grant. However, the DSD (2012:110) states that the “main purpose of the foster care is to create an opportunity for children and youth in need of care and protection to live in a protective, nurturing, stable and secure family environment”. The following story lines confirm this sub-category:

“The second one [case] was not intentional neglect because the foster parent is unemployed with three children of her own. The family depends on the child support grant and foster care grant and on top of that she was owing loan sharks money....The needs of the child and family depend on the grant so some foster parents don’t neglect deliberately it’s because of other circumstances.”

“One that I know is the issue of unemployment, most of foster parents are unemployed and this limit them in terms of understanding the purpose of the grant which is for the needs of the child not those of the family; of which is not enough for the family, that causes the money to be diverted...”

“Unemployed contribute to neglect, it is because when she comes to foster child or those who are already fostering children and those cases that we inherited from Department of Social Development as Setshabelo, they came with the intention that the money they are going to get will assist them to live, to support and sustain their families.”

It is clear from the story lines that because of poverty and unemployment foster parents find themselves in a desperate situation to use the FCG for the needs of the foster family, not of the foster child. Poverty itself plays a big part in foster parents' lives as they find themselves in the difficult situation of neglecting foster children. Families have been applying for the FCG because of their socio-economic status, the high rate of unemployment and poverty in South Africa and the grant is used for the needs of the foster parents (Nziyane 2010:205; Mokgosi cited in Fortune 2016:17). In the studies by Ngwenya (2011: 41) one participant mentioned that socio-economic factors force clients to apply for FCG even use false information.

“I think (it) is poverty, because as the statistics showed that 50% of people are under the poverty line, so poverty contributes more. I think if people were employed, they were not going to think of foster care, they will be affording to raise the child.”

Sub-category 2.3.1.4: Foster parents' own experience of abuse

From the narrative of one participant it became apparent that being a victim of abuse and neglect, it becomes easy for one to abuse or neglect the people one stays with. One participant shared that a foster parent had a history of being abused and neglected and she (the foster parent) ended up abusing the foster child. Chamberlin (2014:291) indicates that one of the causes of child abuse is “intergenerational abuse”. It is stated that parents with a continuous history of childhood physical abuse are potentially higher risk physical abusers

of children than those without a history of physical abuse (Romero-Martínez, Figueiredoa & Moya-Albiol 2013:4)

The researcher included this sub-category as it reflects on an important factor which can contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children. The story line is also quite long, but provides a full history of the foster parent's own experiences of abuse.

“It could be that some of them were victims, I don't want to call it projection of things they passed through in their lives, and just to give an example there is a foster parent who was abusing the child. She was abusing the child physically, neglecting the child emotionally, not emotionally but it was neglect. So even when you start to screen her and assessing her trying to understand why she beat up the child. You find out that her own husband, even her mother, went into marriage by being forced to marry a man who she does not love. Her mother forced her to marry her own husband at the young age and she was beating her. The foster parent grew up being physically abused, in her life; in married life her husband was also beating her. He (husband) denied to buy her things she needed and she was only getting clothes once a year, this thing is something that happened constant in her life and she took it out to the foster child. Why I say that is because her husband was not allowing her to beat her children, her children grown up and left the home and she is left with her grandchild and her husband is passed away. That's when she started doing these things, she reacts when the child changes his behaviour. Instead of her to understand the child's stages or normally teenagers change. It was when she beat the child...Why foster parent is because I mentioned that most children ended up being abused and neglected by foster parents because of the things they themselves have gone through. Now most of them, I pick up that some of things they have not dealt with like emotional things that they hold in their hearts. Because those things have not yet dealt with and you are going to foster a child that is teenager with a deviant behaviour. So that person will see beating the child as the best option to deal with the child or uttering painful words.”

Sub-category 2.3.1.5 Foster parents' lack of understanding of foster care

The findings of the study reflected that foster parents appear to be not knowing or understanding their responsibilities and the rights of the children. It shows that there is no or

limited training of foster parents on foster children's rights and the responsibilities of the foster parent. De Jager (2011:51) asserts that foster parents are expected by law to be able to do certain things and the law provides them with certain rights. The Children's Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: section 188) stipulates the responsibilities and rights of the foster parent: "(1) The foster parent has parental responsibilities and rights on behalf of the child (a) the court order of the children's court placing the child with foster parent; (d) the court order of children's court giving parental responsibilities and rights in terms of section 23; and (e) a foster care plan be made with the guardian of the child and the foster parent. In terms of section 23 of this Act (1) it grants (a) contact with the child; or (b) care of the child". This is evident from the response of the social workers in the following story lines:

"They don't understand foster care, they get surprised when you have to remind them that foster care is not about foster care grant...as a result of that you have to work very hard to make them understand and they usually don't understand...."

"Another thing that could be the most of foster parents are not aware of children's rights and their parental responsibility. As a parent I have responsibility to take care of the child."

Furthermore, the Draft Regulations of Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa: Section 70) (1), assert that a foster parent has a responsibility to provide for the day-to-day care needs of the foster child.

Sub-category 2.3.1.6 Foster parents' lack of understanding of foster child's needs

Findings indicate that foster parents fail to notice the attention that foster children need. This creates confusion to the extent that the child's behaviour is not understood. The issue of classifying foster children as orphans is creating discrimination. In this regard, foster parents often resort to detrimental or harsh discipline when trying to address the issues of the foster children. Foster parents need to be supported step by step by social workers for them to understand the behaviour of the foster children.

“Sometime the child may act out or change behaviour because he/she wants attention. When the behaviour of the child changes it’s because foster parents don’t have time with the foster child. The foster child is the child that has lost his/her parents so the child needs to deal with the death/loss of his parents. The child needs to adapt in the new family.”

“When they say you are an orphan child, you are a foster care child, so the problem is that foster children are in a classified box so that also irritates and frustrates the child, which is why they act out because they feel like they have this label which they have to live by for the rest of their life.”

“...The child’s behaviour as well, there is this tendency of foster parents that a foster child should behave as a saint. The foster parent was experiencing difficulties in dealing with the child’s behaviour as she was starting to steal, starting to go out with other kids as she was that child who used to stay at home but now she wants to experiment.”

Studies show that foster children need to adjust in the foster family. “Children must first adjust to separation, to a different lifestyle, new surroundings, possibly a new school, and the new parents’ own children, neighbours, and friends” (Crosson-Tower 2008:352). On the other hand, Mnisi (2015:5) highlights that foster children are placed in foster care with emotional stress or baggage and discomfort from previous settings. This might hamper the foster child and foster parent to adjust. De Jager (2011:81) points out that the death of a parent is a great loss for children.

Category 2.3.2: Factors related to the foster child that contribute to neglect and abuse

It is stated by Zastrow (2003:18-19) that the ecological systems perspective includes transitional points relating to the family life cycle and includes all complex relationships between the foster child’s developmental needs, parental capacity, family and environment. One of the factors within the child which may contribute to neglect and abuse is the difficult behaviour of the foster child. This has already been discussed in Category 1.7.1 and the

previous sub-category. This study revealed another factor relating to the foster child, namely when he/she gets involved in gangsterism. Foster children join gangster groups for different reasons. It has been shown that the gangster groups that are joined by foster children are very dangerous. Foster children that join the gangster groups appear to be intimidating to the foster family. The foster child ends up fighting or threatening foster parents to get the FCG. Gangster groups seem to be disruptive to the foster family immediately the foster child joins the group. This study reveals that some foster children are living in a toxic environment and this affects their future badly/negatively. The following story lines attest:

“There are a lot of gangs; some of foster children grow up as part of the gangs. Now when the child is part of the gang, and it becomes difficult to discipline such a child and he/she is no longer attending the social worker, what the child does is to fight for the grant money stating that I have R860 of grant, I want it. The foster parent is already scared by the child and gives the child the money, those are the influences and I have them in my caseload.”

“Their environment is poisonous, so the minute the child forms part of gangsters; obviously the foster parent will be scared of the foster child. That’s where she will distance herself, so the minute she distances herself, it is a neglect because that child need her, she distances herself emotional, physical, and this leads to emotional abuse, you see, that is why I’m saying environmentally it does contribute.”

The researcher did not find any linking literature on this sub-theme.

- Category 2.3.3: Factors within the foster parent-foster child relationship that contribute to neglect and abuse

This study found that foster children being neglected or abused by foster parents, lack bonding and a sense of belonging with foster parents. It appears that there is a gap between the foster child and foster parent. As indicated in Category 1.2.1, Mikesell (in Leake 2007:136) explains that humans experience belonging, or not belonging for the first time within the family because the family is the primary context of human experience. With that said, foster children do not find themselves belonging to the foster family because of the treatment they receive from their foster parents. The foster children are able to see the

comparison or discrimination applied by the foster parent, hence there is no bond or a lack of belonging.

“Emotional as I said, they [foster parents] are not emotionally connected or invested on the foster child because of that it is not their biological child. It comes to the motivation where parents are not motivated because that child is not theirs, that’s why when the foster child reaches eighteen years the foster parent comes with stories that the child has deviant behaviour, the child comes home late, the child does this and that and it ends up to the point where it shows that the foster parent has no concern.”

“Like I said they emotionally don’t have passion for children and they don’t care what is going on with the foster children... they are not emotionally attached at all, they don’t feel any pain for them that is the problem, they neglect them just like that, and they don’t care. So in this way they don’t take them as their own children. They...feel that they are not the children of the foster parent, because of the treatment. We give the child the best treatment but the child does not see it that way because when the other children are playing the foster child is busy washing the dishes and other things. I understand that it affects them.”

“I think foster parents don’t have attachment/bond with the foster children like when she knows that the child is not hers biologically. So the foster children suffer emotionally, again neglect and emotional [abuse].”

As a result, foster parents do not provide care to the foster children as to their own children. The placement ends up not working for the child the children in the household are treated differently. A foster child (orphaned) in the study by Nziyane (2010:237) said the foster parent treats her differently by narrating that “...they will make me do a lot of work”.

Category 2.3.4: Factors related to the foster child's family that contribute to neglect and abuse

Participants indicated that the interference of relatives of the foster child creates conflicts and problems in the foster care placement. Mnisi (2015:88) asserts in her findings that in the case where biological parent are alive, make contact and are involved in the placement there were reports that the placements are negative and disruptive when it comes to discipline and structure. On the other hand, De Villiers (2008:70) states that it is crucial for social workers to provide services to the biological family of the foster child as this will help to solve problems that led to placement in the first place.

"...both biological parents will be living together without getting married by the time the other one is deceased (especially the mother). The maternal family comes to take the child and the paternal family also feels that they also have a right to take the child. They turn to fight...contributing to neglect and abuse."

"I don't know if it leads to abuse or neglect, I will just say it leads to problems within the relationships between the foster child and the families. The relative plays a big role in causing conflicts between the [foster] parent and the child. I have cases where relatives are not willing to care for the child, but the minute the money is involved and the foster placement is finalised you then get many complaints and concerns from relatives about the child."

The interference of families plays a big role in the life of the foster child. The two families of a foster child often fail to reach consensus on the placement of the child and that affects the child or placement negatively. Money or the FCG motivates the families to fight for the child. This is also noted in the research study by Mnisi (2015:90) in that foster parents shared that there was disagreement over the foster care grant with extended families or foster children.

▪ Sub-theme 2.3.5: Factors related to the community that contribute to neglect and abuse
From the findings it seems that communities play a role in the neglect and abuse of foster children by either not reporting incidences or by negatively interfering in the lives of foster families. From the feedback of the participants it seems that people have developed a new

value of not caring for one another. The community members try to protect themselves from others by not reporting such issues. However, the lack of knowledge of community members about protecting children put the children's lives in danger. The Information Guide on the Management of Statutory Cases in terms of the Children's Act (2012:82-84) mentions a list of persons who are obliged to report child abuse and neglect. The persons that are obliged to do so include teachers, social workers, traditional leaders, police officials, other related professionals and even parents or any person (Children's Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: section 110(1),(2)). The researcher is therefore of the opinion that community members are preserving an artificial harmony with the concerned families at the cost of the foster children.

“Our community contributes [to neglect and abuse of foster children] because they don't report. They see them and ignore them, and they say 'this is not my problem' or 'if I report this case the person will get angry at me or attack me'. So they don't report.”

“Yes, there is no response...many communities can see the issue of abuse, they can see that the foster child of our neighbour is being beaten by fists like that case I was explaining about. When the child is beaten, the neighbours will come out to see and became silent. They will be like it is a family issue that does not involve them.”

Some community members interfere negatively in the lives of foster children. The researcher views community members as people who lack knowledge on how to approach foster families especially on issues that seem to be problematic. Further, social workers narrated that the community members utter painful words to foster children and influence them negatively to turn against their foster families. Nziyane (2010:215) alludes to community members interfering and responding with criticism to foster care families.

“When they see a foster child doing something, I had a case where the foster child was sent to buy maize meal by wheelbarrow at around 7 pm. The child stays with the grandmother. The community member came to report that the child is not taken care of; the other time the same person will call the foster child and tell him that you are abused, then the child changed

his behaviour. They influence him negatively, they may think that the child is loitering around at night but they don't ask the grandmother about it, so the grandmother lashed out to the child by saying 'go stay with those people that say I'm abusing you', automatically the grandmother is neglecting the child."

"On the negative side is that once the community members start mingling in the other people's business, it becomes a problem because the very same community does not ...support the children., They don't have justice, in such a way that they will tell the foster children the negative words that your father is still alive, maybe like more of making a joke of the child and this...actually became painful to the foster children. And that's how I think and they will even tell the child that your foster parent misuses your grant."

"The community just contribute by meddling in the child and foster parent's relationship."

Category 2.3.6: Factors within social work foster care services that contribute to neglect and abuse

Participants in this study pointed out various factors relating to social work foster care which could contribute to neglect and abuse of foster children. Factors that contribute include high caseloads; shortage of manpower; lack of parenting training; and not enough supervision.

Sub-category 2.3.6.1: High foster care caseloads per social worker

In the study by De Jager (2011:118), one participant mentioned that her caseload is 300. The author noted that the caseloads of social workers are higher. The following story lines attest to high foster care caseloads per social worker and the implication this has for social workers:

"On my side I find it very difficult when I have placed a child because of my workload I will only be able to see the file after two years when I have to review."

“Yes our caseload is higher, on top of that we lack resources even if you feel you can go extra mile.”

“We neglect our people because of pushing numbers. If we can provide our people with services we won’t have a problem.”

It is apparent from the findings that as long as there are high caseloads in foster care, neglect and abuse of foster children will continue. Literature reveals that the foster care system in South Africa is not coping (Kanyane 2015:48). It is obvious that foster children are neglected by social workers due to high caseloads and this indicates that even if the child is abused, the social worker will only know after two years when it is time to review. The study of Ngwabi (2014:61) reveals that since the adoption of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006), social workers have a lot of administration in foster care placement processing. In the mentioned study, social workers are of the opinion that they have concentrated on desk work, processing foster care papers because of many forms. It is mentioned that the backlog has made social workers lose their self-esteem, become deskilled and not using their social work skills but pushing numbers instead (Ngwenya 2011:50).

Sub-category 2.2.6.2: Shortage of manpower and too few resources to do foster care effectively

Participants asserted that there is a shortage of social workers, social auxiliary workers and coordinators in offices. The participants emphasised that with limited manpower they cannot control and manage their caseload better. The social workers are unable to monitor their cases well to a point where foster children can be neglected and abused by foster parents without this being noticed due to a lack of resources.

“We have shortage of social workers, because you can’t control your caseload, and there are no social auxiliary workers, the supervision of cases, that’s where they get in.”

“It is not possible for us to do supervisions and, we don’t have manpower In our office we have only three social auxiliary workers, for the whole office. This office provides services to Botshabelo, for more than 13 sections, with three social auxiliary workers, if you can just say 13 multiply with 147, you can see the caseload. Those are the people who are supposed to be helping the social worker with supervision.”

“We don’t know where to refer the person because coordinators are in Bloemfontein, you struggle to assist the person with substance abuse. Because they used to say we have to inform supervisor, coordinator and there is no coordinator in Botshabelo, they are in Bloemfontein by the time you find him the problem is escalating.”

“Again we turn to overlook some of the other things because of caseload, we have too much of caseload with little resource. So this little resources contribute to neglect and abuse in this manner, we don’t normally do foster care supervisions as it has to be done.”

The Minister of Social Development at the time, Bathabile Dlamini (cited in Kanyane 2015:50) concurred with the participants of this study, that there was a shortage of social workers and supervisors. Furthermore, Jooste (2010:10) from the Cape Argus as well as Bundlender and Proudlock (2012:28) concur that many children will remain in risky situations after a suspected abuse has occurred because of the shortage of social workers. Lombard (2008:164) is of the view that a shortage of social workers “undermines social workers’ capacity to respond to its social change and development function and to deliver socio-economic goals”.

Participants highlighted specific shortages of resources that affect their work:

“We always talk about it, we have shortage of cars, we need cars, I only go once a week [home visits] that is if the car is available.”

“We don’t have cars, you only do home visit once a week and the minute you get an opportunity to do home visit, it is when you have to do your reviews and placement of new files.”

“We don’t have cars, we lack resources.”

Social workers sounded helpless as the issue of shortage of cars has long not been addressed. This situation makes the participants’ work difficult as they are only able to conduct home visits once a week or when the opportunity arises. It is obvious that social workers do not perform their work as it is supposed to be. In the study of Ngwenya (2011:49), social workers were concerned about the lack of resources as it creates problems and negatively impacts on service delivery.

Participants also highlighted the need for printers and copiers:

“So we will just have to wait, even now the files that are on my table needs to be captured in my system, others need to be duplicated to assist SASSA with their backlog. Currently as we speak our photocopying machine is broken, I can’t print the reports that need to be in court.”

As stated by Ngwenya (2011:48), the lack of resources frustrates and angers social workers as it hinders them from providing quality services to clients. The participants in Ngwabi’s (2014:63) study mentioned that lack of resources, such as computers and printers hinder them from delivering effective foster care. The participants could not finalise reports because the photocopying machine was broken. This issue showed that many processes were behind. In this regard, there were no proper systems of maintenance of printers, hence the social workers struggled to do their work.

Sub-category 2.3.6.3: Forced foster care placements

Participants mentioned that foster parents feel obliged to provide care and protection to foster children. Mnisi (2015:77-78) states that in many cases foster parents, especially relatives,

feel obliged to take responsibility to provide care for the children. In the studies conducted by Ngwenya (2011:3) and Van der Riet (2009:2), they point out that HIV\AIDS is the main reason why many children are absorbed by foster care with their relatives.

“Another thing is, ...I don't know how to put it, let me say a forced foster care placement because in some cases some people are forced to take care of the children because the children's parents are deceased. Another reason is that they are the only surviving relatives so they are forced to take the children. Age maturity because other kids foster other kids, the foster parent is not mature enough to foster the children, but just only because it is her siblings she is forced to take care of the children and she still has to enjoy life; that is when neglect start”.

“Some foster parents were forced by circumstances to foster the children or other reasons. Our families, especially blacks, if... (you) are my sibling when you die I will have to look after your children or if I die you will look after my children. You feel like it is your responsibility to do that, you don't get any support even if you struggle you have to deal with the situation on your own.”

As cited by the social work participants, some placements are not voluntary but are forced by the situation. The researcher in this regard is of the view that imposed foster care placements pose the threat that the children might be neglected and abused.

Sub-category 2.3.6.4: Inadequate assessment and training of foster parents

Participants were of the view that foster parents are not trained to deal with the foster children when challenges arise. There is a lack of training for foster parents and assessments are not properly done. According to Carter (2013:66), there is uncertainty about how to assess the prospective foster parent. De Jager (2011:66) argues that to “assess the prospective foster carers' ability to meet the responsibilities of foster parenthood, a holistic picture is needed of the applicants, their family and their way of life.”

“Because we don’t have time to train foster parents so if we really had time to train them by making them ready to what to expect and how to deal with the situation that they will encounter.”

“... that’s when the child will be neglected because everyone has his/her corner, that is why we need to train foster parents so that the other children in the family can accept foster children.”

The study by Durand (2007:41) highlighted that training of foster parents helps to capacitate them to cope with anything that may be a challenge during the placement. The author further states that the foster parent can make use of the knowledge they receive during training to fulfil the needs of the children.

“According to the Act it is a must, you have to train a foster parent and you need to see if the person is ready to foster the child and in some of the files when you look at them, there is no police clearance, there is form 30 which includes whether the person has abused the child before, you see.”

“They lack training on how to deal with the foster child and what is expected as foster parent, especially their rights and responsibility.”

Sub-category 2.3.6.5: Inadequate monitoring, supervision and support of foster care placements

The DSD (2012:112) acknowledges that the shortage of social workers is a “challenge which leads to foster care backlogs and the inability to render supervision services.” Durand (2007:33) argues that foster parents can be supported in many ways such as regular social work visits, trainings, foster parents supporting each other, to mention a few. The participants agreed that they do not properly support and supervise their cases. As for monitoring, it is apparent that foster parents are not monitored. However, De Villiers (2008:54-55) states that the social worker is required to place children with the appropriate

foster family and ensure that the foster care placement will not further harm/damage the children.

“We don’t normally do foster care supervisions as it has to be done. After you have placed the child in foster care, after six months you have to do a progress report and you have to do supervisions.”

“Our failure as the organisation is the supervision of cases. We don’t do supervision of cases and we don’t monitor these cases. We only monitor closely when the case has been reported, or when we have to review. We don’t have enough time to monitor the whole caseload it is difficult for us to monitor it.”

“Yes, you know I can say if a continuous monitoring by social workers exist, it will help to know that children in foster care are properly cared for and also home visits are helping a lot.”

“I think that is the most need; we don’t have cars, you only do home visit once a week, and the minute you get an opportunity to do home visit, it is when you have to do your reviews and placement of new files. It is not possible for us to do supervisions.”

The social workers’ inability to do foster care supervision, directly links with the lack of manpower and resources such as cars. The researcher observed a sense of frustration in the participants as these factors are out of their control.

Sub-category 2.3.6.6: Inadequate provision for differences between the foster child and foster family during placement

According to Mudavanhu and Schenck (2014: 371), the ecological systems theory is about the environment and its immediate settings shaping the individual’s life. The social work participants pointed out that during the placement of foster children, similarities and

differences between the child and parent are not considered. This creates instability of the foster care placement that in turn leads to conflicts and forcing the children to do things they are not used to. Culture and religious aspects seem not to be thoroughly taken into account as they have resulted in foster parents forcing foster children to follow their belief system.

“Like culture is a problem where the foster child comes from a Christian family and they don’t perform ancestral rituals but now the child is in this family. The foster parent is the aunt and is married into a family that does things differently so the child needs to adapt to ancestors belief.”

“When we speak of the Rasta case, it is the belief system; sometimes we force our belief systems onto the children which causes conflicts.”

“So the problem starts when the child is instructed to follow what is done in the family or (be) expelled. So the child feels he/she has his/her own beliefs, you understand, why he/she should change.”

Culture has an influence on foster parents’ daily decision making and it has an effect on the foster children (De Villiers 2008:60). Further, it is asserted that prospective foster parents’ norms, morals and values need to be considered when social workers take informed decisions regarding the placement of children (Department of Welfare 1998:15; Moaisi 2003:26).

Category 2.3.7: Factors related to other organisations that contribute to neglect and abuse

The findings of this study revealed that police officials appear to be not attending to the cases reported by foster families; instead they see foster care cases as the sole responsibility of social workers. The Information Guide on the Management of Statutory Cases in terms of the Children’s Act (2012:45) states that the police official has a role to play in implementing the Children’s Act. According to the Constitution (South Africa 1996: section 205 (3)), the South African Police Service has to prevent, combat, and investigate crime, to maintain public order, to protect and secure the inhabitants of the Republic and their property, uphold

and enforce the law. The researcher is of the opinion that there is a need for SAPS officials to be empowered about the role of social workers in foster care so that there can be clarity on police officials' role, where required.

“As for other institutions like SAPS, they have this tendency when a child/parent goes to them to report, they ask them whether the child is under foster care or not, you see. If the child is in foster care, normally the case turns and they refer them to us.”

Participants also reported a lack of interdepartmental coordination and teamwork.

“This will make our clients to see that we are working as a team, we are linked to each other and I believe that was going to make the difference...”

There is no interdepartmental coordination that was going to make work easy. The stakeholders lack teamwork which is vital to the work of social workers.

- Sub-theme 2.4: Social workers observation of signs of neglect and abuse

In response to the question “What signs do you pick up that children in foster care might be abused or neglected?” participants revealed how they observed that foster children were neglected or abused.

Category 2.4.1: Observation during contact with the child

Participants were able to observe physical neglect, when the child was not healthy or appeared neglected and behaved with anger or fear. These signs were observed during home or office visits.

Sub-category 2.4.2.1: Neglected appearance and condition of clothes

The social worker participants verbalised that they were able to see that children in foster care were neglected through their appearance. Their appearance often depicts that foster children are treated differently from the foster parents' own children. Pretorius, Kotze and Lodge (in Pretorius et al 2012:77-78) indicate that children who are neglected show physical indicators such as poor hygiene, inappropriate dress for weather conditions and associated physical consequences such as illnesses resulting from being too hot/cold. Literature review indicates that children may appear dirty or smelly with unwashed clothes or with clothes that are not enough for weather conditions (Knowledge and Information Services 2017:4). The following story lines confirm this:

“When you get at home you find the child is not neat, not bathing, with a dirty mouth, like the child is not clean at all. When you compare the child with other children of foster parent you can see huge difference, the biological children of the foster parent are clean, they bath and that... but the foster child....”

“When the child comes scruffy, untidy you see and then you start asking questions why the child is not neat, why the t-shirt is like this, things like that.”

“You can see by school uniform that this one are last year's clothes, shoes are not in a good condition, even the hair of the child and the level of cleanness shows.”

Sub-category 2.4.2.2: Child's physical well-being

Visible facial bruises and scars on the foster children assisted social work participants to see that the foster children were physically abused. The child who is physically abused will have unexplained injuries like burns, bites and bruises, broken bones and/or black eyes (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2019:5; Pretorius et al 2012:77-78). The information from literature is in line with the following story lines:

“Some is physical abuse you will see by scars because there was this child that I was removing with my colleague, the foster child was beaten up by foster parent that was with scars.”

“You will find marks, bruises and....”

“When there is physical abuse you can see that the child is not okay.”

Sub-category 2.4.2.3: Child’s behaviour when with the foster parents

The findings indicated that when there were issues or problems, the social workers were able to observe this during sessions with the foster parent and foster child. The foster children exhibited unsettled behaviour so as to illustrate that things were not in order. This kind of behaviour appeared when the child was interviewed with the foster parent. The following was narrated by the social workers:

“When the child is with the foster parent, he will look frightened, shy, does not want to talk, he will just answer by saying mm, mm, mm to everything you will be saying.”

“The children come with their foster parents for review and is not easy for the foster children to...[talk]. Yes, they polish them for the day, to say okay we are going to the social worker and they make foster children to look clean.”

The literature correlates with the findings of this study. In terms of behavioural and emotional indicators of emotional abuse a child may be unresponsive to interaction with strangers or anxiety (Pretorius et al 2012:77-78). Knowledge and Information Services (2017:9) points out that one of the signs of emotional abuse is when the children “use language, act in a way or know about things that you wouldn’t expect for their age and struggle to control strong emotions or have extreme outbursts”

Sub-category 2.4.2.4: Child's behaviour and revelations when interviewed alone

It is apparent from the findings that foster children are groomed by foster parents on what to say when they enter the social worker's office. The participants shared that in one-on-one sessions with the foster children, they were able to know the truth of what was happening in the foster family. Social workers were able to address problems and challenges that foster children experienced in the foster family and knew if there was abuse by assuring foster children about confidentiality. Some foster children became emotional in the session when talking about certain people. The following story lines were shared by the social workers:

“When you speak to the child in a one-on-one session, it is where you will pick up (problems). The child will tell you what is happening.”

“When the client enters your door you will assure her that whatever we discuss in here will remain confidential, but now she said she can't speak about other things because her foster mother will end up knowing about them. So I can pick up that hence the child was not open about a certain issue, she needs assurance even though you told her about confidentiality...that you might tell her foster parent then she will beat her....”

“...when children come to see me for review their foster parent grooms them, to say what they want the children to say in the session so when the child speaks like a robot you can see that or when she speaks freely. They even say words that are not normally used by children...”

Behavioural and emotional indicators of sexual abuse are that the child may have a fear of a person or place - a sudden fear of a family member, bathroom or closet (Pretorius et al 2012:76-77). The literature warns that behaviours of abuse in children especially in sexual abuse depend on the child's age and the situation (Knowledge and Information Services 2017:7).

Category 2.4.3: Observations during the review process

The review process helps social workers to identify neglect and abuse of foster children. It was obvious from the findings that social workers did not conduct regular visits or write progress reports of foster care placement, unless it was time to review. Mathebula (2012:94) confirms that social workers did not conduct home visits to the foster parents in kinship foster care placements after court placement. It is indicated in the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006: section 156 (3) (a) (i)) that providing a foster placement to a child is subject to supervision services by a social worker.

"In foster care you can't find how many children are neglected, unless you are going to review the cases."

"Through review, I like to do my interview separately with foster parents and foster children, because normally when we interview both of them children normally they get scared to talk about what's happening."

"Immediately the child started to be reserved, you know. Remember the first time you met with the child you build a relationship, the child start to be free to talk to you, immediately when the child visit me starting to claim she/he is okay especially to everything you say."

Category 2.4.4: Reports of possible neglect

From the feedback of participants it seemed that the community and other stakeholders such as SAPS, SASSA and schools assisted to report neglect of foster children. The community members, however, seemed not to be empowered about how and where to report cases of children that were abused. Ward (2011:1) and Child Welfare Information Gateway (2019:4) advise that any person suspecting child abuse or neglect can report.

"Fortunately the security guard was not a criminal, it was when the foster child was taken to the office of the manager, he (the manager) called the nearest Centre, and luckily the child

had my phone numbers and the following morning the Spoornet manager called me that he had a child who was left by her foster parent.”

“Most of the time, when cases are reported by community members, they will be attended.”

“She was raped but I get their cases through police officials.”

“This issue came to us through SASSA, as the child is a scholar of Ben School (not real name).”

3.3.3 Theme 3: Suggestions and implied suggestions to address the neglect and abuse of foster care children

Considering the views of the social work participants, it appears that the foster care placement system in South Africa needs to be reviewed, to cope with and accommodate children in need of care and protection. Meintjies and Van Niekerk (2005:2) are of the view that the large numbers of foster care applications are putting the child protection system of South Africa in jeopardy as it becomes difficult to help children who are in need of services, especially those who are abused and neglected. Kanyane (2015:49-50) points out that the number of orphans the country faces or will face, shows that social welfare services, court capacity and resources are not adequate to support the implementation of foster care. The author further articulates that social workers are overwhelmed by high foster care caseloads and indicates that a number of abused, neglected and exploited children receive poor social work services due to these high caseloads.

On the other hand, Black Sash (2012:2) alludes to the fact that the foster care system was created to cope with approximately 50 000 children, not millions of children in need of income support. De Jager (2011:55) mentions that SA needs sixty six thousand (66 000) social workers, and R44 billion, to execute the Children’s Act no 38 of 2005 successfully. As stated by De Jager (2011:41), the purpose of foster care is to give children substitute care in families especially those who cannot be cared for by their biological parents.

In this theme, social work participants with first hand-information narrated possible solutions to provide better foster care services. These suggested solutions include a change of the foster care system, statistics to play a smaller role, manpower and resources to be increased, a decrease in caseloads, improvement of inter-organisational relationships, provision of training for foster parents and awareness raising within the community.

- Sub-theme 3.1: Foster care system not to be used to alleviate poverty

Research conducted by Ngwabi (2014:60) found that because of high levels of poverty, the majority of foster parents are dependent on the foster care grant. Furthermore, Lombard (2008:26) mentions that government has created a dependency syndrome on the FCG rather than self-reliance. De Jager (2011:59) points out that the danger that one needs to be aware of is that foster care cannot be a poverty alleviating strategy, but needs to focus on child protection. A possible solution tabled by government at the moment is the Social Assistance Amendment Bill which will empower the Minister of Social Development to increase the Child Support Grant so that relatives caring for children whose parents passed away, will obtain a social grant without having to go through the foster care process. This grant will not lapse every two years and will not have to be renewed by a court order (Gungubele 2019).

“It would also be nice if foster care placement is finalised without the foster care grant. We must look at the cases where the foster grant is not necessary so that we can press the idea of children being placed under guardians without the money.”

“It should not be like they are applying for the grant, we must teach the community about the meaning of foster care.”

“Yes, it is the main factor, we are now having many foster care placements because of the grant, two when you visit the family you find that foster child’s needs are not met.”

As indicated in the above story lines, foster parents appear to be using the foster care system as a vehicle to access the foster care grant. The researcher supports the proposed Social

Assistance Amendment Bill that will enable prospective foster parents, especially relatives of orphaned children, when applying for foster care placement to apply for a foster care grant and not necessarily a legal placement for the child.

- Sub-theme 3.2: Statistics to play a lesser role in the assessment of a foster care social workers' performance

A study by Mathebula (2012:8) indicates that social workers appear to focus on the quantity of placements and not the quality of foster care placements. The said author attests that as a social worker, she experienced a challenge of a heavy caseload and she was compelled to apply the “quick fix” approach to place children in alternative care without preparing them (Mathebula 2012:7). The participants with first-hand information highlighted that the DSD is only focusing on statistics, not necessarily quality services. It seems that no attention is paid to the issue of resources and caseload but rather “quantity is pushed over the quality” of foster care services,

“There is a workload with no resources and we are pushing numbers than the quality of work, which is a challenge. We neglect our people because of pushing numbers; if we can provide our people with quality services we won't have problems...”

“It is like we rush to places, because of the caseload, so that we can push what they call stats.”

The problem of the government is that they focus much on the reason that every orphan needs a grant.”

Literature concurs with what was illustrated by social workers. Ngwenya (2011:50) reports that social workers are not utilising social work skills, but they are pushing quantity. The same author is supported by Nziyane (2010:252) who states that social workers are pressured to place orphaned children in foster care and that compromises them (social workers) to not provide optimal social work services, because the focus is on reaching targets at the end of

the month. It is thus the view of the researcher, that foster care is not implemented the way it is supposed to, but only to serve statistics.

- Sub-theme 3.3: Manpower and resources to be increased

From the findings, it is obvious that manpower is needed to provide foster care effectively. Participants shared that without adequate human resources such as social workers, social auxiliary workers and administrative assistance, foster care will not be carried out successfully.

Category 3.3.1: Appointment of more social workers, social auxiliary workers and administrative assistants

It is evident from the findings that without adequate human resources for social services, foster care will not be manageable. There is a need for more social workers and social auxiliary workers to be employed so as to manage foster care:

“This one will always be mentioned, we need social workers.”

“The first thing on my side is caseload, if only organisation can hire more social workers because we are over-worked.”

“It is not possible for us to do supervisions and manpower, we don’t have social auxiliary workers, in our office we have only three social auxiliary workers, in the whole office.”

Participants in the studies by Ngwabi (2014:64) and Ngwenya (2011:61) pointed out that there is a shortage of human resources (social workers) and if more manpower can be employed, caseloads can be shared equally. De Jager (2011:60) points out that in South Africa there are many foster care clients with few social workers, many problems and too little time.

Category 3.3.2: Provision of adequate resources for social workers

Participants narrated that lack of resources hinders them in protecting children from neglect and abuse. It is obvious that if resources can be available, social workers will be able to do foster care effectively:

“It is not something that is always available and I wish we had resources.”

“But how when I have a car once a week which I have to use...for all my cases.”

“So this little resources contribute to neglect and abuse in this manner, we don’t normally do foster care supervisions as it has to be done.”

The literature review endorses what the participants have shared. It is confirmed by the studies of Ngwabi (2014:63) and De Jager (2011:56) that a lack of resources such as social workers, children’s courts, commissioners of child welfare and foster parents, child and youth care centres, computers and printers, coupled together with high caseloads faced by social workers make a significant contribution to the backlog in foster care. It is reported by the above author (De Jager 2011:56) that SA does not have resources to implement the Children’s Act no 38 of 2005 (South Africa 2006). In the study by Kanyane (2015:43), Lucy Jamieson of the Children’s Institute, University of Cape Town, confirmed that courts and social workers have a high load of foster care applicants.

▪ Sub-theme 3.4: Foster care caseloads to be decreased

Participants were struggling with higher caseloads and it became difficult to manage foster care. Social workers suggested that smaller caseloads are allocated per social worker, that the whereabouts of biological fathers are first followed up and that other alternatives to foster care for example adoption and informal kinship care, are considered.

Category 3.4.1: Decrease foster care caseloads by allocating less files

The high caseloads of social workers consume their time and become a struggle to manage properly. From the views of the participants, one can hear that there is no clarity on the exact number of cases that a social worker should ideally have. However, the participants were of the opinion that a smaller foster care caseload allocation will help social workers to render better services.

“I was speaking to another social worker called Nandi (not her real name) I’m sure you will meet her She is from Canada but now she is working with us, she said caseload in Canada is 20. So I’m suggesting that our caseload be decreased. In United Kingdom I heard caseload is 60, so if we have that case load we will be able to reach all the foster children.”

“You know, according to our norms and standards social workers should have more than 60 cases (but)... lower than 100. So that she can monitor each and every foster child.”

“If our caseload decreases, we will be able to do empowerment campaigns in our communities and we will be able to practise our casework, group work and also provide skills to people. In that way we will be doing social work not administrative work of social work or agents of SASSA.”

A study conducted by Ngwenya (2011:93) points out that the Lenasia office had a caseload of 1 500 with eleven social workers and five social auxiliary workers. A research study conducted by De Jager (2011:118) adds by pointing out that about six participants (social workers) in her study had caseloads that ranged between 151 and 200 and one of the participants had a caseload of 300. De Jager (2011:118) noted that the caseloads of foster care per social worker are higher.

Category 3.4.2: Decrease foster care caseloads by being more judicious in deciding fathers are unknown

The research findings indicated that cases where fathers are unknown are more than those of children who lost both parents. It is evident that such cases need special attention and a different approach, because they increase the foster care caseload. The researcher is of the view that there is a need to separate “father unknown cases” in foster care from those where children have lost both parents and that a special approach needs to be employed with these cases.

“...what I have seen in my four years if you can check my caseload about 70% is father unknown. Where are the fathers of these children? You find that the grandmother say 'My daughter was staying in Johannesburg and she came back deceased how will I know the children's father, she was living her own life and I had to bury her and continue looking after her children'.”

“And one other thing, if the issue of father unknown can be stopped, my caseload is going to drop to 10 caseload. I'm sure I have only 10 cases that I know they really are orphans.”

“They have to look after the child and get child support grant, because if you can check many of these children are father unknown. Ninety percent (90%) of my files are father unknown.”

In trying to understand why there are so many unknown fathers in foster care, literature reveals that cultural practices can either help or hamper fathers to get access to their children. A study conducted on teenage fatherhood of 27 black and coloured young fathers in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces in South Africa, found that unmarried teenage fathers, have to pay damages to the family of pregnant girl for them to be present in the lives of their children (Swartz & Bhana 2009:65). Nziyane (2010:219) noted in her study that a lack of contact between the orphaned (foster) children and the extended family members, ended in poor relationships.

Category 3.4.3: Decrease foster care caseloads by considering strategies other than foster care placement for children in need of care

One social work participant postulated that adoption is the answer to decrease foster care caseloads. The participant believes that if foster parents are encouraged to adopt children, this will address the issue of the foster care grant because adoption has no special grant like foster care. Jamieson (2013:103) highlights that foster care can be terminated by considering other permanency plans, one of the options being adoption of the child. In the study by Van der Riet (2009:71-72), one foster parent (participant) preferred adoption as another way to place children. The Children's Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: section 231(1(e))) identifies the foster parent as a person who can adopt a child.

"I think if we try to deviate from foster parent [placements] to adoption, then I think things will be good. Because the minute you adopt a child, it is your child, so it will address that factor of love for money, because adoption has no money."

The researcher concurs with the above social worker that adoption indeed will decrease the high caseload in foster care placements, where foster parents apply for legal placement to access the FCG.

- Sub-theme 3.5: Interdepartmental and inter-organisational relationships to be improved. The importance for organisations and departments to improve their relationship, was highlighted by the findings, as this could build teamwork and link services. Teamwork will further assist DSD clients not to fabricate or use false information to get services.

Category 3.5.1: Improve relationships to demonstrate unity and teamwork to the community

From the findings it seems that interdepartmental and organisational relationships are lacking in the various government departments. A lack of teamwork among the stakeholders that should work hand in hand with the DSD is reported. This shapes the idea that the clients observe that there is no collaboration between the departments and use that to their

advantage. The following story lines show that it is imperative to have improved relationships:

“I think maybe there would be a change if there was a proper relationship with other institutions; maybe there would be a difference. This will make our clients to see that we are working as a team, we are linked to each other and I believe that was going to make the difference.”

“The understanding should be that we are working together as one.”

DSD stakeholders should know about services of the Department (DSD) related to foster care. The Constitution (South Africa 1996: section 41(1), (h)) promotes the principles of co-operation and intergovernmental relations. Governmental institutions and departments should be motivated to interact and co-operate with one another in mutual trust and good faith.

Category 3.5.2: Improve relationships to increase support for social work services

The participants believed that if good relationships could be observed between relevant stakeholders in foster care, it would increase support to social workers. This leads to the idea that stakeholders who provide services related to foster care need to be centralised. All stakeholders providing foster care services or related should be in one place.

“I was going to be able to visit SASSA to enquire about the client’s grants or even in police station we need support.”

“The social worker will also know how to refer the child to SAPS, even the clients cannot play us because if we don’t meet they will easily manipulate us and say I’m from SAPS because they know we are not together but if we are united in the community explaining about our services and how we are linked as stakeholders, they won’t manipulate us.”

In the study by Mathebula (2012:8), the author makes the point that the success of foster care does not depend on the foster parent or institutional care but on well organised preparation done by and the competency of all significant people involved in foster care such as the social workers, relatives, home-based caregivers, community forums and other relevant organisations.

- Sub-theme 3.6: More thorough pre-placement screening of foster parents to be more thorough

Social workers with first-hand information postulated that prospective foster parents need thorough assessments to prevent neglect and abuse of foster children and misuse of the foster care system. Participating social workers in the study by Nziyane (2010:250-251) stated that thorough investigations and screening are needed because it is lacking due to high caseloads. In addition, De Jager (2011:66) advises that foster parents should be motivated to provide care to the foster child during the time of the placement. It is also noted by Mnisi (2015:128) that social workers need to conduct a thorough investigation of the suitability of both the foster parent and foster children (adolescents). The author suggested that social workers should use standardised guidelines for screening placements for families that already have informal arrangements.

“Okay, now it goes back to doing thorough assessment of foster parents. Such parents need to be thoroughly assessed. One of the easiest ways that I saw working for me is that I do family genogram, so family genogram will (identify pattern of abuse)....”

“If we can say when we place a child, we need to do thorough investigation.”

“Our screening should be intensive because now the files are many with return dates and our investigation should be more intensive not just to place.”

It is clear that social work continues to use the ecological systems perspective to assess human behaviour (Zastrow 2013:100). Hepworth et al (2006:18) explain that the ecological systems perspective focuses on the interpersonal system including parent-child, marital, family and kin systems, friends, neighbours, cultural reference group, spiritual belief systems and other members of the social network.

- Sub-theme 3.7: Ensure a better match between foster parents and foster children

It is stated by Teater (2014) that the ecological systems perspective in terms of cultural aspects of the environment involve “values, norms, beliefs, and language that shape the individual’s views, perspectives, and expectations”. According to the participants some foster children are incompatible with their foster family. Religion came out as an aspect which proves that children do not match the family, as conflicts occurred that lead to emotional abuse. The researcher is of the view that better and thorough assessment is crucial, specifically relating to religion to balance the life of the foster child and avoid unnecessary abuse. De Jager (2011:69) states that social workers should take into consideration finer details to ensure a good match and successful foster care placement. De Villiers (2008:59) advises that social workers should place foster children with foster parents that have similar cultural backgrounds, ages, religion and home language. On the other hand, Jamieson (2013:97) argues that a foster child can be placed with someone with a different religion, culture and linguistic background if there is an existing attachment between the child and the prospective foster parent.

“We check [the] environment the child (in which) will be staying. We check if the child is fitting well in the family and we also consider the culture diversity because sometimes you might bring a challenge between foster child and foster parent so it is one of the things we check. That’s where friction came from, and the foster parents wanted to instil their cultural beliefs/religion to the foster children. It becomes a problem which led to abuse of emotions...If we can say when we place a child, we need to do thorough investigation, if you are aware, you cannot put a Muslim child into Christian family, because that child is not going to adjust. So we need to try to place a child where there are similarities so that the child cannot miss the previous life he was (in) before the placement.”

“Like culture is problem where the foster child comes from Christian family and they don’t perform ancestral rituals but now the child is in this family.”

“When we speak of Rasta case, it is the belief system. Sometimes we force our belief systems on the children which causes conflicts.”

▪ Sub-theme 3.8: Implement pre-and post-placement parenting training

It is important to furnish foster parents with parenting training before and after the placement. This seems to be useful for the support of foster parents during the placement. This training should include various topics including what foster care entails, financial management, managing the child’s behaviour and communicating with the foster child.

Category 3.8.1: Importance of training

From the story lines it seems that many foster parents appear to have not received parenting training before fostering the children and even after the child was placed. It is evident that such situations create opportunities for children to be neglected and abused. De Jager (2011:64) is of the opinion that foster parents need empowerment, so that they understand how the foster care system works. After prospective foster parents have been recruited, it is imperative for them to receive information about what it means to be a foster carer (Triseliotis, Sellick & Short 1995:42). However, Delpont, Roux and Rankin (2008:314) reveal that social workers in most cases are unable to train foster parents, due to heavy caseloads and not having enough time.

“I think...before we place a foster child with foster parent we could also do parenting skills with parents.”

“Our foster parents need extensive trainings before children are placed with them.”

“Like for example the issue of parenting training, she never had it, the first thing that I can recommend is that parents should receive parental trainings before placement.”

Category 3.8.2: Include various topics in the training

Participants suggested that the training of foster parents should include what foster care entails, financial management, management of the foster child's behaviour and the relationship and communication with the foster child.

Sub-category 3.8.2.1: What foster care is/entails

According to Webb (2011:234), foster care is a short-term arrangement that provides care for the child whose parents are unable to take care of the child because of great strain. Mnisi (2015:2) describes foster care as when a child has been placed with a person who is not the biological parent or guardian. De Jager (2011: 41) explains the purpose of foster care as to give substitute care in a family set up for children who are unable to be cared for by their biological parents. The story lines stress the importance of foster parents and even other role players, for example teachers being trained about what foster care really is and what foster parents' rights and responsibilities are:

“So they get guidelines of foster care, about their roles and responsibility. She knows her parental...rights...If they can receive parental training around those issues I think it will minimise the issue of abuse and neglect of foster children, that's my suggestion.”

“Also a social worker's responsibility, (is) to assist foster parents to understand the powers that are given to them by court.”

“The group work leads to training foster parents, training of community, training of school teachers, even nowadays teachers, need the training because they ask the children about the grant.”

Literature review supports the findings of this study. Durand (2007:2) notes that generally foster parents need training and support for them to parent the children in their care properly. As indicated by the social work participants, the researcher concludes that foster parents need extensive parenting training and a programme of foster care orientation.

Sub-category 3.8.2.2: Foster care financial management

It is evident from the findings of the study that foster parents lack financial management skills. Parenting training in this regard remains crucial for foster parents. Participants suggested that foster parents need to be trained about budgeting, so they can manage the grant well for the benefit of the foster child. On the other hand, the DSD (2012:112) noted that one of the challenges of foster parents is financial status; when a foster parent has no other means of support it becomes difficult for foster parents to manage the needs of the whole family with a FCG.

“When I talk of parental trainings there are various topics that it covers such (as)....budget.”

“On mismanagement of funds I can suggest that if foster parents can get intensive parental training, very, very important so they can be aware.”

“We have to teach our people about the dangers of loan sharks (Mashonisa), and how it’s hampering or how negatively it is affecting the money of the foster child.”

The FCG seems to be not serving its purpose as foster parents appear to lack knowledge about how it should be properly utilised. De Jager (2011:64) is of the opinion that the most significant part in pre-placement training is to prepare foster parents for caring for a foster child. Guidelines for Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa (DSD 2009:35) advises that the foster parent, together with the social worker, must draw up an individualised learning plan that includes budgeting, basic counselling skills, parenting skills, child care and succession planning.

Sub-category 3.8.2.3: Management of the foster child’s behaviour

According to participants, foster parents lack training on the behaviour of foster children. Foster parents resort to abusing foster children in the name of discipline; this proves that

they do not know how to handle foster children. Foster parents often have to deal with children who display different behaviour challenges (DSD 2012:111).

“When I talk of parental trainings there are various topics..., behaviour management of the child...”

“People need to be taught the difference between discipline and abuse because to them is the same thing.”

“The other one is training, if we can provide our foster parents training and allow them self-determination not to be something that you are forced to do. Train a person, make her aware of importance of foster care, again I think if we try to deviate from foster parent to adoption, then I think things will be good.”

The study by Farmer and Moyers (2008:63) states that forty five percent of the foster parents were not coping with adolescent foster children, especially managing their behaviours, as the foster parents lacked parenting skills. In addition, Mnisi (2011:82) explains that foster parents have the responsibility to raise the foster child as their own and are obliged to create a warm relationship with the children, also to give full emotional and physical care to allow the children to feel at home without disturbing their current relationship.

Sub-category 3.8.2.4: Relationship and communication with the foster child

From the viewpoints of the participants, foster parents do not know how to communicate and build relationships with their foster children. The foster children are often classified as “orphans” due to being treated differently, since some foster parents do not want to set boundaries because they feel sorry for the children. Foster parents, however, have certain roles and responsibilities towards the foster children and need to treat foster children the same as other children in the household (DSD 2012:112).

“When I talk of parental trainings there are various topics that it covers such (as)... relationship, budget, communication and how to communicate with the child.”

“Foster parents handle the children as orphans because the child has experienced the loss, fear and that the child is fragile to them. When the child requests something, immediately he/she gets it. Then he grows up with that mentality of getting everything that he wants... There are foster parents that when they come from the pay point, they give the foster child the grant.”

“I have cases where relatives are not willing to care for the child, but the minute the money is involved and the foster placement is finalised you then get many complaints and concerns from relatives about the child.”

According to Swart, Esser and Opperman (2009:23), it is crucial for foster parents to maintain a “sound relationship” with foster children, for the reason that the foster children see them as role models since they (foster children) trust their foster parents as the only people who provide care for them. As stated by Thomas and Philpot (2009:32-33), foster care is about the relationship between the parent and foster child, their feelings and the situation in which they find themselves. According to Thomas (2005:116), the main aim of foster care is to provide a normal family life to the foster child. Children in foster care are not supposed to be discriminated against or classified as “orphans” or treated differently but to feel at home in the foster family.

The ecological systems perspective allows social workers to conduct a holistic assessment of what is happening in the children’s exposure to their environment (Fadel 2015:54-55). The ecological systems perspective highlights that individuals, including children, are viewed as resulting from the interaction between risk and protective factors at individual, family, community, cultural, and societal levels (DePanfilis & Salus 2003:12; Department of Health 2000:12).

- Sub-theme 3.9 Social workers to provide foster parents with more support after placement

According to the narratives of participants, it is apparent that social workers do not provide sufficient support to foster parents. The Guidelines for Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa (DSD 2009:58), however, indicate that the aim of providing supervision and aftercare services is to empower and support the “foster family, foster child and biological family or family of origin through regular supervision”.

“Which is part of the cases I removed children, now when you go through the file of the child to check what kind of support the foster parent had, you will find nothing since she started.”

“We are not indicating to foster parent that she will still encounter other challenges when the child’s age changes from 10-14 years, hence foster parents get frustrated with the children who smoke Nyaope (drugs). We don’t give foster parents the programmes that they are supposed to get.”

“We don’t normally do foster care supervision as it has to be done. After you have placed the child in foster care, after six month you have to do a progress report and you have to do supervisions.”

Participants acknowledged that they did not conduct supervision services to foster families as is prescribed by literature. De Jager (2011:73) points out that when children are ultimately placed in foster care, the following step is to provide post-placement training and support to the foster family. In addition, De Villiers (2008:69) concurs with De Jager that the first goal of services delivered to foster parents during the placement is to prepare the children for the new family and supervise the foster care placement. It is thus essential that social workers should prioritise support to foster parents and families after placement.

- Sub-theme 3.10 Social workers to work with and support foster children

From the findings it appears that foster children do not have a platform that social workers create for them to teach and empower them. There is indeed a need to support foster children so that they can be able to communicate openly with their foster family and understand their

rights as foster children. The DSD (2012:112) stresses that it is the social worker's role and responsibility to work to meet the needs of the foster child and also to capacitate and support the foster parent to fulfil his/her responsibilities. According to Nziyane (2010:250), most social workers struggle to perform their work because of their high caseload. On the other hand, Mathebula (2012:98-99), encourages social workers to involve foster children when implementing supervision after foster care placement to identify and solve problems and challenges that arise.

“The foster children don't know how to have open communication.”

Participants mentioned that group work as method is not applied in foster care as it should:

“We have to conduct group work with children that have the same problems and then get them together you know, so we fit them with ideas.”

“We need to also create time (for) group sessions with foster children...”

- Sub-theme 3.11: Foster care supervision to include exit programmes for foster children and foster parents

From the feedback of the participants, it seems there are no exit programmes in place for foster children when they exit the foster care system. The findings of Ngwabi (2014:67) are in line with the feedback of participants, that there is no exit strategy for foster children especially when they complete their secondary school or drop out of school and the grant stops. The author further found that there is a need to empower foster children with practical skills, give scholarships or expose them to self-income generating projects. Triegaardt and Kaseke (2010:65) point out that it is crucial to empower people who receive grants and strengthen poor people to reduce grant dependency on the state. On the other hand, the Guidelines for Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa (DSD 2009:66-67) indicate that foster children should be prepared for independent living by including them in programmes such as counselling, mentorship programmes, developmental programmes,

social life skills, vocational training, employment opportunities, access to bursary schemes and internship programmes as well as scholarship programmes. The following story lines are part of the findings:

“Foster parents...we need to make them aware that the grant will stop and don't expect to bring the child to us saying we must see what to do with the child.”

“We fail by leaving foster children after they have exited the foster care system at the age of 18 years. We don't have an exit programme, we don't prepare our kids that when you are 18 years our relationship is going to end. Exit programme, should be started when the child is 16 years, until he reaches 18 years so he can know that our relationship will end.”

- Sub-theme 3.12 Social workers to involve biological family members as support for the foster child where possible

Participants indicated that the involvement of maternal and paternal families of foster children can help the placement to work for the child and foster parent. This sub-theme also links with Category 3.4.2 referring to the role of the unknown father. As indicated by participants, the whereabouts of unknown fathers needs to be thoroughly investigated so that both maternal and paternal biological family members can be part of the placement to offer support to the foster child.

“After the placement of foster children, contact both families if they exist, explain to them the importance of supporting the foster child. Because some of the placements are that biological parents of foster children were divorced, so the families had differences, so the foster children live with things that happened to their biological mother and father.”

“We have lot of... unknown fathers cases because I don't think we are doing enough to... what can I say, to look for this unknown fathers.”

“If with other stakeholders there could be a law that is amended like I liked the law of Home Affairs of involving fathers in the birth certificate. It assists in cases of father unknown in foster care whereby only mother is deceased.”

Research conducted by Nziyane (2010:210-213) indicated that maternal and paternal families come into conflict, fighting for children if the biological parents of the children were not married or lobola was not paid. The literature reports that if lobola is paid, the child will belong to the father’s family and if not, the child will remain belonging to the mother’s family (State of South Africa’s fathers 2018:15). It thus seems that the non-payment of lobola or not being married to the mother of a child, can be a barrier for men or paternal families to be involved in foster children’s lives.

- Sub-theme 3.13 Communities to be informed on various topics

Community members appear to have limited knowledge about what and where to report abuse and neglect. The notion of Ubuntu needs to be revived because community members seem to have forgotten about it. The researcher experienced difficulty in finding adequate literature to substantiate this sub-theme.

Category 3.13.1: What and where to report neglect and abuse

The findings indicate that there is a lack of knowledge in terms of where to report child neglect and abuse by the community members, in particular after hours. Clarification of roles is needed, especially to understand the responsibility of the police when it comes to cases of child abuse. There is a need to have crisis social workers and the collaboration of SAPS, the community and social workers. De Villiers (2008:39) points out that there are two ways of reporting neglect and /or abuse of children, namely mandatory and voluntary reporting.

“Okay, you know what I picked up I saw where I stay people always come to me they don’t know who to call, they don’t know...when they call police station on 10111, they are being taken from pillar to post. They don’t know the specific division that deals with children specifically in the police station and as for social workers they don’t know who to contact

after hours to report neglect or abuse. What I'm saying is that such information is not shared that much with the community."

Literature postulates that people should be trained on how to report child abuse and neglect, and that there is a need for stricter laws and more workers (Chamberlin 2014:292).

Category 3.13.2: Revive the Ubuntu notion that children belong in the community

The participants were of the opinion that the Ubuntu notion does not exist in the community anymore. As a result, there are negative consequences as community members are no longer helping one another to raise children. As stated by Foster (2004:67) "traditionally, there is no such thing as an orphan in Africa as relatives such as aunts and uncles have almost always taken on the parenting of orphaned children". There is a need to renew and remind society about Ubuntu as this will help in caring for children. The following story lines confirm this opinion:

"To teach them that the child is not raised by one parent but by the whole society, school, church and they should not be afraid to share their problems, like when you have a child who use drugs (nyaope)."]

"Whereby your child is my child...that your family is my family. Working together we can raise the children, there is no orphan child. What I'm trying to explain here is that long time ago there was no a child called orphan, there was no starving people because if you don't have maize meal you were to go to your neighbour and borrow it, when did you see this happening in nowadays? If you don't have a sugar you were to get it and when she bought the sugar she will remember you and bring it back, this is not happening."

▪ Sub-theme 3.14: Community work programmes form part of a holistic foster care system

Findings indicated that community work as a method of social work is not applied by social workers in foster care. Participants pointed out that backlogs and caseloads have diverted their work as there is the gap of not using group work and community work. De Villiers (2008:76) indicates that community work can be used to strengthen parenting capacity. The author further states that group work as a method of social work can help foster parents understand the different dynamics of effective parenting roles. There is evidence from the study of De Jager (2011:132) that community work is applied sometimes or not used at all. Social workers do not have the time to do community work and group work as the following narratives attest:

“The issue of backlog has deviate our work, we no longer do group work and community work. As for community work you will be addressing an issue in holistic approach rather than on individual, in that way we will be able to invite different stakeholders so we can see were we lack and can strengthen.”

“This people need to be educated more about foster care, and we don’t have time for group work but the use of community work will help because of our caseload.”

“The use of community work will help because of our caseload. I have be trying to see how I can conduct group work and community work.”

▪ Sub-theme 3.15: Integrate more social and economic development programmes into foster care services

It is evident from what the participants shared that unemployment and grant dependency contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children. The social work participants advanced that cooperative projects can be of assistance to foster parents who are unemployed and dependent on an FCG. This emerged as a solution to minimise or eliminate neglect and abuse of foster children:

“Another issue I suggest that the Department of Social Development initiate cooperative projects for foster parents, this will beat two things: One, unemployment and two, the foster parents will no longer depend on foster child grant. The mismanagement of grant will decrease, in turn my workload will be low in a sense that foster parents will be self-reliant now and they can decide to start their own business like ‘I no longer need assistance from social workers there and there. I can help myself, actually I can stand on my own.’”

“The training can help a lot and starting of cooperative projects, those are the only suggestion I can make.”

A study by Ngwabi (2014:75) concluded that FCG dependency and lack of empowerment projects are caused by an unclear understanding of the roles and duties of foster care social workers and that they should also function as developmental social workers. However, Nziyane (2010:258) noted from participants’ suggestions that poverty relief strategies should include provision of food parcels, social grants, clothes, and housing for orphaned children. An article by Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017:165) suggests that statutory social workers are not supposed to only provide foster care services from a remedial perspective, but to align the services with the developmental approach that includes a socio-economic development focus.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, it was confirmed by the social work participants that neglect and abuse of foster children are occurring in the foster families. Firstly, the tasks of social workers in foster care were discussed. Factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children were categorised and discussed according to factors relating to the foster parents, the foster child, the relationship between the foster parent and child, the family of the foster child, the community, social work foster care services and the relationship with stakeholder organisations.

The social work participants provided suggestions and implied suggestions from a social work perspective to address the neglect and abuse of foster care children. The suggestions

included that the foster care system be changed; statistics play a smaller role in the assessment of social workers; and manpower and resources be increased. It was also suggested that foster care caseloads be decreased; interdepartmental and inter-organisational relationships be improved; a better match between foster parents and foster children be ensured; as well as that pre- and post- placement parental training and support be provided. Lastly, suggestions were made that community work programmes form part of a holistic foster care system and more social and economic development programmes be integrated with foster care services.

The following chapter outlines the conclusions and recommendations emerging from the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The first chapter set out the plan of how the study was to be conducted. The second chapter fully outlined the details of how research methodology was employed to meet the goals and objectives of the research study. The third chapter explained the findings of the study, presenting a literature review with themes, sub-themes, categories and sub-categories. In the fourth chapter, the researcher provides a summary and draws conclusions on the process of research and on the findings of the study. Limitations of the study are highlighted and recommendations are made concerning the qualitative research procedures, the findings of the research study and future study.

4.2 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The qualitative research process followed is discussed first, followed by the findings per theme.

4.2.1 Summary and conclusions relating to the qualitative research process

The goals of this research were to develop a comprehensive and thorough understanding from the frame of reference of social workers of the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children and to proffer suggestions to address the neglect and abuse of foster care children. A qualitative approach was employed utilising the exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design (cf. Creswell 2009:3-5; Grove et al 2013:632; Wiid & Diggens 2013:56). Participants were engaged to interpret the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children. The researcher was able to reach an in-depth understanding of the topic from the opinions and perceptions of the participants as they could provide first-hand information. The participants were understood in their own context and from the experience of their own world through the application of the contextual design.

The researcher identified all social workers working at the DSD and one NGO (SFCS) that are rendering foster care services in the area of Botshabelo Free State Province, South Africa as the population with valuable information for the study. The non-probability sampling method was used, by applying the purposive sampling technique, which provided appropriate and adequate data regarding the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children (cf. Denscombe 2010:25; Dudley 2011:145). Based on data saturation, the researcher identified a sample of 13 participants, one being a social worker from an NGO and twelve from government (DSD). The participants were residing both in Botshabelo and Bloemfontein (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 2).

The researcher utilised semi-structured interviews to gather information from the social work participants (cf. Denscombe 2010:175-178; De Vos et al 2011:348). In preparation, the interview guide was compiled and a pilot study was employed to evaluate the interview guide. Two social workers were included in the pilot study, the third one was included in the actual study because of the meaningful information the participant provided. Based on the feedback received during the pilot study, amendments were made to the initial interview guide (see Chapter 2 section 2.3.4.3).

The eight steps of the data coding method by Tesch (in Creswell 2009:186) were used to analyse the data. Themes emerged from the information collected from participating social workers and were compared with available literature (see Chapter 3). This study was undertaken from an ecological systems perspective. The researcher was able to use the theoretical framework of the ecological system perspective as it awarded the researcher the opportunity to collect relevant information and interpret the data. The ecological systems perspective is a holistic approach that perceives people in the context of their environment and stresses the constant interactions with and reciprocal influence of their environment (Maguire 2002:90).

The researcher made sure of the validity and credibility of the study by conducting data verification and applying verification methods described by Maree (2007:113-115), namely verifying raw data; keeping notes of research decisions taken; stakeholder checks; and avoiding generalisation. Data verification was followed and applied. From the onset to the

end of the research study, the researcher adhered to ethical principles by making sure of anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent.

The goals of the study were:

- To develop an in-depth understanding from the perspective of social workers of the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children.
- To proffer suggestions from the perspective of social workers on how to address neglect and abuse of foster care children.

The researcher was able to achieve the following objectives of the study:

- To explore the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children, as well as suggestions that can be made to address the neglect and abuse of foster care children from the perspective of social workers. This objective link with theme 2 and 3 of the study.
- To describe the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children, as well as suggestions that can be made to address the neglect and abuse of foster care children from the perspective of social workers. This objective link with theme 3 of the study.
- To come up with conclusions and make recommendations on the factors that contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children and suggestions that can be made to address this abuse and neglect.

Participants were able to provide the researcher with relevant information.

4.2.2 Summary and conclusions relating to the research findings

In the next section, the researcher summarises the findings and conclusions. This includes the researcher's observations of the participants. Three themes were identified during the study:

- Social workers' tasks in relation to foster care

- Neglect and abuse of children in foster care
- Suggestions and implied suggestions to address neglect and abuse of children in foster care.

4.2.2.1 Theme 1: Social workers' tasks in relation to foster care

In foster care placements, social workers have different roles to play and procedures that need to be followed (DSD 2009:20). In the organisations included in the sample (DSD and SFCE) duties are assigned according to sections. Specific social workers are assigned to open a file and then refer the foster care cases to the area social workers rendering foster care services. This includes assessing potential foster parents. For the purpose of this study the work "intake" is not used to refer to opening of the case, but to the assessing of potential foster parents.

Social workers use various methods to assess the suitability of foster parents. From the findings it was clear that home visits are used as a method to investigate and collect relevant data from the prospective foster parent and the foster child and to confirm the home circumstances. Social workers rely on background checks such as doing a police clearance for criminal records and consulting the National Child Protection Register relating to child abuse and assault cases. Interviews are also conducted with relatives and neighbours to conclude the investigations and verify the information. The social workers need to be trained to do thorough investigations, including assessment of prospective foster parents (cf. Ngwenya 2011:66).

Various aspects regarding prospective foster parents are assessed to ensure according to the Children's Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: Section 182) (2) (a-d) that the prospective foster parent will be able and willing to take care of the child. It is essential to conduct assessment of potential foster parent in order to understand their motivation to apply for foster care placement. Some parents have good intentions, while others may prioritise the receipt of a FCG. The physical environment in which children in foster care will be staying was considered to be important. Participants related that they check with foster parents if they have knowledge about their responsibilities as foster parents. Participants viewed the assessment of the existing relationship between the children in foster

care and the foster parent as important. This is done specifically in kinship foster care before the social worker can finalise the placement. The other aspects that are considered, is to check if the foster parent is emotionally, cognitively and educationally fit to parent the child.

The foster child's background is also investigated to determine if the child is an orphan or not. Participants worked mostly with orphaned children. In cases where the father of a foster child is unknown, organisations such as churches are used as resources in an effort to locate the father. An interesting part of the study was that participants narrated that prospective foster parents often lie about the whereabouts of the foster child's father when initially applying for the placement. They are of the opinion that not enough effort is made to locate the fathers of potential foster children.

Following the initial investigation, the social worker compiles and submits a comprehensive report to court, because the foster care arrangement is a court-ordered process (De Jager 2011:69; Jamieson 2013:95). Participants verbalised during the study that several documents, where relevant, are needed for placement of the child, including the documents such as the death certificate of both birth parents of the foster child, the birth certificate of the child (under 18 years), ID book of the prospective foster parent and an affidavit that the child is in his/her care. Furthermore the Form 30 outcome and a police clearance certificate are part of the required documents.

After a court order is issued, participants indicated that they provide supervision. In the case where foster children are neglected or abused social workers resort to either transferring or removing the child. However, the social worker first involves foster parents by providing them with parenting skills or resolving the problem. The court order has to be reviewed every two years and progress reports were mentioned as helpful to check if the placement is working. During review social workers change or continue with the foster care placement. Participants shared that the foster children can be transferred to another foster parent or temporary places of safety if the current foster parent dies or the placement is not working.

Participants identified reasons for the removal or transfer of a foster child as relating to the child, the foster parent and the biological parent. Foster children sometimes exhibit behaviour problems which foster parents struggle to manage. In addition, there are also reasons for a change in the care situation relating to foster parents. Participants shared that the mismanagement of grants; neglect or abuse of the foster child by the foster parent; the life style of foster parents; foster parents abandoning the child; as well as the death of the foster parent/s are reasons for placement changes. Lastly, the social workers found that there are reasons for change in the care situation relating to the biological parent. It was found that foster parents lie about the whereabouts of the foster child's father when they start with foster care placement. Due to ignorance about their rights, unmarried fathers are often denied access to the child. The biological father later comes to the fore and claims his rights to the child (cf. Ngwabi 2014:60; Ngwenya 2011:41).

The ecological systems perspective considers person-environment behaviour as “proactive, inseparable and multi systemic” (Greene 2008:206). It is stated by Zastrow (2013:100) that social work continues to use the ecological systems perspective to assess human behaviour.

4.2.2.3 Theme 2: Neglect and abuse of foster children

The researcher wanted to gain an understanding of whether the foster children are neglected and/or abused by foster families. It was noted that there are a number of foster children that are neglected and abused, but the social workers had no statistical register to account for such cases. Some participants reported a higher number of cases of neglect and abuse of the foster children, while others identified a smaller number of such cases from their caseloads. The findings reported that about two hundred forty four (244) cases of neglect and abuse of foster children were reported during the year 2016/ 2017 in Botshabelo Township.

The participants reported various types of neglect and abuse that foster children experience in the foster family. As stated by the social work participants, foster children experienced physical neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. These alleged incidences of abuse and neglect were supported by evidence from the participants and literature. The findings from the study for example, revealed that one foster child was raped fifty two (52) times by one perpetrator (cf. Jooste 2010:10; Nziyane, 2010:216).

In terms of social workers' perceptions of factors that contribute to neglect and abuse of children in foster care a number of factors were highlighted, including factors relating to the foster parents; the foster child; the foster parent-foster child relationship; the child's family; the community; social work foster care services; and other organisations such as SAPS and SASSA.

However, misuse of the foster care grant appeared as one of the main contributing factors, because foster parents experience poverty and unemployment (cf. Dhludhlu & Lombard 2017:166). It was reported that there is a critical challenge whenever foster parents lack the means of financial support and rely on the FCG, as the grant will not be adequate to accommodate the whole family (DSD 2012:112). From findings, foster parents were reported to be unskilled or unable to parent foster children due to foster parents not knowing how to discipline foster children. Foster parents' own experiences of abuse contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children (cf. Chamberlin 2014:291). It was indicated that foster children sometimes join gangster groups, which has a negative influence on the behaviour of the foster child and the relationship between the foster child and the parent. Findings showed that foster parents are lacking understanding of foster care and the foster child's needs.

Factors within the foster parent-foster child relationship were highlighted as contributing to neglect and abuse. Foster children being neglected or abused by foster parents lack bonding and a sense of belonging with foster parents. On the other hand, the interference of relatives of the foster child creates conflicts and problems in foster care placements. There are also factors related to the community, as the community does not report neglect and abuse of foster children.

Participants also identified factors relating to social workers that contribute to foster children being neglected and abused, such as too high foster care caseloads per social worker, shortage of manpower and too few resources to do foster care effectively. The findings

supported reports in the literature that the foster care system in South Africa is not coping (cf. Kanyane 2015:48; Ngwabi 2014:63). Furthermore, the study pointed out that foster care placements forced by the situation and not based on the personal choice of foster parents, is another contributing factor to neglect and abuse of foster children.

From the findings it is clear that foster parents are not assessed and trained so they can deal with challenges that foster children may raise (cf. Carter 2013:66). It is indicated that police officials appear to not attend to the cases reported by foster families, they see foster care cases as the sole responsibility of social workers. The SAPS has a role to play in implementing the Children's Act (Draft Information Guide on the Management of Statutory Cases in Terms of the Children's Act 2012:45).

Social workers were able to identify abuse and neglect of foster children by observing physical neglect, physical abuse, the child's behaviour when with the foster parents, and the child's behaviour and revelations when interviewed alone (cf. Child Welfare Information Gateway 2019:5; Pretorius et al 2012:77-78). The findings also indicated that social workers during the review process observed that foster children are neglected or abused. Social workers are helped by the community and stakeholders such as SAPS, SASSA and schools to report neglect and abuse of foster children.

It is mentioned by Lewis and Greene (2009:240), as well as Ambrosino et al (2012: 46), that the ecological systems perspective proposes a positive view of people's capacities and empowers them to develop strength that improves their social functioning. Hepworth et al (2006:18) explain that the ecological systems perspective requires focusing on the individual and his/her total context by stating that, an assessment from the ecological systems perspective, requires knowledge of the diverse system involved in interaction between human beings and their environment.

4.2.2.4 Theme 3: Suggestions and implied suggestions to address the neglect and abuse of children in foster care

The findings in this theme suggest that the foster care system needs to be reviewed to cope with and accommodate children in need of care and protection. Foster care cannot be a poverty alleviating strategy, but needs to focus on child protection. According to participants, the foster care system seems to be used or abused to alleviate poverty, as foster parents appear to be applying for an FCG and not necessarily foster care placement (cf. Dhludhlu & Lombard 2017:172; Ngwabi 2014:60)

The participating social workers reported that the DSD focuses on numbers, not the quality of foster care services. It was indicated that statistics should not be considered the only way to assess foster care social workers (cf. Dhludhlu & Lombard 2017:174). However, their unrealistically high caseloads impede social workers from rendering quality services. The findings stated that there is a need to appoint more social workers, social auxiliary workers and administrative assistants. Participants also identified a lack of resources as a hindrance to supervise or monitor the foster care cases. It was noted that foster care entails a lot of work and it needs sufficient resources to be manageable. The same conclusion can thus be made as Mathebula (2012:8), that quantity and not quality of services are being pushed, despite a lack of human and other resources.

Although there was no clarity on the exact number of cases that a social worker should ideally have, the findings reported that foster care caseloads need to decrease per social worker to be more manageable. Participants narrated that high caseloads consume their time to manage foster care properly. Social workers see themselves as agents of SASSA or administrative social workers. Participants were of the opinion that some cases could be managed not only by using the foster care system. For example, adoption was suggested as an alternative for children in need of care and protection. It was apparent that foster parents are not encouraged to adopt foster children. The “father unknown” cases in foster care appeared to be more than those where both parents are deceased. The social work participants were not convinced that foster children’s fathers are always unknown to the family. However, there are reasons that cause fathers to “appear” unknown to the maternal families such as divorce, unmarried fathers and conflict between families of the foster child.

Participants suggested that these cases need special attention and a different approach because they increase the foster care caseload.

Participants saw the improvement of relationships between families, departments, organisations, as well as the community and teamwork as crucial for successful foster care placements (cf. Mathebula 2012:8). Social workers were convinced that if there are good interdepartmental and inter-organisational relationships, foster parents will not see an opportunity to take advantage of foster care services. It was shared that improved relationships between all stakeholders will increase support for social workers. Participants also suggested that screening of prospective foster parents must be thorough.

Social worker participants were convinced that a better match between the foster child and the foster parent would help to avoid unnecessary abuse (cf. De Jager 2011:69; De Villiers 2008:59). Religion was identified as an aspect which often leads to children not matching the foster family, as conflicts around religious rituals and expectations can lead to emotional abuse. Participants indicated that social workers should consider similarities between the foster parent and the foster child before placement.

The findings further indicated that foster parents do not receive adequate parenting training before children are placed with them. This parenting training should include various topics including what foster care entails, financial management, managing the child's behaviour and communicating with the foster child.

It was also apparent that support is needed after the placement to both the foster child and the foster parent. There seems to be no exit programmes for foster children and the foster parents. It emerged from participants that they do not have exit programmes in place which leave foster children having no way forward should they drop out of school or complete their schooling career.

It was noted by participants that community members lack knowledge about where to report the neglect and abuse of foster children. The community members should be informed about the role of police officials when it comes to cases of neglect and abuse of children. As for social workers, after hour crisis workers could be appointed. Participants noted that the Ubuntu notion that children belong to the community has changed and needs to be revived. The absence of Ubuntu has negatively influenced the quality of care provided to children within the community and this concept should be revived.

Social work participants attested that community work and group work as methods of social work are not applied as the focus is on the backlog within foster care. The use of community work appeared as the relevant method to educate the community about foster care. It was clear that community work forms part of a holistic foster care system. It was suggested that more social and economic development programmes need to be combined with foster care services. Participants mentioned that DSD should initiate cooperative projects specifically for foster parents, as this will eliminate unemployment and foster parents would no longer depend on the FCG. This conclusion is in line with the suggestion of Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017:165) that foster care social workers are not supposed to provide only foster care services as a remedy but, to align the services with the developmental approach that includes a socio-economic development focus.

It is stated by Rasheed, Rasheed and Marley (2011:36) that the ecological systems perspective, which gives the framework for an individual in the family “could be understood within the context of transactions with a variety of biological, psychological and historical environments”. Safety and Risk Assessment of Children in the Field of Child Protection Services (2012:39) explains that the ecological systems perspective mainly focuses on satisfying the basic needs of a human being and mastering developmental tasks that need adequate resources in the environment and good interaction between the person and the environment. Hepworth et al (2006:18) indicate that interaction of the individual and the environment includes the subsystem of individual (biophysical, cognitive, emotional, behavioural, motivation); interpersonal system (parent-child, marital, family, kin, friends, neighbours, cultural reference group, spiritual belief system and other members of the social network, organisations, institutions and communities); and also the physical environment

(housing, neighbourhood environment, buildings, other artificial creations, water, weather and climate).

4.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the lack of adequate time and resources researchers are not able to study all of the population they wish to study (Yegidis and Weinbach 2002:181). This study focused on the neglect and abuse of foster children. The dissertation is limited because of a limited scope. Only one group of participants (social workers) responsible for foster care placement formed part of the study. It is stated that it is not possible to conduct interviews with all people in the population so it is imperative to identify a sample (Wiid and Diggins 2013:181). Therefore, the results of this study were limited by its small sample size. The topic of the study can be further investigated in future as the study was exploratory in nature.

4.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the following section, the researcher points out the recommendations relating to the research methodology employed to reach to the findings of study. Recommendations will also be made on the findings of the study. The recommendations can assist professionals who work in foster care to improve and strengthen service delivery.

4.4.1 Recommendations pertaining to the qualitative research process

Researcher conducted the research study using the qualitative approach, which is applied and suggested in behavioural science studies. The approach corresponded with the aims and objectives of the study. Applying the exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design allowed the researcher to collect relevant information from the social workers working with foster care. The recommendation is that the qualitative research approach together with an exploratory, descriptive and contextual design is useful and could be applied in research studies and related topics.

In this study, purposive sampling was applied which allowed the researcher to reach the social work participants. The participants were able to provide the researcher with first-hand

information for reaching the goals of the study. As a result, semi-structured interviews utilising an interview guide is recommended. Furthermore, a pilot study is recommended as a trial run as this helped the researcher to practise the questions in the interview guide and to discern whether information obtained was valuable or not.

The eight steps of the data coding process of Tesch, as explained by Creswell (2009:186) with data verifications as suggested by Maree (2007:113-115), is highly recommended. The methods of data verification ensured the trustworthiness of the research study. It is stated by Flick (2006:45) that the essence of ethics in research is to control the relationship between the research study and the people, as well as the fields studied. In this regard, it is recommended that all researchers take into consideration research ethics and apply them.

The following section discusses the recommendations regarding the findings of the study.

4.4.2 Recommendations pertaining to the findings of the study

This section outlines the recommendations of the findings of the study and the discussion is reflecting on the data collected.

4.4.2.1 Review the foster care system to minimise neglect and abuse of foster children

It is clear from the findings that the foster care system needs to be reviewed to minimise or stop neglect and abuse of foster children. Foster care is not implemented in the way it is supposed to be. The findings stated some reasons why the foster care system does not function according to its norms and standards. Foster care is seen as a poverty alleviating strategy and a method to manage orphans in kinship, not as a means of child protection (cf. Dhludhlu & Lombard 2017:172; Jamieson et al 2017:108). The foster care grant appears to be the motivation why prospective foster parents want foster children to be in their care. As a result, the researcher recommends that new foster parents be thoroughly screened. It is also important that social workers use alternative programmes and resources to relieve poverty. The DSD saw a need to amend the Children's Amendment Bill 2 and currently it is busy with the Social Assistance Amendment Bill to improve foster care (Vorster 2019). The researcher is of the view that the amendments are important and needed to address the foster care crisis in SA.

Furthermore, this study revealed that statistics are used as tool to assess foster care social workers' performance. This emerged as a factor encouraging neglect and abuse of foster children because social workers are "chasing numbers", and do not prioritise quality foster care services. It is recommended that foster care should not be used to serve as statistics for government, but quality services, including proper supervision services, be provided to foster care clients. As stated in Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017:176), DSD should stop quantifying foster care services and put focus on improving the quality of services.

There is a lack of manpower (social workers and social auxiliary workers) and limited resources to execute foster care effectively. The researcher recommends that employers should provide an environment that is conducive for employees to render quality services. This means that sufficient numbers of social workers and social auxiliary workers should be employed, and that adequate resources, for example cars, computers, printers and copiers, should be available to social workers. It is further recommended that crisis social workers who are known to the community, with toll free numbers to report neglect and abuse of children, are made available. The DSD Minister Lindiwe Zulu's budget vote speech, indicated that about 595 graduate social workers were appointed on contract in an effort to address other issues that need social work services (Bhengu 2019). The Minister further stressed that there is a need for more social workers. Accordingly, more needs to be done to address foster care and the researcher endorses the efforts by DSD.

It is evident that government departments for example DSD, the police, schools, SASSA and organisations such as NGOs rendering foster care services, need to improve their relationship. The study concluded that there is no unity and teamwork between government departments and organisations. For this reason, it is recommended that stakeholders should form a forum that will improve their relationship and raise awareness about the purpose of foster care and facilitate a well-functioning system.

4.4.2.2 Suggestions to improve foster care services

The findings of the study recognise that foster children are neglected and/or abused in foster families. However, no statistics are kept on the number of children who are neglected and/or abused, or children moved from foster care placements due to neglect and abuse. It is recommended that these essential statistics be required as part of the DSD reporting so that proper assessment can be made of the national extent of this problem.

Social work participants highlighted a number of challenges that hindered them from providing quality services in foster care and they also mentioned a number of suggestions that can assist to minimise or eliminate neglect and abuse of foster children in foster families.

- **Decrease foster care caseloads**

It emerged that foster care caseloads need to be decreased because social workers are not managing foster care. Participants believed that allocating fewer files will help to better manage foster care. It is recommended that the national DSD should provide a guideline to social work supervisors and social workers on the number of cases/files one social worker should manage. Foster care caseloads can be decreased by considering strategies other than foster care placement. One participant mentioned adoption as a way of minimising foster care placement. This suggestion links to the opinion of Msibi and Shabadin (2014:4-5), who mention the importance of permanency planning as a principle of foster care placement. Permanency planning as explained by these authors is to allow children to be under the care of one of the family members and to ensure that the children grow up within stable family relationships (within the context of family).

- **Improve screening of foster parents**

From the findings, it is apparent that there is a need to improve the screening of foster parents. When social workers conduct reviews of foster care placements, it was found that children are neglected and abused and that FCGs are misused. This is an indication that prospective foster parents are not adequately screened. The use of Form 30 and a police clearance as tools to check if a prospective foster parent has not abused or neglected a child, is not sufficient. It is therefore recommended that the DSD should develop an additional tool to screen prospective foster parents to avoid problems during the placement. It is quoted by

the Children's Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007 (South Africa 2008: section 182) that persons who qualify to be trusted with the protection of children must be a fit and proper person; who will become a foster parent to the child, being a person who has the ability to give a child a conducive place that is safe for the child's development.

- **Improve compatibility between foster child and foster parent**

The findings also indicated that foster children and the foster parents need to be compatible. The religion of the foster family was indicated as important to match that of the foster child share so that conflicts cannot arise. Therefore, it is recommended that social workers should match foster children with foster parents considering age, race, religion, and culture, and linguistic background to avoid future problems.

- **Involve both maternal and paternal families in foster care placement**

It is apparent from the findings that many cases of foster care are those of "father unknown". It was found that foster parents, especially in kinship foster care, often lie about the whereabouts of the biological father of the foster children. This is often the case when the deceased mother of the child was not married to the father. It is therefore recommended that "father unknown" cases be approached differently to that of when both parents are deceased. Both biological families of the foster children should be involved before the placement is finalised and additional efforts should be made to locate unknown fathers.

- **Provide more programmes for foster children and foster parents**

Social work participants suggested that social workers can implement more programmes to better manage foster care. In this regard, the recommendations that follow are made based on the findings of the study, as well as recommendations made by other researchers.

Pre-fostering support programmes

A pre-fostering programme was suggested as indicated in the study by Mnisi (2015:132) and a gauging procedure with the objective of preparing both the foster parent and the family for

the new member. This programme is also relevant and crucial for the foster child as preparations are made for him or her to join the new family. It was noted in the study that some of the foster children are struggling to adjust in the new foster family. A pre-fostering support programme can help the foster child understand the whole foster care process. A method of social work like group work can be used or individual sessions to empower the foster child, foster parent and foster family members.

Loss and trauma programmes

The findings revealed that many foster children and foster parents have experienced loss. In foster care, loss is experienced in the form of losing biological parents or loved ones. It is apparent from the findings that foster parents or foster children did not receive any bereavement counselling after losing their loved ones. Mnisi (2015:132) suggests a programme of bereavement for foster children as emotions that are not attended to may emerge later in the form of negative or disruptive behaviour.

Pre- and post-placement parenting training programmes

From the findings of the study, it is evident that social workers do not provide parenting training to foster parents before or after the placement. A parenting training programme in the form of group work or individual sessions is suggested as important. The programme should include topics such as what foster care is/entails, reasons and motivation for fostering, foster care financial management, management of the foster child's behaviour, relationship and communication with the foster child. The foster parents and the foster children need detailed education on what foster care entails.

Awareness campaigns

The study indicated that communities do not know what and where to report neglect and abuse of children. The findings also pointed out that foster children join gangster groups. Foster children need awareness to know about the consequences of crime through awareness campaigns in schools. However, community awareness campaigns can also be conducted during parents' meetings in schools, churches, community meetings and , integrated community outreach programmes with SASSA to educate community members about how

and where to report abuse and neglect of children. Community members need to be reminded of Ubuntu so that everyone can be on board about the issue relating to neglect and abuse of foster children.

Community work programmes

The research study found that community work programmes are needed to form part of a holistic foster care system. Social workers can initiate projects to assist identified foster parents or foster families to sustain their families. In this way dependency on the FCG will decrease. The foster parents will be encouraged not to rely on the FCG, but to stand up and work for themselves. On the other hand, government can contribute funding to such projects facilitated by social workers.

Exit programmes for foster children

Participants reported that there are no exit programmes in place for foster children when they exit the foster care system. Social workers need to have programmes in place that help foster children to be independent when they exit foster care. The exit programmes should entail linking foster children to bursary schemes and internship programmes. Foster children who struggle to pass their matric should be linked with colleges that will accept them to do qualifications on the NQF level two up to four, which is equivalent to matric. Foster children who do not cope in the mainstream schools or who fail to pass their grades/matric should be prepared and assisted by identifying their strengths to find a job and become independent.

In the next section suggestions will be made regarding further research to be undertaken on this topic.

4.4.3 Recommendations pertaining to further studies

Further research studies can be undertaken on the experiences of persons who were/are in foster care, in particular those who are/were neglected or abused. It is important to hear the voices of foster children who experience/d neglect and abuse in foster care. It became clear from the study that many problems are experienced in foster care placements ranging from foster children with behaviour problems to neglect and abuse. Such research will create

awareness of people who experienced foster care and social workers will gain more knowledge about foster care when placing children and they will also be able to develop and place foster families in relevant programmes.

Another research question to be explored from the perspective of foster parents is whether foster care is working for the caregivers. The experience of the foster parents may help to understand what it is like to be a foster parent and to identify areas where foster parents need support. Furthermore, the perceptions of foster parents will address their understanding of neglect and abuse of foster children. Social workers will be awarded the opportunity to better understand foster parents, improve selection criteria, better match foster children with foster parents and improve supervision and support services.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The goals of this study as indicated in Chapter 1, namely to obtain a comprehensive and thorough understanding of the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children from the perspective of social workers and to proffer suggestions to address neglect and abuse of foster care children were reached. Factors that contribute to neglect and abuse of foster children were identified within the foster child and the foster parent. The mismanagement of the FCG, management of the foster child's behaviour and relationship, as well as communication with the foster child were identified as the main factors contributing to neglect and abuse of foster children. It was found and confirmed that neglect and abuse of foster children is occurring in foster families. It is important to review the South African foster care system, make more resources available for the benefit of service delivery, stop chasing numbers and ensure the rendering of quality and accountable foster care services.

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ADDENDA

Addendum A

Letter of request to conduct research study to the Department of Social Development

1992 H Section
Botshabelo
9781
03 March 2017

Department of Social Development (District Manager/Social Work Manager)
31 Blue sreet
FDC building
Botshabelo
9781

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Mr Masha Rankwe Reuben is a registered social worker employed by Setshabelo Family and Child Services in Botshabelo. He is a part-time Master's Student with the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa. In fulfilling the requirement of the Master's Degree, he has to undertake a research project and will be focusing on the topic of factors that contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children in Botshabelo Township: social workers' perspectives and suggestions. The gist of the study is to explore (identify) and describe factors that contribute to neglect and abuse of foster children. In this regard, he is expected to interview social workers in Botshabelo.

Mr Masha will conduct interviews with the social workers in their offices on dates and at times suitable for the participants. He will only require access from participants to their offices as well as their time to respond to the research questions set for the purpose of this study and they will be expected to sign an informed consent form to participate voluntarily in the study. It is Mr Masha's responsibility to explain to the participants the purpose of the study; to ensure that the identity of each participant as well as the information shared by participants is kept strictly confidential; and to ensure that the research findings are used only for the purpose of the study. The researcher will verify findings with participants and will give feedback on the outcome of the study.

It is requested that permission be granted to conduct this study in your organisation and to interview social workers.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated

Yours faithfully

Mr Masha R.R (Researcher)

Addendum B

Letter of request to conduct research study to Setshabelo Family and Child Services (NGO)

1992 H Section

Botshabelo

9781

03 March 2017

Director: Setshabelo Family and Child Services
Po Box 2011
Botshabelo
9781

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Mr Masha Rankwe Reuben is a registered Social Worker employed by Setshabelo Family and Child Services in Botshabelo. He is a part-time Master's student with the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa. In fulfilling the requirements of the Master's Degree, he has to undertake a research project and will be focusing on the topic of factors that contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children in Botshabelo Township: social workers' perspectives and suggestions. The gist of the study is to explore (identify) and describe factors that contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children. In this regard, he is expected to interview social workers in Botshabelo.

Mr Masha will conduct interviews with the social workers in their offices on dates and time suitable for the participants. He will only require access from participants to their offices as well as their time to respond to the research questions set for the purpose of this study and they will be expected to sign an informed consent to participate voluntarily in the study. Mr Masha's responsibility is to explain to the participants the purpose of the study; to ensure that the identity of each participant as well as the information shared with participants is kept confidential; and to ensure that the research findings are used only for the purpose of the study. The researcher will verify findings with participants and will give feedback on the outcome of the study.

It is requested that permission be granted to conduct the study in your organisation and to interview social workers.

Your cooperation is highly appreciated
Yours faithfully

Mr Masha R.R (Researcher)

Addendum C

PREAMBLE TO INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Dear Colleague

I, Rankwe Reuben Masha the undersigned, am a social worker in the service of Setshabelo Family and Child Services in Botshabelo Free State Province, and also a part-time master's student with the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa. In fulfilment of requirements for the master's degree, I have to undertake a research project and have consequently decided to focus on the following research topic: factors that contribute to the neglect and abuse of foster children in Botshabelo Township: social workers' perspectives and suggestions.

In view of the fact that you are well-informed about the topic, I hereby approach you with the request to participate in the study. For you to decide whether or not to participate in this 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 will entail (i.e. what you will be asked/or what you will be requested 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).

Aim and need for the study

The aim of the study is to develop an in-depth understanding from the perspectives of social workers of the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children and the suggestions that can be made to address neglect and abuse of foster children. Should you agree to participate, you could be requested to participate in an interview that will be conducted at a convenient place (i.e. your office) the duration will be 45 minutes. After recording the participants' gender, the following questions will be asked social workers rendering foster care services:

- How long have you been working as a social worker?
- How long have you been working with foster care?
- Describe your role in relation to foster care placements.
- What is your caseload of foster care placements?

- How many cases of neglect and abuse of foster care children by their foster parents have you encountered during the last year? Discuss the type of neglect and/or abuse you encountered.
 - What in your perspective are the factors contributing to neglect and abuse of foster children? Factors relating to: Subsystem of individual child and parent/s (biophysical, cognitive, emotional, behavioural, motivation)
 - Interpersonal system (parent-child, marital, family, kin, friends, neighbours, cultural reference group, spiritual belief system and other members of social network)
 - Organisation, institutions and communities
 - The physical environment (housing, neighbourhood environment, buildings, other artificial creations, water, weather and climate)
- What suggestions can you make from a social work perspective to address the neglect and abuse of foster care children, referring to each of the factors identified?

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. You will be approached to read the transcripts and findings to verify the findings. Please note that participation in the research is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part in the research. Your decision to participate, or not to participate, will not affect you in any way now or in the future and you will incur no penalty and/or loss to which you may otherwise be entitled. Should you agree to participate and sign the information and informed consent document herewith, as proof of your willingness to participate, please note that you are not signing your rights away. If you agree to take part, you have the right to change your mind at any time during the study. You are free to withdraw this consent and discontinue participation without any loss of benefits. However, if you do withdraw from the study, you would be requested to grant me an opportunity to engage in an informal discussion with you so that the research partnership that was established can be terminated in an orderly manner. As the researcher, I also have the right to dismiss you from the study without regard to your consent if you fail to follow the instructions or if the information you have to divulge is emotionally sensitive and upsets you to such an extent that it hinders you from functioning physically and emotionally in a proper manner. Furthermore, if participating in the study at any time jeopardises your safety in any way, you will be dismissed.

Should I conclude that the information you have shared left you feeling emotionally upset, or perturbed, 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, you can contact these numbers 072 698 9170/073 987 8156.

Please note that this study has been approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at Unisa. Without the approval of this committee, the study cannot be conducted. Should you have any questions and queries not sufficiently addressed by me as the researcher, you are more than welcome to contact the Chairperson of the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at Unisa. His contact details are as follows: Prof AH (Nicky) Alpaslan, telephone number: 012 429 6739, or email 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

Signature of researcher

Contact details: (051 531 9001) Cell: 072 698 9170)

Email: mapopped@yahoo.com/41860705@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Addendum D

INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE NEGLECT AND ABUSE OF FOSTER CHILDREN: SOCIAL WORKERS' PERSPECTIVES AND SUGGESTIONS.

REFERENCE NUMBER: 41860705

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/RESEARCHER: RANKWE REUBEN MASHA

ADDRESS: 1992 H SECTION

BOTSAHBELO

9781

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER:

(☎): 051 531 9001

(☎): 072 698 9170

<p>DECLARATION BY OR ON BEHALF OF THE PARTICIPANT: I, THE UNDERSIGNED, _____ (name), [ID No: _____] the participant or in my capacity as _____ of the participant [ID No _____] of _____ (address)</p> <p>A. HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS:</p> <p>1. I/the participant is invited to participate in the above research project which is being undertaken by (name) _____ of the Department of Social Work in the School of Social Science and Humanities at the University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.</p>	<p>Initials</p>
<p>1. The following aspects have been explained to me/the participant:</p> <p>2.1 Aim: The investigator(s)/researcher(s) is/are studying Factors contributing to neglect and abuse of foster children: social workers' perspectives and suggestions.</p> <p>The information will be used to Develop an in-depth understanding from the perspectives of social workers of the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children and</p>	<p>Initial</p>

<p>recommendations will be made to help social workers and foster families experiencing neglect and abuse of foster children.</p>	
<p>2.2 I understand that</p> <p>It is the researcher's right to dismiss me from his study without considering my consent provided I fail to follow the instructions or if the information I share is sensitive and makes me angry to such an extent that it disturbs me from functioning well emotionally and physically. Again, if participating in the study puts my life in danger, I will be dismissed.</p>	
<p>2.3 Risks:</p> <p>I will have to provide information that may be regarded as confidential by the other participants.</p>	Initial
<p>Possible benefits: As a result of my participation in this study</p> <p>The researcher will develop an in-depth understanding from the perspectives of social workers of the factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children and contribution to the social work profession to develop correct and appropriate intervention programmes for preventing neglect and abuse of foster children.</p>	Initial
<p>Confidentiality: My identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description or scientific publications by the investigators/researchers.</p>	Initial
<p>Access to findings: Any new information/benefit that develops during the course of the study will be shared with me.</p>	Initial
<p>Voluntary participation/refusal/discontinuation: My participation is voluntary. My decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect me now or in the future.</p>	Initials

<p>3. The information above was explained to me/the participant by _____ (name of relevant person) in Afrikaans/English/Sotho/Xhosa/Zulu/other _____ (indicate other language) and I am in command of this language/it was translated to me satisfactorily by _____ (name of the translator). I was given the opportunity to ask questions and all these questions were answered satisfactorily.</p>	Initial
<p>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.</p>	Initial
<p>5. Participation in this study will not result in any additional cost to me.</p>	Initial
<p>B. I HEREBY CONSENT VOLUNTARILY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ABOVE PROJECT.</p> <p>Signed/confirmed at _____ on _____ 20__</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Signature or right thumbprint of participant</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Signature of witness</p>	

Addendum E

Confirmation of a local person who will debrief participants



Setshabelo Family & Child Services

Reg NO: 135-492 NPO

Address: 2461 Section H, P.O. Box 2011, Botshabelo, 9781

Tel: 051 531 9001, **Fax:** 086 552 7189, **Email:** info@sasfcs.org.za

Setshabelo Family and Child services

Po Box 2011

Botshabelo

9781

Tell: 051 531 9001

Cell: 082 502 5899

27 September 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This serves to confirm that I will provide counselling where needed to participants of research that will be conducted by Rankwe Reuben Masha of factors that contribute to abuse and neglect of foster children in Botshabelo Township: service providers' perspectives and suggestions.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Sekoboto Keabetsoe Portia, BSW (UNISA)

Signature:

SETSHABELO FAMILY & CHILD SERVICES
Reg No: 135 - 492 NPO
27 -09- 2016
2461 SECTION H Botshabelo • 9781
Tel: 051 531 9001
Practice No:.....

Addendum F

Permission from DSD



social development

Department of
Social Development
FREE STATE PROVINCE

To: All Social Workers

31 Blue Street

FDC Building

Botshabelo

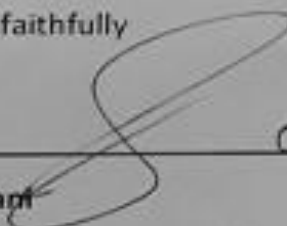
Dear Colleagues

Re: Study Research of Mr Macha

Please take note that Mr. Macha who is doing a Master's degree with UNISA has been given permission to conduct a study (research) within our office.

Your co-operation will be highly appreciated in this regard.

Yours faithfully


V.S. Sanj

Acting Manager

Botshabelo Office

05/06/2017



Addendum G

Permission from NGO



K.P SEKOBOTO

P.O BOX 2011

BOTSAHBELO

9781

04 April 2017

MASHA RANKWE REUBEN

P.O BOX 1116

SEKHUKHUNE

1124

Re: Permission to conduct research

Permission is hereby granted to conduct interviews with the Social Workers of Setshabelo Family and Child Services.

Kindly, share the outcome of the research with our office so as to improve service delivery.

Hope the above will be helpful

Regards

Sekoboto K.P

Executive Director



Addendum H

Editorial Certificate

*Margaret Grobbelaar
589 Opstal Street
The Willows Pretoria 0041
Tel: (012) 807 1249
E Mail: mwmrg@iafrica.com*

To whom it may concern

31 December 2019

Editorial Certificate

This certificate serves to state that I have edited various theses for Master's and PhD students for a number of years as well as other research reports and articles. In past years I have edited dissertations and theses for students studying at UNISA, University of the Free State, University of Pretoria, University of the Western Cape and the University of Technology, Pretoria. I was born in the United Kingdom and English is my home language.

I have edited Rankwe Reuben Masha's MSW thesis entitled: Factors contributing to the neglect and abuse of foster children: Social workers' perceptions and experiences. This entailed editing the language, making sure it was correct and clear, querying aspects that were unclear, correcting grammar, spelling and punctuation. Layout was also considered and corrected, as needed. The author's content was not altered but amended to ensure clarity and consistency

Whilst I have edited the document to the best of my ability, it is the responsibility of the student to decide whether or not to implement my suggestions and to implement them correctly.

Yours sincerely



M Grobbelaar