EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF CARING FOR ADOLESCENT FOSTER CHILDREN: DEVELOPING POST-PLACEMENT GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled "**EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF CARING FOR ADOLESCENT FOSTER CHILDREN: DEVELOPING POST-PLACEMENT GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION"** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and this work has not been submitted before for a degree at any other institution.

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SIGNATURE

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DATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late father, Nyangane Albert Khoza who instilled education in me, education was of value to him though he did not know how to read and write.

ABSTRACT

The study examined the challenges of caring for adolescent foster children post-foster placement with the intention to develop guidelines for social work intervention. The research approach of the study was qualitative and various research designs, namely: explorative, descriptive, contextual and phenomenological research designs were used. Non-probability purposive, methods were used to obtain twenty-five participants from various parts of Sedibeng District in Gauteng Province comprises of Emfuleni local Municipality (from areas such as Lakeside, Ironside, Sebokeng and Evaton), and Midvaal Local Municipality from areas such as Sicelo Shiceka, Silahluwe and Meyerton Farms). The study made use of both face-to-face semi-structured interviews and focus group as data collection methods.

This study emphasized the challenges encountered by foster parents when raising adolescent foster children. These challenges include lack of parenting skill and training, drug dependence, dynamics of adolescent stage, traumatic events, insufficient supervision by social workers, breakdown of the relationship between foster parent and foster child, and children's behavioural problems. Amongst these challenges, the findings reveal that parenting incapacity is the main reason for the challenges faced by foster parents.

The findings revealed that social workers failed to conduct supervision and monitoring foster care placement due to lack of resources, limited time allocated for each case, excessive caseloads that they experience in the foster care system. Participants pointed out that most children display behavioural problems due to lack of support by the social workers after placement. The findings showed that social workers should provide support to foster parents in the form of parenting training to strengthen their knowledge in managing the behavioural problems encountered when caring for adolescent foster children. Furthermore, they should coordinate the services offered by diverse role-players to foster a collaborative approach to promote positive change within foster families. The other key finding of the study was that the community does have a key role in influencing the behaviour of both foster parents and the children placed in their care.

Keywords: Foster care, foster parents, adolescent foster children, social workers

NKOMISO

Ndzavisiso lowu wu kambele swihlawulekisi swa ku hlayisiwa ka vana lava wundliwaka va vakondlo-a-ndzi-dyi endzhaku ka ku vekiwa eka ndhawu ya vuwundli hi xikongomelo xa ku hluvukisa swiletelo swa mphalalo wa tisoxaliweka. Endlelo ra ndzavisiso a ri ra risima naswona ku tirhisiwile tidizayini ta ndzavisiso to hambanahambana ku nga, tidizayini ra ndzavisiso wo valanga, to hlamusela hi ku hlawulekisa, ta ximbangu na ntivavukona. Maendlelo yo sampula, lama nga na xikongomelo ma mipimo leyi nga riki ya muhulahula, lama vanhu va avanyisiwaka hi mitlawa leyitsongo na ku va yo kongomisa eka mutivi un'wana ma tirhisiwile ku kuma vatekaxiave va makumentlhanu kusuka eka swiphemu swo hambanahambana swa Xifundzatsongo xa Sedibeng lexi nga eka Xifundzakulu xa Gauteng lexi vumbiwaka hi Masipala wa Miganga wa Emfuleni (kusuka eka tindhawu to tanihi Lakeside, Ironside, Sebokeng na Evaton), na Masipala wa Miganga wa Midvaal kusuka eka tindhawu to tanihi Sicelo Shiceka, Silahluwe na Mapurasi ya Meyerton). Tiinthavhiyu leti nga na xivumbekohafuto to va mi langutanile na ntlawankongomo swi tirhisiwile tanihi maendlelo ya nhlengeleto wa switiviwa.

Ndzavisiso lowu wu tshikelele mitlhontlho leyi ku hlanganiweke na yona hi vatswari vo wundla loko ku kurisiwa vana vo wundliwa va vakondlo-a-ndzi-dyi. Mitlhontlho leyi yi katsa mpfumaleko wa xikili xo hletela tanihi mutswari na vuleteri, vutshemberi eka swidzidziharisi, swihlawulekisi swa xiteji xa vakondlo-a-ndzi-dyi, swiendleko swa xihluku, vulanguteri lebyi nga ringanelangiki bya tisoxaliweka, ku fa ka vuxaka exikarhi ka vatswari vo wundla na n'wana wo wundliwa, na swiphiqo swa matikhomelo swa vana. Exikarhi ka mitlhontlho leyi, swikumiwa leswi swi paluxa leswaku nkavuswikoti wo hletela tanihi mutswari hi wona xivangelokulu xa mitlhontlho leyi ku langutaniwaka na yona hi vatswari vo wundla.

Swikumiwa swi paluxe leswaku tisoxaliweka ti hluleke ku endla vulanguteri na ku vekiwa eka ndhawu ya nhlayiso wa vuwundli hikwalaho ka mpfumaleko wa swipfuno, nkarhi wo tsongahala lowu averiweke kheyisi yin'wana na yin'wana, na tilodi ta kheyisi to tala kutlula mpimo leti va hlanganaka na tona eka sisiteme ya nhlayiso wa vuwundli. Vatekaxiave va kombise leswaku vana vanyingi va kombisa swiphiqo swa matikhomelo hikwalaho ka mpfumaleko wa nseketelo hi tisoxaliweka endzhaku ka ku vekiwa eka ndhawu leyi.

Swikumiwa swi kombe leswaku tisoxaliweka ti fanele ku nyika nseketelo wa vatswari vo wundla hi xivumbeko xa vuleteri byo hletela tanihi mutswari ku tiyisa vutivi bya vona eka ku lawula swiphiqo swa matikhomelo leswi ku hlanganiwaka na swona loko ku hayisiwa vana vo wundliwa va vakondlo-a-ndzi-dyi. Ku yisa emahlweni, va fanele ku kondletela vukorhokeri lebyi nyikiwaka vatlangaxiave vo hambana ku kondlela endlelo ro tirhisana ku kondletela ku cinca lokunene endzeni ka mindyangu ya vuwundli.

Maritokulu: Nhlayiso wa vuwundli, vatswari vo wundla, vana vo wundli wa vakondlo-a-ndzi-dyi, tisoxaliweka

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CHAPTER 1
GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1   GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

This chapter outlines the general orientation of the thesis. The main intention of the study was to explore the challenges encountered by foster parents in caring for adolescent foster children as well as to develop post-placement guidelines for social work intervention in this regard. An overview of the study is presented in the introduction below. The research problem, questions and objectives of the study, research method, ethical consideration, definition of key terms of the study and conclusion on various chapters of the thesis are also presented in the discussion below.

1.1.1   Introduction

Every country, depending on its level of social and economic development, its priorities, strategies and willingness to see and meet its needs will identify, does analyse, develop and take action to minimize its social problems. Foster care has been described in various ways and means worldwide even though it conveys the same impression of protecting and nurturing children in a healthy family setting. A sacrifice kind of placement may be referred to as foster care kinship, non-kinship, cluster type, relief care, emergency fostering, short-term foster care, intermediate, long term foster care depending on the place or country where the placement has been made.

Every child in South Africa has the right to have a family or to be in some form of an alternative care as outlined in Section 28 of the Constitution as well as in the Children's Act 38 of 2005. Foster care in South Africa is considered to be an important part of alternative care for children in need of care and protection (Goemans, Buisman, van Geel & Vedder, 2020:663). Research shows that the total number of orphans in South Africa ranges between 3.7 and 5.2 million (Koyana & Khanya, 2019:1). These children are either in the foster care system and/or waiting for adoption.

The study aimed to develop post-placement guidelines for social work intervention in order to address the challenges encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children in Sedibeng District. In the current study a social worker will be regarded as a professional person registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978 (Children's Act 38 of 2005) while adolescent means a person in the developmental stage between puberty and adulthood (Shpiegel (2015:7). Social workers in the Department of Social Development, as the drivers of foster care, are obligated to ensure that foster parents do provide efficient care to the foster children through adequate screening and supervision (Cater & Breda, 2016:209). In South Africa, most orphans who lost their parents due to HIV/AIDS are placed with extended family members. These family members are often the grandparents or elder members. This is because in most instances these are the only surviving family members and/or the only ones who can provide some form of financial support (Masha & Botha, 2021:509; Koyane & Khanye, 2019:1). Most of these elderly foster parents have no formal education and employment and as such depend on social assistance grant from the Government to care for their grandchildren (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017:166).

The researcher herein is of the view that foster care grant is meant for poverty alleviation as opposed to being some kind of income generation or promotion of sustainable livelihoods on the part of beneficiaries.
According to Mampane & Ross (2017:3), given the financial and health status of the elderly foster parents who are entrusted with caring for orphaned children, they may not be in position to provide for the emotional needs of these children especially as they reach their adolescent stages. Naicker (2021:361) argues that it is important to determine the financial circumstances of foster parents before placing orphaned children under their care. These foster parents should be in a sound financial position to offer support and care for the adolescent foster children. Foster care should not be seen as some form of poverty alleviation on the part of foster parents but should always be about the much-needed love, care and protection of the orphaned children.

It is also worth noting that the elderly foster parents do also deserve to be supported. To this end, Msebenzi (2017:34) asserts that not much support is given to this category of foster parents from the social workers in order to fulfil their parenting role. Frimpong-

Manso *et al.,* (2020:1) found that foster parents experienced challenges such as stigma, financial constraints, and emotional difficulties as a result of caring for adolescent foster children.

These have an impact on the provision of physical and psychological support for adolescent foster children with behavioural challenges although they are entitled to foster care grants that support their financial status in performing their nurturing role.

The study conducted by Mampane and Ross (2017:2) establishes that the South African government should care and protect foster children and the same government has entrusted this obligation to the court (Department of Justice) which depends on the designated social workers (DSW's) to monitor foster care placement. The shortage of social workers, high caseloads and the lack of parenting training have created a massive impact on the foster care system as DSWs are rushing for numbers (quantity) and leave vulnerable children with little supervision (Masha & Botha, 2021:508). These features contribute to the abuse and neglect of adolescent foster children. Inevitably, this does have an influence in the behavioural challenges experienced by these children from time to time. According to Masha and Botha (2021: 501) DSWs only get to know about these when there is either an urgent case reported or when the two-year order has already expired. The researcher is of the view that the performance evaluation criteria of DSWs are grounded on quantity (the number of cases conducted) rather than quality (the impact of the services rendered) and this made DSWs feel demoralised and fail to render professional services to protect the adolescent foster children. In other words, the caseload of DSWs is determined by the number of cases that they have finalised rather than on the amount of work and time spent on such cases (Naicker, 2021: 341).

Foster care is regarded as a method of providing family life through love, care, support, and protection for vulnerable children as stated in Section 181 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Koyana & Khanye, 2019:1). DWS's dealing with foster care system encounters problems in linking foster care assessment, placement, supervision, socio-economic and parenting programme due to the high caseloads, lack of supervision of social workers, lack of resources, inadequate knowledge and skills (Cater & van Breda, 2016:210, Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017:173). Since DSWs and the Children's Court in South Africa have little capacity to deal with the foster care backlog, especially foster

care reviews, the legality of the placement has become compromised and as such put vulnerable children at risk (Mampane and Ross, 2017:2).

The shortage of social workers constitutes a huge strain in the implementation of the Children's Act particularly in the foster care system (South Africa Parliament Monitoring Group, 2019:1; Msebenzi, 2018:31). DSWs are obliged to focus on administrative work such as review of foster care grant and tend to neglect the psychological needs of the adolescent foster children due to the massive administrative workloads that they have (Mampane & Ross, 2017:1; Masha & Botha, 2021:508). This may result in high levels of distress amongst DSWs working with foster care placement and supervision because they fail to use their professional knowledge and skills in meeting the emotional needs of the adolescent foster children. Section 150 (3) of the Children' Act emphasizes that during foster care screening, if a DSW finds that the child does not need care and protection, he/she should take action in assisting such a child with counselling, mediation, prevention and early intervention programme, family reconstruction, rehabilitation, behaviour modification and problem-solving. DSWs generally fail to provide such services due to the bulk of cases they faced within their workplace.

Some of the children who have undergone traumatic events such as abuse in the care of their loved ones including natural parents and foster parents were reported to show behavioural problems when they reach adolescents (Ntshongwana & Tanga, 2018:15). Goemans *et al*., *(*2020:680*)* argued that adolescent foster children are often characterised by internalizing and externalizing behaviour due to various placement changes or different parenting styles which result in a high level of stress to foster parents. Goemans *et al*., (2020) further assert that there is a relationship between foster parents' stress and adolescent foster children's mental health because the kind of placement and positive parenting are predictors of the pro-social behaviour of adolescent foster children. This may mean that adolescent foster children learn positive and pro-social behaviour through observing their foster parents because they regard them as role models.

Mampane and Ross (2017:3) contend that most foster parents are unable to deal with the behavioural challenges displayed by adolescent foster children who have

experienced complex physical, emotional, health, and educational needs, emanating from the trauma they went through. More often, foster parents become confused about how to manage the behaviour of adolescent foster children due to a lack of knowledge and skills (Masha & Botha, 2021:511). Mosimege (2017:20) emphasizes that foster parents should be supported through parenting training that will strengthen their skills and knowledge to deal with issues they might face during foster care placement. Therefore, the researcher finds it appropriate to explore the experiences of the foster parents who cared for adolescent foster children to develop a guideline for social work intervention.

Further, foster care is characterised by the continuous transfer of foster children from one position of care to another due to abuse, neglect, abandonment, death of primary caregivers, and failure of biological families to take necessary care of the children (Masha & Botha, 2021:511). These multiple placements have a detrimental impact on foster children displaying behavioural problems that foster parents fail to manage (Mashiloane, 2016:38). These have been intensified by foster parents' lack of support and knowledge on the developmental needs of such children. The capacitation of foster parents with proper parenting knowledge and skills will ensure that the foster children placed in their care are exposed to a variety of parenting strategies. Foster parents described the management of behavioural problems displayed by adolescent foster children as exhausting, traumatic and relentless. They further stated that this has an adverse effect on their general well-being thereby impacting on their quest to fulfilling their parenting responsibility (Ntshongwana & Tanga, 2018:15). They seem to have been faced with positive and negative experiences which sometimes cause conflict within the foster family.

Masha and Botha (2021:511) pointed out that foster parents appeared to be unequipped to handle traumatised or vulnerable adolescent foster children and the threat of abuse or neglect likely to happen. Although foster care happens to be a supplementary parenting for orphans and vulnerable children, the researcher has identified a gap and insufficient support for foster parents after placement within the significant childcare sector. Mnisi (2015:131) asserts that children are placed in foster care with traumas that they have experienced from the previous placement and DSWs sometimes unable to provide psychosocial support due to the high caseloads that they

faced. Mnisi further states that there are no bereavement counselling or parenting skills programmes to assist these children with coping skills and foster parents deal with the behaviours displayed by adolescent foster children.

The psychosocial challenges of adolescent foster children manifest in the form of mood swings, aggression, depression, hopelessness, guilt, anxiety, low self-esteem, anti-social behaviour and sadness (Gasva & Mutanana, 2016:9). Dhludhlu and Lombard, 2017:165 and Naicker, 2021:8 confirmed that the South African foster care system is under enormous pressure. This means that the DSWs are compelled to focus more on administrative work and as such they do fail to supervise or monitor the foster care placement. A high number of DSWs is unable to render support services to adolescent foster children as expected. According to Skhosana (2020: 115) this is mainly of unmanageable foster cases that are rising daily. This has gotten to a point where some DSWs are being charged by clients for unprofessional behaviour when trying to cope with the excessive caseloads.

This study sought to explore the challenges faced by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children post-foster care placement in order to develop guidelines for social work intervention. Ceulemans and Kuppens (2018:1) explain that most theoretical frameworks have emphasized the fact that parenting plays a critical role in the development of a child, therefore, a summary of the foster care placement process will be outlined below.

1.1.1.1 Foster care placement process

Foster care placement is defined as the temporary alternative care for children who have been deprived of a healthy family setting and care or cannot live with their natural parents or guardians (Ntshongwana and Tanga 2018:15; Koyana & Khanya, 2019:1; Goemans *et al.,* 2020:663). Similarly, Sprecher *et al.,* (2021: 249) describe foster care as a fundamental system of care for children who have histories of abuse, neglect, family dysfunction, and absent parenting. These children are placed with related and unrelated caregivers who wish to provide a safe caring home environment pending family reunification, permanent substitute care or adoption.

The process of foster care placement begins with the designated social worker (DSW) identifying a child in need of care and protection as well as finding a substitute placement possibility such as a foster family as outlined in Section 155 of the Children's Act. The DSW will then conduct a comprehensive assessment of the prospective foster parent (Koyana & Khanya, 2019:1). During the assessment, which is also termed screening, the following features are considered: age of the prospective foster parents, health of the prospective foster parents, previous conviction on sexual offences and criminal record in terms of the Criminal Procedure Act, family composition, and home environment is conducive for human development, level of education, religious beliefs, housing accommodation and household income as well as areas that require further development (Section 150 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005).

However, Mosimege (2017:20) states that on matters such as child care, foster parents' ability to assume accountability and their inspiration to care for a child that is not theirs is highly valued. Naicker (2021:369) emphasized that the age gap between the foster parent and the child should determine the parents' capability to respond to the feelings, physical emotional and therapeutic needs of adolescent foster children. Although foster care placement is temporary, the assessment process is essential and considered a powerful tool in determining what is in the best interest of children. After the completion of the assessment, the same designated social worker compiles a comprehensive report and submits it to the Children's Court recommending that the child be placed in foster care with a suitable foster parent who has undergone the assessment process (Section 155(4)(a) of Act 38 of 2005). Ntshongwana and Tanga (2018: 15) assert that foster parents have the accountability of nurturing orphans and vulnerable children who have experienced behavioural, emotional and developmental difficulties.

The prospective foster parent will be requested by the designated social worker to appear before the presiding officer of the Children's Court for the finalization of the foster care placement. The presiding officer will issue a court order for the application of the foster care grant with the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) as enshrined in (Section 7 of the social assistance act 13 of 2004).

DSW's are involved in reviewing foster care placement, ensuring that orders issued by the court are extended every two years as outlined in Section 159 of the Children's Act. Still, the same DSWs are timeously required to supervise or monitor the placement by supporting and addressing the challenges faced by the foster parents as well as the foster children during foster care placement (Section 155 (4)(b) Children's Act 38 of 2005). Notably, DSWs have the responsibility or are duty bound to support foster parents to address the challenges encountered by the foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children.

1.1.1.2 Foster care supervision process

Boning and Ferreira (2013:517) define foster care supervision as a process whereby DSWs are expected to monitor the foster care placement in order to identify challenges encountered and to provide support to foster parents and to the adolescent foster children. This should be carried out with a view of ensuring that placements are healthy and stable. It is worth noting that at present DSWs do not conduct foster care supervision and monitoring due to a lack of human resources. According to Masha & Botha (2021:510) DSWs are currently only able to pay attention to reported cases or cases that are due for review, as a result of poor staffing.

The administrative extension of the lapsed orders authorised by the High Court had a detrimental impact on the foster care system as adolescents foster children were neglected without support by the DSWs. Masha and Botha (2021:508) revealed numerous reasons that contribute to abuse and neglect of adolescent foster children and these factors include the shortage of social workers and inadequate monitoring and supervision of foster care placements. DSWs seem to be monitoring court orders that need to be reviewed after two years instead of addressing the difficulties experienced in foster care placements.

Kaasbol, Lassemo, Paulesen, Melby and Osborg (2019:33) state "that foster parents often endure high level of stress and as such have a need for professional support and skills". Challenges in foster families and inadequate support post foster care placement seem to be the main reasons that compel foster parents to resign from caring for the adolescent foster children.

Section 156(3)(i) of the Children's Act orders that designated social workers should provide supervision services in the foster family post foster care placement. Msebenzi (2017:71) emphasizes that the supervision of the foster placement is significant because it allows a designated social worker to explore and address any challenges experienced by foster parents and the adolescent foster children.

The following should be checked up to determine whether foster parents do need any additional resources in sustaining the foster care placement:

a) ensuring that a foster child adjusts well to the new environment;
b) ensuring that a foster child copes well with the values and norms of the new home and that the separation from the previous home is well handled;
c) ensuring that an adolescent foster child compared well with other peers in different settings;
d) determining the extent to which the problems identified during assessments are addressed;
e) establishing to what extent the strengths are being utilized, and
f)   determining the progress, a family is making towards the goals identified in the care plan before foster care placement.

Sadly, DSWs do visit foster families for the review of foster care grants thereby overlooking the therapeutic needs of the adolescent foster children. Foster children are frequently transferred from one placement to another due to no supervision services or no regular home visits in the home of the foster parents. Thus, the study focused on foster parents and social workers because the Children's Court and social workers approve foster parents before they begin their role of fostering. The need to explore the challenges faced by foster parents is significant to develop a guideline that matches the needs of the foster parents.

The number of orphans and vulnerable children has increased tremendously in recent years. According to Naicker (2021:8) this has been fuelled by parents passing away due to life-threatening illnesses such as HIV/AIDS and Covid-19.
Sprang and Eslinger (2022:1) concur with Naicker that the death of parents due to Covid-19 and HIV/AIDS-related illnesses has intensified child-headed household

(adolescents) placements where designated social workers find themselves under pressure to provide parenting programmes and bereavement counselling under the excessive obtaining caseloads and shortage of resources. The researcher herein is of the view that the lack of human resources has intensified the excessive caseloads within the DSD and organizations funded by DSD. Inevitably, this does put vulnerable children at risk.

South Africa still maintains its legislative framework for child protection and the rights of children as outlined in the South African ratified African Charter on the Rights of the Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) of 2000 and the United Convection on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of 1989.

Fortune (2016:8) asserts that failures in the provision of quality foster care services, screening of prospective foster parents for new placement, review of lapsed orders and in the provision of support to those who have adolescent foster children in their care has brought shame to the social work profession. The limited number of DSWs cannot handle the huge number of lapsed orders that resulted from DSW's' failure to render foster care supervision. DSWs are cognizant of the importance of foster care plans that need to be implemented, but the application of the plans is impracticable due to the huge caseloads that they face. The court has authorised the administrative extension of the lapsed orders to relieve DSWs and to prevent the termination of foster care grants that financially support adolescent foster children.

Naicker (2021:347) points out that there are no foster care plans on the files of the DSW and supervisors appear not to be involved in the implementation of the plans that correlate with supervision and support of foster care placements. Naicker further emphasized that DWSs cannot decide to ensure that the best interest of the children is taken care of and result in the neglect of adolescent foster children because there is no standard procedure to follow, and this has mirrored the value of foster care services.

The researcher finds it significant to gain insight into the challenges experienced by foster parents during foster care placement. She is of the view that the knowledge gained in this study will be invaluable in the development of guidelines for social work intervention.

1.1.2   Statement of the Problem Under Study

This study emanates from the findings of the researcher in her study in 2016. The researcher has a social work degree and a Master's degree specialising in medical sociology and is currently practising as a clinical social worker in private practice. Within the researcher's observation and experience with children's problem behaviours and parenting guidance to both parents and foster parents, the researcher focused on the perception and experiences of foster parents and DSW's of the multiple transfer of foster children from one placement to another.

A gap was identified that needed further investigation beyond the scope of the Master's topic. Foster parents and the DSWs were among the drivers of repeated transfer centred on adolescent foster children's behavioural problems, problematic relationships between foster parents and foster children and lack of parenting skills and support for foster parents (Mashiloane, 2016:1). This was compounded by the concurrent inability of the foster parents to adequately manage such behaviours. However, the DSWs felt a need to provide support to foster parents through training which is challenging due to the huge caseloads, inadequate tools of trades, and restricted time that they spent with the foster parents (Mashiloane, 2016: v).

According to the researcher's review of existing literature, there has been little research conducted on the challenges encountered by foster parents in caring for adolescent foster children. Mosemege (2017:3) focused on the psychological experiences of the foster mothers in fostering adolescent foster children and the coping methods used therein. In that study it was found that children should be cared for in a loving and in a constructive family structure in order to ensure their normal development. Ntshongwana and Tanga (2018:14) assessed the life experiences of foster parents who nurtured foster children. This study found that very little support is provided to foster parents and foster children post foster care placement.

It is therefore in this context that the current study was conceived. The researcher herein deemed it necessary to develop relevant guidelines to address the challenges faced by foster parents as well as to address supervision and the current support inadequacy.

Mnisi (2015:134) explored factors that contribute to the breakdown of foster care placement of adolescent children. The disruptive behaviour of adolescent foster children was identified as the main reason in this regard, followed by physical and emotional abuse by foster parents. The involvement of biological parents was also found to be playing a significant role in the breakdown of foster care placements. The study by Mnisi (2015:134) also revealed that not much support or explicit programmes from the DSWs to address issues that emerge during foster care placement were available. Although DSWs are the main drivers in the placement and supervision of foster care placement, there is little that they can contribute in ensuring stable foster care placements, owing to the high caseloads that they are expected to deal with on a regular basis (Khaba, 2017:6). Emovon (2019:63) explored challenges experienced by foster parents caring for non-relative foster children in South Africa. The findings of the study revealed that foster parents experienced discrimination, cultural insensitivity. The study also revealed that stigmatization towards orphans and HIV/AIDS are not efficiently and effectively addressed in South Africa. Furthermore, the study determined that this may result in an unhealthy relationship between the foster parent and foster child because it undermines the notion of Ubuntu.

The study conducted by Masha and Botha (2021:502) explored factors that contribute to the abuse and neglect of foster children. The findings of that study were that foster parents were contributing to the abuse and neglect of foster children. Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017:164) investigated the challenges encountered by statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socioeconomic development programmes. The study revealed that foster care grant contributes to poverty alleviation, therefore, to reduce poverty in foster family, foster care services should be integrated.

Mampane and Ross (2017:3) studied the emotional experience of adolescent foster children, their understanding of the reasons for their being in foster care placement, and their feelings about the phase of the life cycle of a teenager. The results concluded that social workers should implement section 186 (kinship grants) to assist them concentrate on the emotional needs of foster children than the continuous review of foster grants.

Emovon (2019:39) explored the experiences of foster parents when raising non-relative foster children and the findings confirmed that foster parents faced stigmatization and discrimination undue external interference, rejection and isolation and care scrutiny and suspicion by the public.

On the other hand, Msebenzi, (2017:4) focused on the psycho-social challenges experienced by aged foster parents in assuming the responsibility of fostering. It was found that aged foster parents feel overwhelmed with a load of dealing with the behavioural challenges of adolescent foster children, financial constraints and the inaccessibility of social services. They are ineffectively supported in their caring role and this affects their psycho-social well-being and health, and result in increased demand for parenting role and the breakdown of the placement.

Kaasbol; Lassemo; Paulesen; Melby and Osborg (2019:1) examine the needs of foster parents, satisfaction and perception of foster parents' training. They maintain that there is a need for the development of training on parenting children with special needs for the maintenance of stability in foster care placements. Latouf, (2008:2) focused on the parenting styles affecting five-year-olds. She found that parents do not have parenting styles to cope with five-year-olds. The study conducted by Van-Zyl (2014:1) explored the adolescents' experiences of their pregnancy and parenting. The findings revealed that adolescent pregnancy and parenting to be a difficult matter to manage due to little parenting support by the DSWs.

Mancinelli, Arciprete and Salcuni (2021:19) evaluated variables that contribute to foster parents 'psychological adjustment such as parenting stress, parenting distress and parenting styles or approaches with the aim of gaining understanding to provide psycho-social support to foster parents with consequence on foster children's wellbeing. The findings revealed that child related stress and child's externalising problems were the main predictors of foster parent's parenting stress and parenting strategy. There were no foster parents and foster children socio-demographic characteristics contributed to parenting stress.

Ndimba-Ndaleni, Motloung and Kasiram (2022:61) investigated challenges experienced by social workers when working with children and youth at Child and

Youth Care Centres in Durban. The findings revealed challenges such as burnout, fatigue and stress are interconnected to high caseloads, lack of resources, little support and problematic clients which compromised the professional roles of the DSWs. Miller and Grise- Owens (2021:65) examined the impact of Covid 19 on practicing self-care for amongst foster parents. The findings of the study discovered the deterioration of self-care practices on foster parents due to lack of therapeutic support from DSWs which exacerbated stress on them.

The researcher herein does believe that the role of foster parents is multifarious and demanding. She further believes that the existing multiple life stressors make their parenting roles even more challenging. Mancinelli, Arciprete and Salcuni (2021:1) assert that adolescent foster children exposed to abuse and neglect are often exposed to developmental delays, cognitive, emotional and problematic behavioural challenges. Most of the foster parents also have poor or average control over the behaviour of these children. Gasva and Mutanana (2016:5) explored the challenges experienced by foster children. The study established that lack of attachment between the child and the biological parents has negatively affected the relationship between the foster children and foster parents. Some foster parents have little interaction and attachment with the foster children which in turn affect their psychological and emotional needs.

According to Social Policy Research Centre (2010:2), there are several unresolved matters in the region of parenting which include different parenthood such as corporal punishment, parental rights to privacy and parent in their fashion, and debates over the degree to which parents should manage their children. Abdoll and Ragwala (2021:3) assert that it is of paramount importance that foster parents improve their line of communication with the foster children placed in their care.
They further state that this will go a long way in enabling foster parents to set boundaries, eliminate violence and tension in their relationship with foster children and to ensure that their relationship with the foster children placed in their care is more pleasant to both parties.

Foster parents sometimes fail to consider the lived experiences or voices of the adolescent foster children. As stated above, this failure produces behavioural

problems such as intense anger, low self-esteem and vulnerability in foster children (Gasva & Mutanana, 2016:9). Muchanyerei (2015:82) explored the challenges experienced by social workers when placing children living with HIV in foster care in Johannesburg. The findings exposed myths and misconceptions such as fear to disclose HIV status of the child, fear of death, financial constraints, lack of knowledge on HIV, stigmatization and discrimination, distress, lack of support from social workers, shortage of foster parents and shortcomings of the Children's Act.

Steketee, Jonkman, Naber and Distelbrink (2021:3) focused on the effectiveness of Teen Triple Programme (Triple P) provided for parents in Netherlands to prevent childhood challenges and offer treatment for severe behavioural, emotional, and developmental problems in children aged 0 to 16 years through enhancing the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents. The programme was instituted to increase the knowledge, skills, and sureness of parents in managing the behaviour of children. It was confirmed that the programme was effective in decreasing childhood behavioural problems although there are clear discrepancies in parenting skills for children with multiple behavioural problems in a variety of settings.

It is worth noting that these multi-level programmes might be relevant in the South African context hence the need to explore the challenges encountered by foster parents in developing guidelines that will support and lessen the risk factors allied with severe behavioural and emotional problems in adolescent foster children. The researcher believed that exploring the challenges faced by foster parents will guide social workers dealing with foster care placement and supervision to adequately support and empower foster parents with problem-solving skills in an emotionally supportive approach.

Saferspaces (2019:7) states that two parenting programmes have been developed in South Africa; the Thula Sana home visiting programme that helps mothers to develop strong, healthy bonds with their infants, and a book-sharing programme that teaches mothers to share picture books with their children. These two programmes have recently been found to be effective in stimulating cognitive development in children. According to Abdoll and Ragwala (2021:3), clowns without boarders offer capacity-building training to organisations that wish to provide the Sinovuyo teens and Sinovuyo

kids parenting programme in South Africa focusing on essential skills, knowledge and attitudes that are important in development of effective relationship within families.

Doubt, Loening-Voysey, Blank, Cluver, Byrne and Pettersen (2018:5) explored the experiences and perception of local child and youth care workers who were trained in delivering the Sinovuyo Teen Caring Families parenting programme in vulnerable semi-rural communities in South Africa. The programme was introduced to understand what will make the programme implementable and sustainable to improve the well-being of the adolescent. The study showed that the programme can contribute to the development and be taken into consideration to be used in the future parenting programmes because it has enhanced parenting supervision and social support.

Azzi-Lessing and Schmid (2019:5) concentrated on parent-infant home visits, counselling and teenagers with healthy parenting skills that enable them to be more effective, responsible, and nurturing mothers and fathers. It was established that this programme helps parents and foster parents in protecting their children from victimization and abuse in communities.

Abdoll and Ragwala (2021:3) in the Institute for Security Studies examine the costing scale up of parenting programme in South Africa and it was revealed that the main cost items to conduct parenting programme are personnel, training materials or equipment, marketing fees and professional fees when assessing the Non-profit Organisation through Sinovuyo kids parenting programme.

Nevertheless, the researcher knows of no literature that could be located in South Africa that has developed a guideline for social work intervention to address the challenges faced by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children.
Given that the foster care system in South Africa is faced with multifaceted challenges, a fundamental need occurs to conduct this research to explore the dynamics encountered by foster parents in caring for the adolescent's foster children, post-foster care placement to come up with a guideline for social worker intervention. The study should therefore be able to provide important awareness to professionals dealing with families of adolescent foster children or orphans and vulnerable children.

1.1.3　Research Questions, Aim and Objectives

1.1.3.1 Research questions

The following questions informed and guided the study:

a) What are the dynamics of caring for adolescent foster children?
b) What support do social workers provide to foster parents to deal with the dynamics of raising adolescent foster children?

1.1.3.2 Aim of the study

The study aims to develop a post-placement guideline for social work intervention to address the dynamics encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children.

1.1.3.3 Research objectives

a) To explore the dynamics encountered by the foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children.
b) To develop a post-placement guideline for social work intervention.

1.1.4　Theoretical Framework

The current study is guided by sociological theory as a key component of its theoretical framework.　Sociological theory is mostly utilized by researchers in observing individuals, social interaction and the perception as well as meanings that arise from such social interactions.　According to Teater and Hannan (2021:118), a theory is a clear and a non-contradictory set of opinions or ideas that seek to explain problems and guide the understanding of a researcher.　For the purpose of the current study, a theory in social work practice is the prediction of what may happen or might not occur in certain people's behaviour in certain situation.　Theoretical framework is important in guiding a researcher to understand people. In the context of the current study the theoretical framework has assisted the researcher to have a clearer understanding of

the experiences of foster parents, social workers and society in general (Deacon & Macdonald, 2017:9). Sociologically, the researcher ensured that the current study remained guided by the social system theory. Researchers are expected to be knowledgeable about social systems (foster family) when dealing with individuals and groups because a change in one part of the system will inevitably cause a change in the other part of the system (Deacon & Macdonald, 2017:83). This shows a clear interaction between various systems. It is therefore very easy to see that any significant changes in any system may cause a disequilibrium.

Foster family functions in terms of relationships or attachments, business works according to communicated decisions, and ownership runs according to secured legal communication (Schlippe & Herman, 2013:1). It is clear that each system operates according to functional logic and if a specific form changes it would inevitably impact on the other part. This is because their relations are based on attachment. For purposes of the current study, the researcher needed to understand the full background of foster parents. This meant that she had to understand where the foster parents originated from, the challenges they experience when raising adolescent foster children, their norms and values, strengths and weaknesses, interaction with the foster children and social workers as well as where they can get support. It was significant to understand the needs of foster parents in order to ensure that the guidelines proposed by the study match their needs and perception.

This has assisted the researcher to determine the level of intervention (individual, small group, community, international or worldwide) in which change and improvement are needed as well as the reasons for the intervention (why the guidelines for social work intervention should be developed).

The ecological theory was also adopted by the researcher as a framework for the research study because it allowed the researcher to explore the dynamics or challenges encountered by the foster parent when raising adolescent foster children. It is characterized by environmental systems such as chronosystem, micro, meso, exo and macro (Bronfenbrenner,1979:6). Since these systems might be direct or indirect that can affect the child's development, the researcher is confident that the development of a child is best understood when observing the environment where the child has /is been raised. The most communal system that has an immediate impact

on the child 's development is the micro (immediate setting such as family, school, peers), macro (social, cultural values and norms) and chronosystem (changes over time such as death, divorce, foster placement disruption) (Bronfenbrenner,1979:8). The above-mentioned systems affect the relationship, ability to learn, trust building, adjustment, norms and values which are detrimental to the development of adolescent foster children.

Further, child developmental interruptions influence the normal growth of the foster children because it reflects inconsistent attachments and psychological distress which mirrors socialization. Theories that are relevant in the present study include integrated approach, symbolic interaction theory, ecological theory, strength-based theory, social systems theory as it explains how children learn the behaviour of others through modelling or imitation. A detailed description of the theories is discussed in Chapter 2 of the study.

1.1.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethics guides the conduct of researchers and protects the rights of the participants during research (Deacon & Macdonald, 2017:143). Ethical matters were given major attention in the research because human beings were involved. Ethics refers to the study of good and bad human conduct. This includes verbal or non-verbal actions including related actions and values. According to Crossman (2019:1) ethics describes the behaviour of academic researchers and protects the interest of participants. The researcher here maintained the value of her profession because she believes that unethical practice could lead to disciplinary records which may affect her profession (Grant, 2019:24). Section 3 of the Social Service Profession Act 110 of 1978, states that social workers who are conducting scientific research are expected to adhere to the ethical codes that guide their professional conducts to protect the rights, dignity and the welfare of the research participants.

During the process of research, the researcher recognized the limitations of the research knowledge by conducting the research based on the topic and purpose of the study (Weaver-Highton, 2019:171). Ethical approval was obtained from the

Research Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa. The permission to conduct research was also obtained from the Department of Social Development to interview designated social workers who work with foster care placements and foster parents who cared for adolescent foster children. The primary aim of ethics is to guide the behaviour of the researchers when conducting research and to ensure that no human being is harmed due to the research activities (Creswell, 2018:133; World Health Organization, 2015:1). The researcher herein did not rely on personal experience because sometimes knowledge gained through experience might be faulty. She explored the views of participants to ensure accurate and reliable results (Grant, 2019:25). She believed in science that general statements should be investigated through scientific research. The researcher adhered to the highest scientific and professional standards. She also took the following ethical considerations into account while conducting the current research study:

1.1.5.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent is a basic ethical principle of scientific research or a contract that the researcher enters into with the participants that describe the nature of the study before participation takes place (Mays & Pope, 2020:30). The researcher did not force participants to participate in the study or collect data without their permission. Since ethics is about being sensitive to the rights of others, research participants must not be manipulated to participate in the research study (Sterling, 2015:171; Creswell, 2018:171). The researcher ensured that persons involved in the research were competent to understand the nature of their participation as well as their responsibilities. She also ensured that they all agreed to participate without any threats prior the research commencement. They were also informed that there would be no penalty for refusal to participate or withdraw from participation because participation is voluntary (Creswell, 2016:313). Participants were also informed that they had the right to refuse to respond to particular questions if they felt uncomfortable (World Health Organization, 2015:61).

Before the interviews process, participants were requested to be honest when responding to the questions asked and to the best of their abilities during their communication with the researcher (Varkey, 2021:20). With their agreement and

understanding of the processes of the research study, they were requested to attach their signatures on the consent forms before participation commence (Maree, 2016:44). Participants were given a chance to agree or disagree to participate to ensure that the data collection process only involved those who were genuinely willing to contribute to the data freely (Varkey, 2021:20). It was emphasized to the participants that there is no wrong or right answer for them to contribute their experience without fear.

1.1.5.2 Anonymity and avoidance of harm to participants

It is unlikely that the research can cause harm or humiliation to the participants as the researcher adhered to ethics that guide her professional conduct to protect the dignity and welfare of the participants.

Anonymization in qualitative research is important because it protects the privacy or identities of the participants (such as names, addresses, contacts etc.). This is supported by Mays & Pope (2020:35) who assert that participation in research should be totally voluntary and that the identities of those who choose to participate must be protected at all time. Anonymity is defined as keeping the identities of the participants underground except from the primary researcher and supervisor (Tracy, 2020:89). The researcher concealed the identities of participants naming them foster parents and DSW's to protect their identities because she was duty bound not to disclose any information obtained from participants without their permission (Varkey, 2021:20).

The researcher visited the homes of the foster parents with a sanitizer in hand and with a mask on at all times. This was done to avoid the spread of Covid-19 virus to participants. The researcher also maintained physical distancing during the interviews as required when researchers conduct research studies during a period of infectious illnesses. Participants were knowledgeable about the research processes, why are they selected, the nature of the information to be released, to whom the information would be revealed and how the information would be used so that they decide whether to participate in the research study or stay away from participation (Sterling, 2015:10; Tracy, 2020:89).

1.1.5.3 Privacy and confidentiality

Data collected from participants will not be revealed in a way that publicizes the identities of the sources. The researcher took responsibility to protect the confidential data gained from the participants in confidence so that it should not be compromised (Mays & Pope, 2020:32; Creswell, 2016:313). Privacy refers to the right of a person or participant to have control over how the personal information gathered in a study is used while confidentiality means that private or personal information of a person will not be revealed to others without the person's permission (Tracy, 2020:89).

As outlined in Section 14 Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights, everyone has the right to privacy and confidentiality especially on issues that concern them. Interviews were conducted in the quiet boardroom free from distractions and motivated participants to express their opinions (Creswell, 2018:150).
The researcher respected the rights, dignity and worth of the people as enshrined in Chapter 2, Section 10 of Act 108 of the Constitution of South Africa.

The researcher acknowledged the rights and views of the foster parents and social workers even when it differed from her opinions. South Africa is faced with various ethnic or cultural and religious groups which have an impact on the quality of services that will be rendered. Culture refers to integrated forms of human behaviour that include the system of language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of racial, ethnic, and religious that people share (Cole, 2019:1).

According to Section 30 of the Bill of Rights, people should use any language of their choice. Therefore, the researcher allowed the participants to be interviewed with the language that they were comfortable with, for her not to compromise the quality of research. Interviews were conducted in the preferred language (Sesotho and English) of the participants to ensure easy communication and understanding (Sterling, 2015:25; Tracy, 2020:78).

Participants were informed that unauthorized access will be limited as the information will be kept in a safe locked place accessed only by the researcher and the supervisor (Section 5 of the National Association of Social Workers, 2005). They were also

informed that information that was shared with the researcher was treated in a stringent confidential manner. It was explained to them that their direct or indirect identities in any of the documents cannot be identified (Maree, 2016:44). However, audio recordings will be deleted from the audio tape once it has been transferred to the computer. The records of informed consent and the transcripts of the interviews are kept in a safe place complying with the standard of conducting scientific research (Tracy, 2020:89).

1.1.5.4 Beneficence

Beneficence refers to the ethical responsibility of professional researchers to act for the benefit of the participants, protect their rights, prevent harm, and eliminate situations that might cause harm (Varkey, 2021:18). Permission to record the interviews was obtained from the participants.

The researcher explained to participants that there is no benefit or compensation that they will receive from participating in the study. Only participants who have requested feedback will be provided with a summary of the outcome of the study. A summary report of the findings will be compiled and presented to the Department of Social Development to address the challenges faced by foster parents.

1.1.5.5 Debriefing of participants

At the end of the interviews, it is imperative to assist participants to deal with emotional distress that resulted from the study in the form of debriefing. Debriefing refers to the process that happens at the end of the interview process where participants are allowed to discuss difficult events that they have experienced during the process of the study to ensure that participants develop a recovery process (MacMahon & Winch, 2018:3). It is the process of bringing back participants to the state in which they were before they participated in the study. It is improbable that this study can cause physical injury, emotional pain, economic harm, cultural embarrassment or humiliation, breach of confidentiality, or legal jeopardy to the participants and the gatekeepers of the study.

The research topic does not deal with sensitive questions and cause any harm as the researcher adhered to ethics that guide her professional practice to protect the dignity

and welfare of the participants. The participants were all people who work with foster children in some capacity in their daily lives and dealing with 'problems' related to foster children is therefore a part of their normal experience. Foster parents are screened and trained in being able to deal with the demands that accompany being a foster parent. As such, the sensitivity levels of the questions (in the context of these specific participants) are unlikely to exceed that which they would encounter during their daily lives. However, the researcher does recognise that there could be exceptions to this hence she arranged with Lifeline Vaal in Sedibeng region to debrief participants. As such, should the participants feel the need for debriefing as a result of the study. At the end of the interviews, participants were given the contact details of the debriefer (Lifeline Vaal) for the debriefing services to be provided free of charge. There was only one participant who was referred to the debriefer because she felt the need for debriefing following the interview.

1.1.6 Definition of Key Concepts

1.1.6.1 **Adolescence** refers to a period whereby a child is developing from childhood into adulthood (ages 11-19 years). According to Mampane and Ross (2017:3) this is a very challenges stage of growth for young adults characterised by tremendous physical, social, emotional and cognitive changes.

1.1.6.2 **Care** means a process of protecting someone and providing what the person needs such as a conducive environment, suitable living conditions, financial support and protection from all forms of abuse and respecting human rights (Children's Act 38 of 2005).

1.1.6.3 **Caregivers** may include biological parent(s), adoptive parent(s), foster parent(s), residential facility staff or educators (Sawyer, 2012:1).

1.1.6.4 **Child** means a person under the age of 18 years as outlined in the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

1.1.6.5 **Designated Social Worker** means a social worker in the service of the national or provincial Department of Social Development or a designated child protection organization or a municipality (Children's Act 38 of 2005).

1.1.6.6 **Effective parenting** refers to a thorough process of listening to children and hearing not just what they say but emoting with what they feel (Daniel, 2018:1). This method ensures intended results in the rearing of the child.

1.1.6.7 **Family** refers to individuals who, either by contract or agreement, choose to live together and provide care, nurturing and socialization for one another (Saferspaces, 2018:3).

1.1.6.8 **Fostering** means taking care of a child with limited time and with little legal guardianship granted by the court (Gasva & Mutanana, 2016:9).

1.1.6.9 **Foster Care** refers to the temporary care extended to a child in need of care and protection as described in Section 180 (1) and includes foster care in a registered cluster care scheme (Children's' Act 38 of 2005).

1.1.6.10 **Foster child** is a child who, through a court order from the Children's Court, is placed in the care of a person who is not their biological parent or guardian (Section 180 of Act 38 of 2005).

1.1.6.11 **Foster caregivers** are persons who provide caregiving services to children in substitute care (Cooley *et al.,* 2018:1).

1.1.6.12 **Foster parent** is any person who through a court order from the Children's court, provides temporarily care and support for a child/children whose natural parents are unable to provide care due to abuse, neglect or death and this may exclude child headed household (Gasva & Mutanana, 2016:9). This excludes biological parent's child connections. While a Parent means anyone who plays a primary care-giving role in a child's life (Saferspaces, 2019:3).

1.1.6.13 **Guideline** refers to an indication of how something should be done (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

1.1.6.14 **Intervention** refers to the action of purposeful involvement in a problematic situation in order to improve it (Cambridge Dictionary).

1.1.6.15 **Multi-dimensional** is a multifaceted dimension of parenting and includes both positive and negative aspects (Zheng *et al*., 2017:1).

1.1.6.16 **Parenting** is a primary mechanism of socialization, a process raising, training, rearing (nurturing, caring for, educating) and preparing a child or children to meet the demands of their environments (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering Medicine, 2016: 2).

1.1.6.17 **Prospective foster parent** means a person who has fostered care of a child by order of Children's Court and includes an active member of an organization operating a cluster foster care scheme and who has assigned responsibility for the foster care of a child (Children's Act 38 of 2005).

1.1.6.18 **Sedibeng District** is a Category C municipality situated in the southern part of the Gauteng Province. It is located on the banks of the Vaal River and Vaal Dam, covering the area formerly known as the Vaal Triangle. It is comprised of the Emfuleni, Lesedi and Midvaal local municipalities, and includes the historic townships of Evaton, Palm Spring, Lakeside, Sebokeng, Boipatong, Bophelong, Sharpeville and Ratanda, which have rich political history and heritage (Yes Media, 2012-2020:1).

1.1.6.19 **Social worker** means an individual who is registered as a social worker in terms of the Social Service Professions Act 1978 and works with individuals, families, groups and communities to enhance their wellness (Act 110 of 1978).

1.1.7 Limitations of the Study

The majority of the research participants were African females and one was coloured. A total of two African males also participated in the study. Notably, other ethnic groups were excluded from this study. This means that transferability of the findings of the

study is limited. Since Sedibeng District comprises of various ethnic groups more research is required to explore the experiences of the foster parents from multi-ethnic and multi-cultural circumstances.

The sample size was small as the researcher couldn't include the whole of Sedibeng District in the study. DSWs from DSD and organisations funded by DSD represented the sample for the study, male DSWs were not represented in the sample. This implies that more studies need to be conducted to discover the opinions of other ethnic groups such as whites, Indians etc.

Lastly, the study did not explore the insights of adolescent foster children being subjected to multiple foster care placements. This should be considered in future research because having an understanding of their perception and experiences might assist in guiding the intervention programmes that will address the challenges foster parents faced when raising adolescent and foster children post-foster care placement. It might happen that DSWs and foster parents were not fully open about their parenting practices in this study. This could be as a result of them avoiding being viewed in a negative light. It may therefore be necessary to conduct further research on adolescent foster children.

1.1.8 Structure of the Study

The study consists of six chapters. These are outlined below as follows:

Chapter 1: General introduction.

The chapter consists of introduction, problem statement, research questions and objectives, methods used in conducting research, ethical considerations and definition of key terms of the study.

Chapter 2: The literature review on challenges encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children.

The chapter provides the literature review on challenges encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children. It also provides the theoretical framework underpinning the interpretation of the phenomenon of foster parents caring for adolescent foster children and designated social workers supervising foster care placement.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The chapter gives a comprehensive description of the application of qualitative research designs and techniques employed in the study of participants, sampling, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Data analysis, interpretation and discussion

The chapter deals with the challenges encountered by foster parents and social workers during foster care placement.

Chapter 5: Developing post placement guidelines for social work intervention

The chapter comprises of the guidelines process and suggested guidelines for social work intervention post-placement.

Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The chapter consists of summary of the research findings, conclusions and recommendations for future research and social workers.

The next chapter presents the literature review on the challenges encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children.

CHAPTER 2

THE LITERATURE REVIEW ON CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY FOSTER PARENTS WHEN CARING FOR ADOLESCENT FOSTER CHILDREN

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive information of the theories and approaches that deal with the challenges encountered by foster parent when raising adolescent foster children. According to Turner (2017:127), professional social workers are actively and unceasingly involved in the application of their expertise in traumatic and crisis situations that affects individuals, families, groups and society at large. Children nationwide would be given a priority with regards to care and protection especially those who cannot live with their parents (Koyana & Khanye, 2019: 1).

Designated social workers (DSWs) are faced with a huge challenge in the implementation of the legislation that provides care and support to adolescents foster children post foster care placement. They also fail to provide adequate training as well as ongoing support throughout foster care placement due to orders that has lapsed resulting from the DSW's failure to render supervision services (Ntshongwana & Tanga, 2018:19; Mampane & Ross, 2017:3). This has an impact on the emotional needs and psychological wellbeing of the adolescent foster children because DSWs could not provide counselling prior and post foster care placement due to heavy administrative workloads (Mampane & Ross, 2017:3). According to Konyane (2015:3), foster care grant (FCG) is regarded as a social assistance system or child protection system that supports foster parents in caring for adolescent foster children. Social workers have to prioritise the review of (FCG) because most foster parents are unemployed and depend on FCG to alleviate poverty in the foster family.

DSWs are obliged to neglect psycho-social needs of adolescent foster children and to concentrate on their physical needs. Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017:169) reveal that it is unclear on how the South African foster care system will be like in future because social work services are politicised by government as free services, unconditionally accessible, putting more pressure on DSWs as there is no link between skills acquired

from the university and the performance in the field. Naicker (2021:285) argues that the political interference made society to believe that DSWs are jack of all trades and solvers of all human problems. Politicians use DSWs during their campaigns for democratic elections and promised free services and social assistance grant that are beyond the social workers capacity (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017:169). The researcher is concern that most people do not see the value of social work profession, as many people believe that they can provide social work services better than what social workers do. This implicates social work policies and practice as well as the relationship between the DSWs and the community at large.

Nevertheless, foster parents do encounter challenges in raising the adolescent foster children because they do not understand their responsibilities and rights as outlined in Section 188 of the Children's Act (Botha, 2021:507). These foster parents fail to realise that adolescent foster children need special attention in addressing the behaviour that these children display. This lack of understanding creates confusion in understanding the needs of adolescent foster children. DSWs could not assess foster cases thoroughly because their performance appraisal is based on number of cases conducted (quantity versus quality) (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017:174). It is clear that social workers are not able to do quality foster care assessment because of the pressure to reach targets that are expected within the Department of Social Development.

Teater (2020:1) defines theory as an important ingredient that provides guidance to DSWs when dealing with individuals, families and community. The researcher is of the view that no professional intervention should be based on one's opinion. Theory helps to speculate, describe and assess circumstances and behaviours and how to intervene to clients 'problems.

Anfara and Mertz (2015:14) define theory as a systematic set of interrelated statements that seek to explain aspects of social life thus enriching our sense of how people conduct and find meaning in their daily lives. Thompson and Stepney (2018:10) describe a theory as an attempt to explain a phenomenon with the intention to understand what can be used to guide practice. Thompson and Stepney (2018) further explained that theory has been created to assist DSWs to develop an

understanding of the significant aspects of human experience. In social work practice, theory is a generalised set of ideas used to assess and intervene to problems that affect individuals as well as addressing life challenges to enhance therapy (Deacon & Macdonald, 2017:1). It guides the way in which the social workers should intervene to individuals' problem through understanding behaviour and experiences. On the basis of the above definitions, the researcher describes theory as set of interconnected propositions that give the social workers an understanding of what is possible and how to attain the possibility when working with adolescent foster children.

Various theories allowed the researcher to gain insight about different situations, difficulties, behaviours and experiences to respond to the identified phenomenon (Teater, 2020:1). It is a coherent and non-contradictory set of ideas that guide or organise the understanding of the social worker in practice. Regardless of the various descriptions, Teater and Haman (2021:118) maintain that theories are predictive, prescriptive and make statement such as what may occur and might not occur in certain situation or if an individual does this and this will happen. In this study, the researcher utilized various theories to understand the phenomenon of the challenges encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children. It is evident that a theory clarifies and explains why, when and how the study should be conducted as well as gaining insight on how participants experienced it.

The researcher herein believes that it is improbable for the DSWs to use a single theory in addressing the challenges faced by foster parents raising adolescent foster children. The theories employed by the researcher in the current study are the following: integrated approach, symbolic interaction theory, ecological theory and strength-based approach (Rubin & Babbie, 2008:56). According to Healy (2022:2), theories provide guidance to the social worker on what should be the emphasis and how assessment should be done.

Since theories in social work practice complement each other, definitions, presumptions and the application of the theories and approaches are outlined to understand the challenges encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children post foster care placement as well the contributing factors to the challenges. Furthermore, the perceptions and experiences of the DSWs rendering foster care supervision are explored to address these challenges for the development

of the guidelines for social work intervention. The description below of the theories will improve the understanding of the DSWs and the key role players with regard to foster care placement in order to strengthen the knowledge of foster parents when raising adolescents foster children.

2.2   Integrated Approach

Integration of services is critical in social work because social work is a practice profession and its theories support each other (Ceulemans & Kuppens, 2018: 298). According to Miller (2019:68), integrated approach requires DSW's to render comprehensive psycho-social services to the needy children including adolescents foster children.   Integrated approach refers to bringing together common function within and between the organisation in order to address common problem and develop commitment to shared vision and goals (World Health Organisation (WHO), 1998:25). On the basis of the definitions above, the researcher believes that this approach means the combination of separated structures and functions to deal with the challenges encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children.

WHO (1998:26) strives for the universal health coverage that all people should have access to quality health and welfare services including foster parents and adolescents foster children.   Additionally integrated approach intends to provide support for the effort of teamwork in attaining quality social services. Integrative approach in foster care services also requires socioeconomic programmes such as cooperative micro-enterprises, savings associations, after school programmes, adult literacy classes, job training and job referral, in order to deliver coordinated services to foster families (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017:179).

It is the role of social workers to guard against fragmented care and focus on integrative care strategies that will ensure community involvement as well as relevant referrals (Miller, 2019:157). The dynamics of caring for adolescent foster children are interrelated and requires community participation, decentralisation, interdepartmental and intersectoral collaboration with other stakeholders (Miller, 2019:159). Hence there should be coordination of services amongst the critical role-players namely; the

Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, South African Social Security Agency, Department of Health, Department of Home Affairs, Department of Education, Non-Governmental Organisations and community of foster care programmes in order to address these challenges (Koyana and Khanye, 2019:1). Integrated approach is possible to be implemented if human resources are shared by the role players since integration requires enough resources (Miller, 2019:80).

Consequently, a comprehensive intervention through integrated approach is important to address foster care challenges.

WHO (2000:8) is responsible in promoting integrative health and welfare services under the government's stewardship which includes regulation, accountability of health care system and wellbeing of people, assure equity (Brinkerhoff, Cross, Sharma & Williamson, 2008:1). This would be achieved through teamwork and continuous provision of enough resources to the role players so as to support foster parents to gain knowledge when facing various behavioural problems exhibit by adolescent foster children. The Department of Social development is committed in putting children first and addressing the problems experienced by children through various programmes (Gauteng Department of Social Development Annual Performance Plan (GDSD, 2022). These problems include poor health, poor education, vulnerability, abuse, neglect and exploitation (GDSD, 2022). They emphasized a multidisciplinary integrative filled of practice that requires active involvement of relevant stakeholders (Lee, 2001: 303).

The objective of social development is to assist and build self-reliant in partnership with all stakeholders through integrated social welfare which is sustainable and developmental (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997). It encourages and strengthens partnership between community (foster parents) and government (DSWs) for the development of conducive environment for adolescent foster children.

Layland (2019:170) argues that intersectoral collaboration is a core principle for parenting and behavioural intervention where foster parent should be encouraged to solve their challenges. If collaborative relationship is created with the key role players of foster care, DSWs will be able to provide early intervention strategies through consistent monitoring and coordinated service delivery (Dhludhlu & Lombard,

2017:169). They further mention that there is no integration of service due to political interference, because political leaders impose rules and laws in the system and social workers are obliged to comply with no choice. This has become a norm for politicians to make promises to public that will not be fulfilled and as results it puts more pressure to DSWs (van Rensburg, 2004:112).

Integration needs strong leadership, enough resources, well trained staff, finances, adequate remuneration, professional commitment and clear communication and guidance to deliver coordinated quality services to people (Miller, 2019:80).

DSD experience challenges such as shortage of resource and lack vehicles to conduct home visit (Boning & Ferreira, 2013:519; Nicker, 2021:348). Lack of resources and continuous restructuring of political leaders affect the functioning of DSD as their focus and priorities change. Every political leader brings his or her decision that tend to temper with the current developmental programmes in place as there is no continuation of the existing plans and regulatory laws. Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017:169) claim that political interference seems to be a barrier to developmental social work. Education by DSWs can assist foster parents to effectively understand, develop and strengthen their skills to manage the behaviour of the adolescents' foster children.

Van Breda (2015:11) refers to developmental social work as an overarching practice model which intend in effecting meaningful social change, linking people with the available resources, promoting human growth through the use of strengths, and capacity building. Muleya (2020:473) argued that developmental social work entails the active participation of DSWs in the macro local (communities) projects which serve in securing resources, obtaining access to networks and develop local projects. He further explains that DSWs are concerned with the removal of barriers of participation but develop opportunities that will improve community involvement for the vulnerable.

Developmental approach also needs intersectoral collaboration such as Non-Governmental (NGO's) faith based, right based, community participation to address the challenges faced by foster parents when caring for adolescents foster children. Intersectoral collaboration guides the implementation and monitoring strategies to foster families that in turn provide a spirit of mutual support to foster parents post foster

care placement (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997). This White paper was implemented in South Africa to address poverty and inequality in the delivery of services.

Developmental approach encourages coordination of welfare services with other stakeholders, which allows DSWs to develop parenting programmes where one-on-one intervention will be created according to the foster parents' needs (Layland, 2019:176). In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the Universal Declaration of human rights with the aim to ensure that all human beings have rights (Austin, 2012:564; Henry, 2015:101). The World Health Organisation Constitution (1946) declares health and welfare services as essential rights for all.

After the collapse of apartheid in South Africa, human rights became fundamental, and the Constitution was promulgated to ensure these rights. South African children are protected by rights that are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Children 1999 (ACRWC), Children's Act, and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC). Chapter two of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa preserved human rights to all people in South Africa and affirms human dignity, equality and freedom.

Similarly, National Health Plan (1994:12) asserts that the National Health Act was created to provide a uniform health system which considered the obligation imposed by the Bill of rights. It was able to identify the previous inequalities and imbalances of health and welfare services and also the need to develop socioeconomic justice and fundamental human rights as well as improving health and welfare for all.

The principle of respect of human rights and dignity is essential in social work practice because self-determination is a human right to adhered to and determine if people are capable of self-governing (Austin, Bezuidenhout, Duplessis, Jordan, Lake, Moletsane, Nel, Pillay, Ure, Visser, Von Krosigk and Vorster, 2012:564; Henry, 2015:100). Designated social workers should facilitate social change in individuals, families, communities and strengthen the effective utilization of available resources (Turner, 2017:471). However, these DSWs could not implement the developmental social work

method due to the high caseloads of foster care placement. Within the framework of developmental approach, DSWs should focus on socio-economic development which embrace foster parent's right to participate on issues that affect them and take ownership (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017:167).

This approach reveals that DSWs engaged in holistic assessment and analysis of human rights and strengths (Berthold, 2015:20). The DSWs should ensure the realisation of human rights that will promote equal distribution of resources and power (Berthold, 2015:19).

Section 181 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, regards foster care as the principal source of alternative care that protects and nurtures children by providing a safe, healthy environment with positive support and promote permanency planning. The Department of Social Development depends on foster parents who are tasked to safeguard the welfare of adolescent foster children through the provision of conducive family environment.

In line with developmental method, DSWs are not able to do other programmes instead they rush for quantity because their level of performance is determined by the number of cases finalised than the impact of the cases conducted (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017:174). The same sentiment resonates with Muleya (2020:473) who argued that social workers are unable to contribute effectively to the development of programmes due to high caseloads of foster care cases. This might deprive children and adolescents in receiving psychosocial support from the social workers. For instance, children should live, nurtured in an enabling and caring environment that provides for all their needs psycho-socially and emotionally. In nature, human rights are interconnected, violation of a single right lead to the violation of other right which might affect their feelings, thoughts and behaviour (Tomlinson, Kleintjes & Lake, 2022:10). He further indicates that there is a gap in caring for children and adolescents in South Africa and such gap results in serious human rights deprivation.

Human rights motivate people to challenge or against unfair labour practice and oppression in the workplace or society at large (Thompson & Stepney, 2018:242). DSWs respect human rights by using their professional expertise in promoting voices and perspectives of clients who may be overlooked by those in power. With regard to

the rights for children, social workers assume the role of advocacy, challenging larger systems, inequality and injustice to ensure that their rights are heard and considered (The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics).

Advocacy is regarded as a professional mandate of social work practice; hence they should also promote social change by empowering foster parents to be change makers through active participation (NASW) Code of Ethics).

In the South African context, the protection of children and rights have been critical hence South Africa ratified the ACRWC in January 2000. Article two of the ACRWC defines a child as any person below the age of eighteen years who also have rights. These rights include the right to dignity, protection from harmful influences, exploitation, neglect and abuse, participation in cultural, social and economic activities Tomlinson et al., 2022:115. Although a child is defined differently by different countries with regard to their norms and standards (Suikkanen-Malin & Veistila, 2016:44).

The UNCRC is the utmost comprehensive global document on the rights of children which was adopted and ratified by the General Assembly on the 20th of November 1989. A child is described as an individual under the age of eighteen years except under the law applicable to the child is reached earlier (UNCRC). Article 12 of the (UNCRC) affirms the right of all children to express their opinions on matters that affect them and their voices should be taken into consideration according to child's age of maturity (Berthold, 2015:40). There are four main values of the convention namely: the right to life, non- discrimination, survival and development, protection against harmful and social life, commitment to the best interest of the child (United Nations Children's Fund, (UNICEF 2009:7).

Over three decades ago, participants of Alma-Alta Declaration noted that health is a basic human right. They gave recognition to the fact that promoting and protecting health is essential for human welfare and also for sustained economic and social development (WHO, 1997:17). It is for that reason that DSWs and clinical sociologists by the nature of their work are regarded as human right activists (Henry, 2015:101). Together with the key role players of foster care, DSWs should assume the role of facilitating and advocating for the rights of adolescent foster children. The right based approach changes the focus of human needs to human-rights and invite social workers

to better serve the interest of the people (foster parents and adolescents foster children) they serve (Berthold, 2015:9).

DSWs should enable foster parents to increase control over and improve their skills in order to contribute on issues affecting them and foster children (WHO, 1997:18). By so doing, they develop intervention strategies to address the challenges faced by foster parents and the needs of adolescent foster children.

Section 10 of the Children's Act affirms that every child has the right to participate on issues that affect them and provide clear guidance on their consent for medical treatment (Section 129 of the same Act). Section 28 of the Bill of rights outlined the right of children which include adolescents foster children that; "every child has the right to a family care or parental care or alternative care when removed from the family environment, to be protected from maltreatment, abuse or neglect to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services". The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) affirms that children require special care and treatment because of their vulnerability and that children have the right to grow up in the family environment. The approach supports people in making decisions and taking control of their situation because the main aspect of this approach suggest the right of all people to claim their rights through community involvement (Berthold, 2015:6). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) 2006, maintains the government' accountability on the rights of persons with disabilities that they should participates in civil, political, social, economic, and cultural matters equally.

Foster parents have parental responsibilities and rights as stipulated in Section 188 of the children's' Act which are in line with Section 31 (1) (b) of the same Act. They are also responsible for addressing the needs and the challenging behaviours of foster children. This is because they are entrusted with the care and protection of these children (Ntshongwane & Tanga, 2018:15). It is therefore important that they should consider the views and wishes voiced out by the affected children, bearing in mind the child's age of maturity (UNICEF, 2009:9). According Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017:166), there is little support provided to foster parents, specifically the elderly who are the single caregivers of foster children, and as such their capabilities are guarded by maternal deprivation. Most of them are unemployed and depend on foster care

grant for survival though they have the right for economic development which is not provided by the social workers.

Older Persons Act 143 of 2006 was proclaimed by the president of the Republic of South Africa in 2010 with the aim of empowering and protecting older persons' rights, status, well- being, safety, and security as well as economic development services (GDSD, 2022). This was also declared to promote socio-economic development programmes that acknowledge the wisdom and skills of older persons to ensure sustainable livelihood.

The rights of the children should be protected to raise a healthy generation (UNICEF, 2009:7). It is a priority in South Africa to raise children in a physically, socially, economically, mentally, healthy environment for care and protection (Suikkanen-Malin & Veistila, 2016:45). The Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1971 allows the different approaches for children accused of crimes while the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 develops the criminal process for children accused of criminal offences with the intention to protect the rights of children and adolescents foster children (GDSD, 2022). Austin (2008:564) reveals that the World Health Organisation (WHO) also promotes human rights for people with mental disorder. The above-mentioned legislations validate that adolescents foster children also hold the same rights that every child hold in South Africa.

The Department of Social Development is regarded as a multidisciplinary integrative field of practice in which group workers play a crucial role. Empowerment is a fundamental objective of social development activity internationally. Lee (2001:303) states that it needs an active engagement of stakeholders who have willingness to work together towards shared objectives. Empowerment theory was originally presented in 1983 by Ruby Pernell at the fifth Annual Symposium of the Association for the advancement of social work with groups (Turner, 2017:149). Empowerment approach was adopted primarily because it is suitable in addressing individuals, families and organizational resource difficulties (Lee, 2001:36).

Strengths and empowerment perspectives assist the clinical sociologist, DSW and the client to work together in identifying strengths and create goals as well as empowering clients to make positive changes (Ceulemans & Kuppens, 2018:302). Since social

work is an empowering profession, social workers assist individuals to develop their capabilities in various ways to increase their wellbeing (Lee, 2001:30).

Empowerment approach is utilized when social workers apply their knowledge and skills in obtaining resources to meet the needs of clients during case management (Lee, 2001:30). They use their knowledge through integrated method to deal with challenges faces by foster parents when caring for adolescents foster children post foster care placement. According to the White Paper of Social Welfare 1997, empowerment refers to the process of intensifying individuals personal and political power to enable them to improve their life situations. Turner (2017:148) and Meyer, Moore and Viljoen (2008:389) define empowerment as the process of giving authority to people to participate on issues that imposed by external forces and block problems solving. Empowerment in social work practice allows the social workers to develop effective intervention to deal with people's discomfort in accordance with social forces (Caiels, Milne, Brown & Hammond, 2021:5; Lee, 2001:34).

Hossen (2005:208) describes empowerment as a deliberate enhancement of client's awareness of their values and goals and clients' expression of these values and goals in their everyday behaviour. He further describes empowerment as the process of helping people redefine problematic aspects of their living conditions as an opportunity for change. It is regarded as a tool in which individuals, group and community improve mastery over their life affairs (Christens, 2012:542). According to Huss and Bos (2019:203), individual empowerment consists of the following three components:

a) An emotional (intrapersonal) which refers to self -perception of one's competence to use influence in socio-political domain;
b) The cognitive or interpersonal which describes the skills and critical understandings necessary for exercising socio-political impact, and
c) Behavioural component which means actions taken to exert influence.

Huss and Boss (2019:204) describe three settings that contribute concurrently to empowerment on individual, group and community level such as:

a) Social empowerment which refers to attaining effective and valuable roles;

b) Civic empowerment which means obtaining rights or the realization of goals within the community, and

c) Simultaneous empowerment refers to group- based process. Empowerment in the community is characterised by the belief system of the group, core activities, relational environment, opportunity role structure, leadership and setting groups.

Empowerment in social work practice enables social workers to foster social change through effective community participation (foster parents) to enhance resilience when raising adolescent foster children. While in sociology allows the clinical sociologist to identify social problems, analyse and how social system operate in order to enhance skills and knowledge (Little, 2014:3).

Empowerment approach has become a basis for social work and sociology because it assists clients develop resilience, ego-strengths, assertiveness, self-healing, mutual aid, activism and other coping strategies (Lee, 2001:30). Empowerment in the social work and sociological context, focuses on the achievement of the treatment goals and change by using available strengths and resources (Hossen, 2005:208). The researcher is of the view that it permits these professionals to support resourcefulness and creation of skills that eliminate social barriers for people and community.

Empowerment is not important for the clients only but also needed for the social work and sociology professionals. The goal of social work and sociology is to give power to the underprivileged by helping them accept the problem, identify the root cause of the problem, strengthen ability to change in order to prevent it from happening again (Hossen, 2005:198).

Foster parents' expression of their life situation (challenges faced with adolescents foster children) to provide the crucial subjective link between their self-understanding and their perception of their everyday lives.

Turner (2017:148) and Lee (2001:34) emphasise the following three interlocking dimensions of empowerment:

a) Development of positive and powerful sense of self;

b) Construction of knowledge and capacity for social and political realities of a person's environment, and

c) Cultivation of resources and strategies for achievement of personal and collective goals.

Empowerment process resides in a person (client) not the helper (social worker/clinical sociologist) (Lee, 2001:35). It is a developmental process (that starts with people's growth), psychological state (that enhances feelings of self-esteem and control) and liberation (promotes freedom and power) (Lee, 2001:38; Turner, 2017:150). These are forms of empowerments that focus on raising consciousness and wholeness of a person. Empowerment in social work practice means emphasizing, developing, nurturing strengths and positive attributes where foster parents are empowered to become change makers and find quality cost effective solutions to the challenges, they face with adolescents foster children (Turner, 2017:152).

According to Layland (2019:130), foster parents should be supported and empowered on parenting skills to help adolescent foster children to learn self-management skills such as problem solving and accept imperfections. It allows the DSWs to give authority to people to assist them create quality lives. Since empowerment put people to the centre of development process because it promotes community participation where people gain control over their lives and environment (Christens, 2012:542; Meyer *et al.*, 2008:389). The researcher is of the opinion that it helps the marginalised people to acquire valued resources, basic rights and achieve significant life goals relevant to their needs. In empowerment theory, the social worker assists the client in keeping hope alive through management of feelings (Turner, 2017:152).

In an empowerment approach, the social worker promotes reflection, awareness, thinking and problem solving on the person-environment (Turner, 2017:152). The intention is to promote and support foster parents and DSWs to think and act differently to enhance problem solving skills. In order for social workers to empower clients they serve, empowerment practice should be directed into three interrelated levels namely; personal, interpersonal and the political level (Lee, 2001:51; Turner, 2017:151). Gitterman, Knight and Germain (2021:92) viewed this empowerment in life model practice. Personal level of empowerment is significant because it recognises person's

unique life experiences and enhance potentialities for self-determination. Interpersonal level refers to the ability to influence one another through social interaction to achieve desired goals. This acknowledges the social environment as a variable influence's human functioning (Meyer *et al.,* 2008:35).

While political level provide freedom to people to participate in the community in order to develop skills that promote social change (Lee, 2001:52).

The four principles which are guiding the empowerment approach in the social work practice are listed below as follows:

a) Maintenance of the holistic method.
b) Encourage clients to be victor by assisting them to obtain resources needed instead of being a victim.
c) Promote client's responsibility of self-determination.
d) Establish mutual and reciprocal relationship with clients.

It is believed that social workers do not work in isolation, they collaborate with other stakeholders to bring social change in the life of people through sustainable community (Thompson & Stepney, 2018:235). Turner (2017:466) emphasized that social workers can introduce the Biopsychosocial Interactional perspective (BPSI) during case management. This perspective believes that behaviour could not be understood using a single approach, multiple biological, psychological and social factors interact (Austin et al., 2012:80). BPSI model is personal and social change oriented and supports the integration of different theoretical approach to social work treatment (Turner, 2017:460). Social change can be obtained through the promotion of socioeconomic development at macro level with the key stakeholders to create enabling environment (Muleya, 2020:473). On the basis of the abovementioned theory, the researcher is of the view that there is link between illness and lack of social support as foster parents and adolescent foster children feel neglected and isolated without support from the DSWs.

In an integrated approach, social workers employ both theories and methods such as problem solving, cognitive-behavioural, and family structural approaches to meet the needs of foster parents and adolescents foster children in their care (Turner,

2017:466). He further asserts that they should put integrated therapeutic foster care plans and support to empower the foster parent and the adolescent foster child to assume the parental role and build self-esteem based on child's role expectation and responsibilities.

Social workers in practice use specific skills such as dynamic interviewing and knowledge of group, community and individual psycho-social functioning integrated into casework, group work and community organizations for effective intervention (Strean, 1978:4).

The integration of theories can assist in the assessment, examining and guiding treatment under conditions where complex role functioning is required for modifying problems, risks, needs, and harm as well as actualizing strengths and resilience (Turner, 2017:460). People are unique with their circumstances and trials, therefore there will be no set of recipes of what collaborations will be required (Miller, 2019:18). This can assist social workers to deal with the challenges faced by foster parents and play an important role in the development of guidelines for social work intervention. DSWs are able to provide behaviourally based intervention to foster parent to address the dynamics that they encounter with adolescents foster children.

2.3 Symbolic Interaction Theory

The Symbolic Interaction (SI) is a school of thoughts in sociology that explains social behaviours in terms of how people interact with each other using symbols (Husin, Rahman & Mukhtar, 2021:112). It focuses on people's use of language during interactions, thus social structures are best understood in terms of such interactions (Carter & Fuller, 2015:2). The researcher herein believes that language gives people a means by which they negotiate meaning through symbols. SI was adopted and used by the researcher as a theoretical framework in sociology to guide in exploring the challenges encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children. Symbolic Interaction theory offers a researcher a valuable lens through which people explore symbols, meanings and interactions from their perceptions and their daily experiences (Wojciak, 2014:8). The researcher believes that social interaction with others does assist in the moulding of human behaviour.

Symbolic Interactionist theory focuses on ways on how society is developed and maintained through individuals' face to face reciprocal interactions within their environment (Pansiri 2023:351). SI permits the researcher to focus on the subjective views of participants and how they make sense of the experiences from their own perception (Pansiri, 2023:354; Carter & Fuller, 2015:2). SI is viewed as the study of individuals on how they interact with each other and their environment depending on how they interpret factors such as language, actions, statuses etc (Husin, Rahman & Mukhtar, 2021:114).

On the basis of the above definition, the researcher defines SI as the theory utilized to examine how people interact with each other, and their environment based on their interpretations of the situation.

This interaction can be with social objects (foster parents and social workers) how the researcher interacts with them during data collection to explore the challenges encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children. In SI, the researcher examines the interactions between foster parents and adolescent foster children, their parenting styles, conflict management and emotional support. SI functions under the following three concepts as described below:

Symbols are defined as the building blocks of social interactions such as words, gestures, objects and behaviours that convey shared meaning within a particular group (Low & Thomson, 2021:104). Human beings are unique in their ability to use symbols. (Pansiri, 2023:353). It is concerned with how people assign meaning to symbols in their interaction and come to define circumstances (Pansiri, 2023:352). The researcher believes that people do not just take the information received from others through social interactions but they work with the information and develop their interpretation of meaning. **Meaning** comes from interactions between individuals (Carter & Fuller, 2015:1)**.** People act towards things based on the meaning those things have for them (Carter & Fuller, 2015:2). For example, the way foster parents interpret the behaviours of adolescent foster children and how their interpretations shape their relationship towards management of the challenges faced. **Interaction** of things guides the manner in which people view things and behaviour based on what they believe rather than on what is objectively true (Crossman, 2020:1). In SI, the researcher would be more interested in how individuals (foster parents and social

workers) interact, influence and shape each other's action during communication (language and symbols) with adolescent foster children to negotiate family norms, values and beliefs (Wojciak, 2014:8). The researcher is of the opinion that people make meaning based on social interaction and those interaction can influence people's conduct (adolescent foster children).

2.4 Ecological Theory

The current section gives background to the ecological theory of human development and its relevance to the study. There are two other perspectives that are embedded in ecological theory such as system theory and person- in-environment.

2.4.1. Origin of Ecological Theory

According to Turner (2017:288), ecology explores the relationship between living organisms of social and physical environment. Ecological theory is the study of interdependence and interaction between organisms and their environment. It has developed from the early works of Germain (1973), Barker (1973) and Grinnell (1973) and brought into effective social work practice (Payne, 2021: 7). The ecological theory provides a conceptual framework that assists social workers to focus on people and their environment and that all things in nature are related to each other (Cheung & Leung, 2020:2). According to Ettekal and Mahoney (2017:6), Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory explains how a child's development is influenced by various types of environmental systems. He revised his original theory to bioecological systems theory, stressing the role of people in the developmental process.

In ecological theory, social workers remove environmental barriers and sociocultural biases that can increase personal and justice concerns to the community (Cheung & Leung, 2020:2). For example, adolescent foster child with contagious illness can develop to school concern because it can pass to other learners.

Ecological theory permits the social worker to move from micro level of intervention to macro level social treatment (Teater & Hannan, 2021:118). Family matters that were viewed as private issues may become public concerns because of its negative

influence on the community. The main purpose of ecological theory in social work is problem solving drawing from the cognitive and behavioural theories. When implementing ecological theory, the social worker screens and asses the problem comprehensively in order to plan effective social work intervention (Cheung & Leung, 2020:2).

Ecologically, a family is the most close and influential environment in which human development takes place (Lee, 2001:146). A family is viewed as an environment for nurturing, educating human beings and a source of strengths, support and mechanisms for people to interact as well as ensuring stability and generational continuity (Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, Lloyd & Leung, 2013:5). These children experienced adaptation challenges because of the splits between human nature and human culture, a separation from their roots to live with foster parents (Helwig, 1994:20). The researcher believed that it is significant for the adolescent foster children to have families in order to have biological ties.

There are few concepts of ecological theory, namely: (a) ecological thinking and reciprocity of person- environment exchanges, (b) adaptation potential, (c) life stressors, stress and coping abilities, (d) withholding of power and oppression and technological pollution, (e) human relatedness, (f) resilience and competence, (g) self-direction, and self-esteem or identify (Gitterman, Knight & Germain, 2021:51; Lee, 2001:142). These are explained in detail below.

a) The ecological thinking concentrates more on reciprocity whereby the social worker focuses on family transaction and how the changes lead to unsatisfactory behaviours as well as the environmental factors such as, peer pressure, health issues, school, workplace bearing in mind that the family is an open system.

b) Adaptation is action oriented because it provides adjustment to a person 's life situation by securing necessary resources from the environment.

c) Life stressors such as continuous poverty and discrimination impends the level of fit and lead to physiological and emotional stress to people. It necessitates coping measures that needs an environment to provide hope and sources of motivation for a person to live and grow.

d) Coping is whereby as person prioritizes goals that necessitate problem solving skills to manage life stressors.

e) Power and oppression focus on issues of unequal cultural practices that threatens the level of fit in people and their environment such as painful life transitions, dysfunctional interpersonal family processes.

He further describes human relatedness as the capacity of people from birth to develop attachment, the bond for human connection and protection. The above-mentioned perspectives are transactional, personal and environmental, their functions are interrelated. There is a link between some of the concepts of ecological theory such as adaptation and attachment theory. Attachment is recognised as an adaptation to threat to children's survival in family settings (Hart, 2017:263). For Example, birth of a baby in the foster family poses threat to other siblings competing for parental resources.
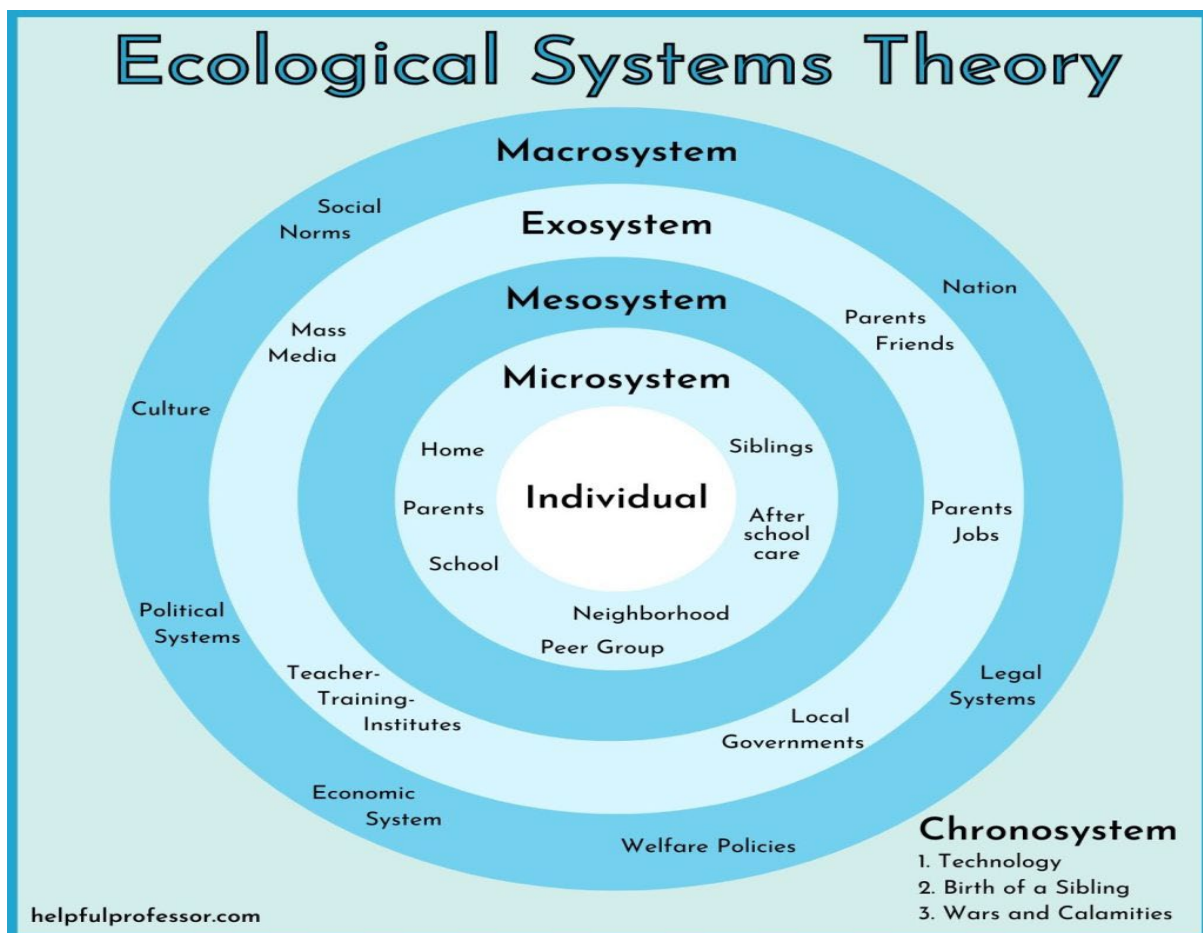
Figure 2.1: Ecological Systems Theory

The illustration in Figure 2.1 above outlines the ecological systems theory as discussed above. In formulating the research question, the theoretical framework of ecology was adopted as a guiding principle. Unlike approaches that attribute issues solely to the individual or the environment, ecology places emphasis on the interactions between individuals and their surrounding environment. The intervention objectives centre on enhancing the adaptive capabilities of individuals and their families, while also fostering greater responsiveness from the environment and organizations upon which they rely (Crawford, 2020).

Traditional practices have often been rooted in a medical model that perceives clients as dependent, giving more prominence to the individual than their situational context. Historical training and understanding of human development have been predominantly influenced by psychoanalytic theories that concentrate on individual aspects, proving inadequate for comprehending family systems.

While knowledge of individual psychological development is crucial, it has been acknowledged that child welfare professionals must possess an understanding of family systems within their intricate environments and the evolving nature of these systems over time, as noted by Laird in 1979.

The ecological theory serves as a pertinent foundation for examining child welfare issues, particularly considering the intricate connections between children in foster care and their biological and foster families. The well-being of children and families relies on external sources of support for normal development and comfortable living. In the context of foster care, these supportive elements encompass social workers, agencies, and various environmental factors. Rather than isolating one element, such as the child, family, or environment, the focus is on understanding the relationships among these elements, offering a more comprehensive view of the transactions that shape success or failure within the foster care component of our child welfare system.

Ecological and systems theory influence each other and allows the social worker to analyse the distinctive environmental experiences that affect the client's life practices (Gitterman, Knight & Germain, 2021:52). The perspectives help the social workers to realise the interdependence and connectedness of all living and non-living systems

(Lee, 2001:24). The role of the social workers is to maintain a dual simultaneous attention on people and their environment (Turner, 2017:287). In ecological theory, functioning improves when people have access to resources or when external systems are engaged with the person. Social workers put more focus on helping clients identify environmental factors that causes strain in their lives for them to gain power and mastery (Lee, 2001:39). In other words, it enables the social workers to assist foster parents to respond to environmental factors that support adolescents foster children development, health and satisfaction as well as social functioning. Ecological theory is characterised by environmental systems which are viewed as interdependent systems (Deacon & Macdonald, 2017:88).

The micro system is the most proximal ecological level that includes the surrounding in which the child directly interacts. It is the child immediate environment such as family school, friends, and neighbours.

Meso system is concerned with the social connection the child has at school. It is the interaction and relationship between various elements of microsystem, for example, if the adolescent child experiences violence at home he /she may display distress behaviour which may have impact on the relationship with educators and friends. It develops when a person moves from one position to another. For the foster parent, it can be family, work and social life.

Macro system consists of beliefs, culture, practices, policies, social norms and values that influences how society or family view themselves and function. The belief system that the adolescent child needs to adjust to in the new environment (repeated transfer of foster care placement).

Exo-system refers to the settings that do not include individual but the events in the setting have impact on individuals' growth. It comprises of broader social context, political, legal, educational, and health, extended family, parents' workplace. For example, a father losing a job, it will affect the child indirectly as well as the component of micro system. In the same way, each system has influence on the other, transactions between systems also have influence on the realities of children and families (Turner, 2017:245). For instance, exo-system may include punitive laws that

may increase the probability that includes the removal of a child from parental care to foster care placement.

The chronosystem is viewed as the significant transition in the person's life from childhood to adulthood (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017:6). For example, major events such as divorce, death, foster parents' disruption which alter family lifestyle have an impact on child's growth. These may also affect the adolescent's difficulty in building relationship with people in future.

However, the most systems that have immediate impact on the child is the microsystem, macro and chronosystem (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017:3). These various systems might directly or indirectly affect child's development particularly for adolescents.

Child development is best understood when looking at the environment where the child is brought up because ecological perspectives offered a balance between the person and environment (Thompson & Stepney, 2018:202). The researcher believes that this theory emphasizes the importance of environment for human well-being.

Ecological theory was employed by the researcher as a framework because it permits the researcher to explore the dynamics encountered by foster parent when raising adolescent foster children (Bray & Dawes, 2016). It also allows the researcher to explore the perception of the DSW's on the support that they offer foster parents post foster care placement. This will also enable the researcher to develop a guideline based on their perceptions and needs for social work intervention.

According to Gitterman, Knight and Germain (2021:94), ecological theory integrates method of practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations or community. It provides the conceptual framework that gives a dual focus on people and their environment (Turner, 2017:287). Ecological theory of human development gives the researcher an opportunity to gain insight about the participants (foster parents and DSW's) and their environment. Bronfenbrenner asserts that to understand the development of an individual, one should focus more on the child and his interaction

with the social environment (foster parent adolescents child relations, biological family, socio-cultural settings) (Thompson & Stepney, 2018:203).

Ecological theory focuses on the importance of natural resources used to influence the relationship between human communities and the physical environment (Deacon & Macdonald, 2017:90; Gitterman, Knight & Germain, 2021:52). The physical environment is characterised by space, infrastructures or buildings erected, where people live, work and socialise or play (Thompson & Stepney, 2018:203). Social environment includes social relationships namely family and friends, the kind of home an individual lives, kind of job a person occupies, life stressors, principles as well as regulations that guide a person's behaviour (Deacon & Macdonald, 2017:90; Gitterman, Knight & Germain, 2021:52).

Social worker uses holistic approach to assess people because poor adaptation or lack of fit in physical and social environment can be detrimental to adolescent foster children (Teater & Hannan, 2021:25; Thompson and Stepney, 2018:232). For social workers to foster possible change in individuals, human development, physical and social environment should be assessed together. The researcher is of the view that there is a need to integrate these environments because they both have impact in the well-being of an individual.

Turner (2017:288) states that social workers should apply the life model to enable clients improve the level of appropriateness with their environment when applying the ecological perspectives. Life model identifies and involves the environmental supports that enhance the coping mechanisms and adaptive methods of the foster parents. In social work perspective ecological theory stresses the goodness of fit and the interdependence between individuals and their environments (Deacon & Macdonald, 2017:89). Ecological theory reflects the whole system in which people functions in order for them to better know and understand their interactions with their environment (Teater & Hannan, 2021:126; Caputi, 1982:105). In social work practice, ecological theory addresses the cycle of problem formulation, resolution and evaluation (Cheung and Leung, 2020:3; Matthies & Narhi, 2017:205).

These stages are:

a) Development of competence by entering the client's life.
b) Identify resources and constraints in the environment.
c) Ongoing process towards setting goals and objectives.
d) assessment and identifying strengths, weaknesses and sociocultural barriers.
e) Implement service plans.
f) Measure success and evaluate outcomes.
g) Sensitive termination of services or case closure.

In social work practice, each stage includes interaction, engagement, assessment of adolescents 'foster children and their environment in order to develop proper strategies for intervention.

Social workers have expertise and duty bound by ethical codes to interact with clients and their environment in their day-to-day practice (Huss & Boss, 2019: 18).

With ecological theory, social workers should be knowledgeable with the assessment framework introduced in their practice that consist of child's developmental needs (emotional and behavioural development, family and social relationships), parenting capacity (care and protection, stability), and family and environmental factors (family history and functioning, community resources, housing, employment) (Mijlof, Roman & Edna, 2020).

The researcher is of the view that assessment framework enables the social workers to strengthen the parenting skills of foster parents in order to safeguard and promote welfare needs of adolescents foster children. Bray and Dawes (2016) disclose that parental abilities to shape the lives of the adolescent's foster children lies with the roles played by foster parents, group, and the entire community in facilitating transition from childhood to adulthood.

Ecological theory permits the social worker to effectively assesses challenges and recognizes needs from five different systems such as individual, family, group, organization and the community (Teater & Hanan 2021:126, Matthies & Narhi, 2017:211). For the social worker to work with the five different systems, six professional roles have been identified:

a) Conferee- primary assistance of the clientsulken.

b) Enabler-facilitate and enhance system function.

c) Broker-linking the client with resources.

d) Mediator-neutral person during conflict.

e) Advocate -Secure resources on behalf of children.

f) Guardian-protection action for clients.

The above-named professional roles are used by social worker to ensure equilibrium or adaptation between people and environment. For the sake of the study, the DSW's assume the professional role by promoting environmental justice and environmental issues as well as assessing the impact to ensure goodness of fit between foster parents and adolescents foster children.

Ecological theory embraces the study of human development, the joint product of person, context, process and time should be understood (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017:5). Further, Bronfenbrenner's theory emphasizes human development within the process-person-context-time (PPCT). Person factors refer to people's traits that interact with the environment to influence development while context means the five ecological systems (micro, meso, exo, chrono and macro systems) (Cheung & Leung, 2020:2). Process refers to mutual exchanges between developing human organisms and immediate external environment called proximal process which happens in the explicit time and place (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017:5). This joint product allows the DSW's to explore the individual's interaction with the environment, their perception, their response to it and how their reaction within the environment influence them (Deacon & Macdonald, 2017: 89; Meyer, 2008:465).

According to Emovon, Gutura and Ntombela (2019:18), mutual exchanges provide the opportunity for role players to learn, gain insight and integrate aspects of their beliefs, norms and social existence to survival and continuity. With regard to the study, proximal process is associated with the social workers, adolescents foster children and foster parent's relations and interaction because it relates to socialisation. It puts children in the micro systems which refer to the child's immediate surrounding (foster family) where children have direct interaction and spend most of their time (Emovon,

2019:44). The researcher is of the opinion that adolescent foster children are nurtured by foster parents such as relatives or non-relatives and protected by key role-players who render services to them.

2.5 Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is developed by John Bowly (1907-1990) and Mary Ainsworth (1913-199) with the key opinion that human infants are commonly seeking bond from the parents or caregivers (Miljlof, Roman & Edna, 2020). According to Bowlby's attachment theory children are born biologically programmed to develop attachment with adults for their survival and development. Bowly defines attachment as a behavioural control that maintains the safety and security of infants and children through the care protection of a caregiver (Shaw & Pae'z, 2007:69). With reference to the study, attachment means an interaction or contact between foster parent and adolescents foster children that provide love, care and protection.

Furthermore, attachment is significant for the functioning of the relationship from cradle to the grave (Scharfe, 2017:1). Erozkan, (2016:1072) argued that parents or caregivers who are unresponsive to their children's needs due to life stressors such as depression, domestic violence, substance abuse are more likely to cause insecure attachment to these children (Erozkan, 2016:1072; Layland 2019:179). Trauma such as child's abandonment, abuse, neglect, separation, loss, violence, divorce was viewed as the major destructive factor of attachment relationship and may also damage children's ability to form attachment (Erozkan, 2016:1076). Social workers should provide a multisystem intervention (beneficial and non-beneficial behaviour of a child) to families, (foster parents) school and community to develop a stable, safe and supportive environment that will enhance trusting relationship secure attachment (Shaw & Paez', 2007:73).

According to Thomson (2017:10), attachment theory seeks to assist the social workers to understand the important of parent - child attachment patterns and the implication with regards to child 's development and adult life. Attachment theory further assists the social worker to assess social worker-client relationship and understand how past

experiences of the child can impact the child's behaviour and abilities (Teater, 2019:11). Layland (2019:179) believes that poor parenting such as insecure attachment is associated with children's behavioural challenges.

Layland (2019) further explains that since there a link between lack of attachment and child behavioural problems, attachment theory in social work practice should be useful in promoting attachment relationship that will lessen behavioural difficulties associated with adolescent foster children.
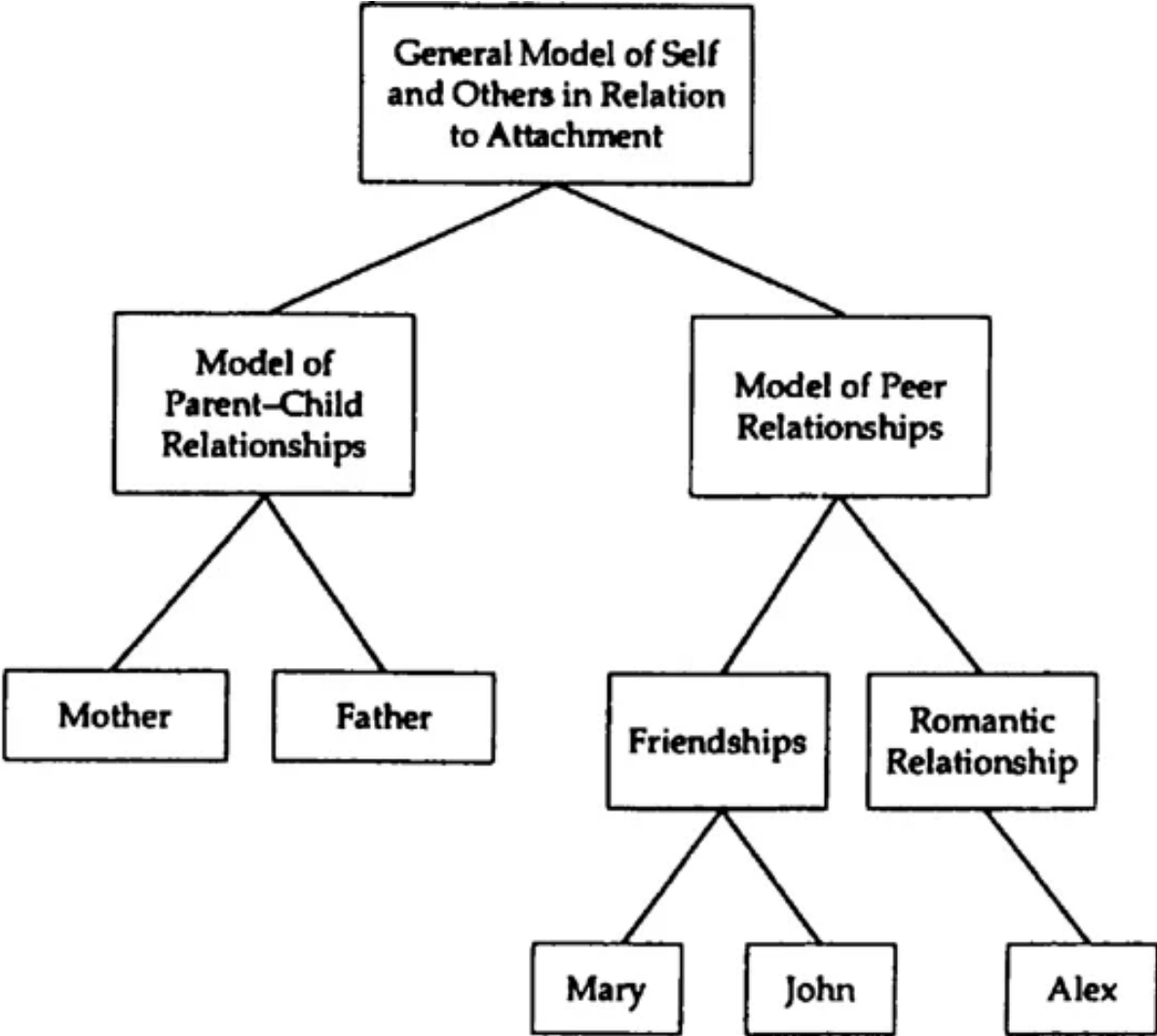
SOURCE: Collins and Read (1994).

Figure 2.2: General model of self and others in relation to attachment

The above illustration in Figure 2.2 above depicts the nature of the relation attachment model between the self and others, as discussed above. The researcher herein

believes that the attachment theory is aimed at strengthening relationships and intensify development in children.

Notably, adolescent foster children still experience insecure attachment or lack of support following the death of their parents in which they are moved to another placement or others consider marriage as an option for support (Jamieson, Bery & Lake, 2017:45). People who have suffered attachment disorder due to traumatic events are likely to experience developmental difficulties such as trouble with relationships, self-esteem, trust management, loyalty, self-confidence, spiritual development and identity (Erozkan, 2016:1072). According to Bowly (1969:176), past experiences of people affect social, emotional and psychological development and functioning which further impact new relations and interaction in people's lives. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of past relationships in determining how people develop new relationships with others in future. Attachment theory enables social workers to assist foster parents to secure healthy relationship that will provide a sense of protection from the impact of trauma so as to regulate emotional arousal to adolescent foster children from the impact of trauma (Erozkan, 2016:1071).

Human relatedness is restorative and critical for healthy life functioning hence social workers should enhance therapy and assist people in restoring relatedness. Children who fit best outside their homes are children who have moulded secure attachment with their family members or foster parents (Suikkanen-Malin & Veistila, 2016:66). Teater (2019:10) agrees that a child who was made to feel safe and offered appropriate attention and affection, such child will develop relationships and interact with others in a way that imitate these positive relations. It is believed that a strong bond between the foster parent and adolescents' foster child create a safe environment and confidence to the child. A healthy relationship and cooperation between the foster child, social worker and foster parents is seen as important for the best interest of the child as well-defined by the UNCRC 1989 (Suikkanen-Malin & Veistila, 2016:66).

2.6 Systems Theory

System theory originates from general systems theory which was developed by Ludwig Bertalanffy in 1930 who scrutinized that together produce a functional whole (Payne, 2021: 215; Teater, 2019:17).

Furthermore, Pincus and Minahan (1973,1977) and Goldstein (1973,1977) were among the first theorists to apply system theory in social work practice. Thompson (2017:204) defines a system as a way of seeing individuals or groups that are linked together across various parts of the system for example families, schools and community are regarded as interconnected. Just like human body consist of number of systems such as nervous system, the respiratory system, endocrine system etc. (Musson, 2017:56). Since a system is goal focused, the researcher believes that systems theory is mainly utilized by clinical sociologists and social workers during assessment and planning to determine intervention on individual, groups and community. In social work practice, role interaction and transaction are considered parts of the larger system of people 's behaviour with the desire for equilibrium (Payne, 2021:215; Strean, 1978:28).

Systems theory is a system of processes of interaction between people and the environment (Musson, 2017:56). Systems theory remind us that human personality is an exposed system with constant interaction with its surroundings which receives provocations from the environment and transaction to maintain homeostasis (Thompson & Stepney, 2018: 209). For example, the behaviour of the adolescent foster children cannot be understood without referring to the system in which they belong because change in one part of the system inevitably lead to change in the other. In systems theory, social worker brings change through manipulating the systems, their relationships and their environment (Cheung & Leung, 2020:4). In other words, systems theory reminds the social worker and the clinical sociologist that individuals' problems are integrated, hence problems cannot be resolved effectively when they are observed in isolation from other interrelated systems.

With regard to systems theory, social workers assess and examine how the systems affect people's behaviour by developing strategies based on the system to provide a treatment plan for the clients (Teater, 2019:17). System theory plays a very critical

role in shaping the perception of an individual. Just like a family which is viewed as social system. A family is the child 's immediate system which is responsible for the upbringing of the child. Foster family is regarded as a system which serves as a support system for children in foster care and foster parents also play a crucial role in socialisation (Khaba, 2017:31). She further emphasizes that system theory may motivate adolescent foster children to become best parents to their children.

In the same way, human behaviour consists of what people do, observe and unobservable such as overt actions, covert speech, views, and cognition, feelings and dreams (Turner, 2017:476). In other words, most of human behaviour is learned through life experiences hence socialization. The researcher believes that in most cases children tend to imitate behaviour of adults through observation and social interaction in their environments. System functions best when carefully used. According to Ritzer and Stepnisky (2017:244), socialization and social control are regarded as the core tools that permit social system to maintain sense of balance. Social workers should assist clients to change the behaviour that they believe is challenging in their lives.

The main assumption of systems theory is that change is constant because change is regarded as the adjustment outside the system. Another assumption of a system perspective is the interrelatedness of all parts of the systems that everything is connected (Payne, 2021:225). A change in one part of the system has a potential change on the other part of the system (Teater, 2019:25). Just like a family which is interconnected, people in the family are connected within the larger system.

Isolation and disconnectedness have an opportunity to foster poor sense of wellbeing while rich combination and connectedness foster a healthy wellbeing and improve functioning (Musson, 2017:64). This could be the reason why adolescent foster children move from one placement to another. A family is viewed as a system that is stable and maintains boundaries with their environments and control the environmental distinctions (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017:242). Families are viewed as systems and family members (adolescents foster children and foster parents) become the role players. For instance, social worker examines how subsystems of the family such as parents, spouse, child, siblings, stepparents, foster parents work together in

order to address challenges experienced in the family (Teater, 2020:25). The researcher suggests that dealing with foster care placement and supervision social workers should assume the role to assist foster parents and adolescent foster children in maintaining equilibrium of a system.

System theory assumes that human behaviour is the results of larger system which contains several elements and external factors such as environment. For example, the environment and cognitive features where the child grow may be influential to the child's behaviour. Bandura (1971) argues that the behaviour of people models the behaviour of others through observation and imitating people around them. This means that a child's behaviour can change through observing other people's behaviour or due to environment in which the child lives. With regard to social learning in social work practice, children can learn the behaviour of their parents and perform it later in life such as models who are highly observable and competent perceived to have power and prestige and are more likely to be imitated (Over, 2020:95). For example, social worker can use social learning theory to understand why adolescents foster children misuses drugs because they have seen their parent and peers misusing drugs (Smith, 2021:15). Mashiloane (2016:21) argues that foster children who have experienced multiple placements are obliged to learn new family values and rules and to adapt to a new environment with every new placement.

Person and environment interaction includes perception, selection, evocations and manipulations. In other words, is how a person interprets the environment, the way in which he or she chooses situations, friends or hobbies as well as the manner in which people influence one another (Payne, 2021: 227). Person-in-environment (PIE) was developed in social work practice by Jane Adams (1910) and Mary Richmond in 1917, 1922 with the prominence of individual's interaction and their environment (Teater, 2019:203). PIE perspectives allow the social workers to provide basis for identifying strengths and seeing the client's system as part of the environment (Gitterman, Knight & Germain, 2021.97). Payne (2021:227) argued that person and environment cannot be defined separately, they are regarded as interdependent variables. PIE argues that a social worker cannot understand and change the client's situation without considering the environment in which a person lives (Teater, 2019:202). Social workers adopt person-in -environment primarily to intrapersonal and social interaction

that addresses the social environment of a person (Thompson, 2017:203). PIE assessment method supports the social worker and client to consider mental health problems that might affect the client in meeting desired goals or expectations (Turner, 2017:459). For instance, if the foster parent capacity is compromised by mental health challenges such as substances addiction, then may jeopardise child development.

He further explains that it also supports them to consider physical problems that might interact with social role functioning and related personal, social, and environmental problems. For example, a foster parent who had seriously impaired stroke might have impact on community role, self -identity related to employee roles and instrumental role such as driving a vehicle may not be likely be permitted. Therefore, the progress of resuming desired and expected role functioning might be slow or stagnant which sometimes has impact in the social system (family). Social worker should play the role of advocacy to help the person improve the level of fit through adaptive behaviour or learning new skills (Musson, 2017:54). With regard to PIE, social workers are responsible in oiling the wheels of people to promote social change and development, social cohesion and freedom of people (Musson, 2017:72). It is fundamental to understand that a situation of individuals cannot be changed by social workers without taking into account their environment.

According to Gitterman, Knight and Germain (2021:55), person-in-environment is vital in social work practice because it helps in promoting self-determination and the ability to access available resources within their environment. When the favourable fit exists, people perceived the availability of resources while the unfavourable fit occurs people experiences strain in their lives. With regard to adolescent foster children, PIE enables the social workers to connect them with resources that will promote change in their lives (Gitterman, Knight & Germain, 2021:55; Musson, 2017:55). For example, during the time of abuse or ill-treatment, adolescent foster children are transferred to another placement to promote safety and care. Foster parents should gain strength and be resilient or flexible by focusing on developing ability and capacity to respond to the future changes (Miller, 2019:81).

2.7 Strengths-Based Perspective

Teater (2020:38) describes strengths-based perspective as the way of working with clients focusing on their strengths, abilities, resources and achievements. In other words, it is how people identify their capabilities and environment appropriateness.

The major purpose of strength based is empowerment and social change in which a social worker aims to work with individuals, promoting and facilitating growth and self-fulfilment. It often adopted by social workers from assessment to intervention in which social workers should provide guidance, help clients reflect and use their strengths to come up with coping skills that will directly and indirectly work for them (Turner, 2017:417). It was developed in 1980's to bring the social work practice to its basis. Pulla (2012:55) found that different strengths-based perspectives arose as alternatives to the dominant models of social work practice.

Turner (2017:417) reveals that strengths perspective was promoted as a new method of social work practice in 1997 by Saleebey who emphasized that utilizing this method means refocusing on social workers role in helping clients. The social worker should identify, mobilize and build on people's strengths and resilience (Gitterman, Knight & German, 2021:178). In strength-based perspective, social workers help people learn to realize and appreciate their strengths and positive qualities within themselves (Barnes-Lee, 2020; Weick, Rapp, Sullivan & Kisthardt, 1989).

Saleeby has identified principles of strength perspective:

a) An understanding that every individual, group, family and community has strengths. Social worker should assume the responsibility of identifying and building strength of foster parents rather than focusing on their weaknesses. Additionally, strengths-based perspective enabled the social worker to consider various questioning methods in obtaining strengths that might bring change to people (Pulla, 2012:61). For example, social worker asked survival questions, support questions or change questions such as what has worked and how have you managed as well as exploring what did not work and why. The perspectives mandate a different way of looking at foster parent's competences and abilities

for growth when raising adolescent foster children. These are outlined as follows:

b) Trauma and abuse may be the source of opportunities and challenges. Social workers should identify their strengths and resilience gained through their life experiences and facilitate it to capacitate and acknowledge the strengths and resilience of foster parents acquired through their challenges.

c) Clients are best served through collaboration. With regard to strengths based, social workers and role players of foster care placement should collaborate on inherent strength of individuals, families, groups and community to aid their recovery and empowerment (Barnes-Lee, 2020; Pulla, 2012:52).

d) Social workers believe that every environment has adequate resources. In the setting where resources are scarce, the environment is viewed as less powerful.

e) Importance of caring and caretaking in strength-based perspective. Caring of adolescent foster children is essential in social work practice and it begins in the family where relationship foster growth while social support and resilience are interrelated to the wellbeing.

There are three other strengths- based perspective namely: person centred approach, narrative therapy and solution focused practice (Deacon & Macdonald, 2017:118; Pulla, 2012:57). It was developed to move the social work focus on identifying strengths and abilities of clients through collaborative relations strengths can be framed with three points. (CPR) whereby C symbolises Competencies, Capacities, Courage, P symbolises Promise, Possibilities, and R signifies Resilience, Reserves and Resourcefulness (Saleebey, 1996:301). In other words, strengths- based approach allows the social workers to work together with client in identifying strengths and resources that can be used in fostering control of situation and development (Pulla, 2012:62). It is assessing what went wrong, how and what can be done to improve the operation.

It is an approach that social workers and clients focus on what client already doing and used such strength to assist them achieve the self-determined goal (Turner, 2017:50; Hammond; Zimmerman, 2010:10). Pulla (2012:57) believes that social workers use the self-determined goals during evaluation because strength-based perspective is goal oriented.

The social workers in the study cited above adopted the strength-based approach to assist clients to bounce back from challenges and to use their support system as a basis of resilience. Layland (2019:81) claims that foster parents should gain strength and become resilient to be able to communicate openly with adolescents foster children in order to deal with difficulties they face in their lives.

In strengths-based approach, social workers should assist clients by strengthening behaviour change programmes that will improve the lives of adolescent foster children. On the other hand, Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017:167) emphasized that in order to strengthen foster care families, conducive environment for the development of adolescents should be provided.

3. Conclusion

This chapter provided an indication of the theories utilized to guide the study in exploring the dynamics of caring for adolescent foster children and developing post-placement guidelines for social work intervention. The chapter provided a clear understanding of the study and also provided some insights for the professionals and stakeholders that deal with foster care system in the Sedibeng District. The researcher attempted to use various theories and methods such as integrated approach, symbolic interaction theory, attachment theory, ecological theory, systems theory and strengths-based theory which have provided clearer lens to the study. These theories have clarified the interconnectedness between people and their environment and their interaction. As shown in the discussion above, this interaction is reciprocal and necessary for change. This is because it emphasizes the importance of understanding the patterns of how people interact with their environment and the impact of their behaviour over time. These theories emphasize the importance of equilibrium between individual, family, group and community in order to gain power and control of their lives.

The next chapter will outline the research process and methodology applied in the current study.

CHAPTER 3

APPLICATION OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS

3.1   Introduction

This chapter describes comprehensively how the research has been conducted such as the research approach, research design, population and sampling methods, data collection and data analysis. The researcher used different theories to conduct the study in order to address the challenges encountered by foster parents as well as the perceptions of designated social workers post foster care placement. Therefore, the study has been undertaken in Sedibeng District with twenty foster parents who have raised adolescent foster children and five designated social workers who worked with foster care placement and supervision.

3.2   Research Methodology

In scientific research, it is significant that the study is guided by methodology because methodology is a process on how the study is been conducted. Tracy (2020:49) defines research methodology as approaches and ways that direct the researcher in conducting the study. Since the research methodology is guided by the research questions, the researcher desires to react to the research questions as outlined in chapter 1 such as what are the challenges of caring for adolescents foster children? What support do social workers provide to foster parents to deal with the challenges of raising adolescents' foster children? (Maree, 2016:54). For the researcher to better understand the background of the respondents, she visited the locations of the participants such as the homes of the foster parents and workplaces of the designated social workers (DSW's) to gather data personally (Pope & Mays, 2020:47). For that reason, semi-structured interviews were utilized to explore the perceptions and experiences encountered by foster parents when caring for the adolescent foster children in their locations (Creswell, 2012:46).

Semi-structured interview is the process where questions are detailed and developed long before the interview begins (Maree, 2016:93). It allows the researcher to be an

active listener in order probe for follow up questions that emerge from participants. Therefore, a comprehensive description of the research approach and the research design used are outlined below.

3.3   Research Approach

According to Creswell (2018:40) scientific method consists of different research approaches, namely: qualitative (which uses words and open-ended questions), quantitative (uses numbers and closed-ended questions) and mixed method (integrates both qualitative and qualitative method). In qualitative research, the results are not representative of the whole population as the researcher drew a smaller sample size from the area under study. The researcher applied qualitative research which has been defined as a plan of specifying data collection and data analysis intended at understanding participants' perceptions and experiences in the contextual environmental systems (Maree, 2016: 72).

According to Creswell (2014:42), qualitative research emanates from anthropology, sociology, the humanities and evaluation.   It is a method of discovering and understanding the meaning of the people with the intention of describing their experiences through data collection instruments (Kamal, 2019:1387).   Qualitative research method was used for collecting and analyzing data in order to develop this study from the position of the participants (Creswell, 2018:258).   The results in qualitative study address the questions why, how and what instead of how often or how many.

Qualitative research is about going in-depth into interpreting meanings of the information gathered from participants (Kamal, 2019:1387). It assists the researcher to create a rapport with the participants and understand their perceptions and experiences in the manner that they make sense of their lives instead of directing this research on statistical data (Creswell, 2012:19; Creswell, 2018:17).

It also enables the researcher to observe the DSW's and foster parents' behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal cues.   The researcher understood the perceptions, attitudes and experiences of respondents instead of counting their responses (Pope &

Mays, 2020:1). Since the study intends to investigate the challenges faced by foster parents when raising adolescent foster children, a qualitative approach was assumed relevant.

Qualitative research permits the researcher to be the primary instrument in data collection and analysis rather than some inanimate mechanism or artificial intelligence (AI) (Maree, 2014:83; Creswell, 2018:256). It includes descriptive data collection and interpretive data analysis concerned with meaning people assign to their experience (Pope & Mays, 2020:2). Since qualitative research requires the researcher to ask relevant questions and listen carefully when conducting the interviews (Tracy, 2020:8). The researcher had face-to-face interaction with the participants to understand how they faced challenges and how DSW's think about the challenges (Creswell, 2018:257). The researcher triangulates qualitative data collection methods or utilized multiple forms of data collection such as interviews, field observation, document and audiovisual information study over any sole source of data collection (Creswell, 2018:257; Pope & Mays, 2020:7).

3.4   Research Design

Research design is defined as a strategy in which the researcher uses to respond to research questions (Saunders, 2016:162). It is a comprehensive plan of how the study will be conducted which includes data collection tools and how such tools will be used as well as the proposed means of data analysis. The intention is to assist the researcher to comprehend the design and plan that will be utilized in the study (Maree, 2016:73). It enables the researcher to ensure that data collected from respondents clearly answers research questions as much as possible. Creswell (2012:20) described research design as a means of collecting data, data analysis and interpretation as well as report writing. Creswell (2018:544) describes a design as a means on how the researcher strategizes in conducting a study. The researcher utilized different research designs such as exploratory, descriptive, contextual and phenomenological research design to answer the research questions.

3.4.1 Exploratory Design

Exploration is conducted by artists, innovators, authors to familiarize themselves with a particular problem by testing it (Stebbins, 2001:1). In this study, exploration has been carried out by the researcher to investigate the experiences of the participants with the intention of systematically discovering intervention. It is a valued technique of gaining insight about the topic under study (Saunders, 2016:175).

Since the researcher had little scientific knowledge about the problem under study, she cautiously chose exploratory method to gain new understanding, generate new ideas and to increase knowledge of the dynamics experienced by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children (Creswell, 2012:21; Stebbins, 2001:5). The researcher was flexible and open-minded to explore the dynamics encountered by foster parents when raising adolescent foster children with the aim of gaining familiarity and achieve the desired influence for the development of post-placement guidelines for social work intervention (Stebbins, 2001:3). Exploratory approach is amenable to change by relying more on the information received from participants to shape the follow up questions (Saunders, 2016:176).

3.4.2 Descriptive Design

Descriptive design is used by researchers with the purpose of gaining detailed profile of an event or situation by using *how* and *what* questions (Saunders, 2016:175). During data collection, the researcher allowed participants to describe what they know best regarding the challenges encountered when caring for adolescent foster children (Saunders, 2016:175). The researcher allowed the respondents to define the challenges that they faced based on their experiences and what they think might be the cause of those challenges. This has strengthened the knowledge of the researcher during data analysis and interpretation.

3.4.3 Contextual Design

Contextual research has been defined as both observation and conversation of the interviewer and the interviewee during data collection. It is an integration of

observation and discussion of the researcher and the participants (Duda *et al*., 2020:1). The context of the current study was limited to DSD and organizations funded by DSD within Sedibeng District. Sedibeng has a huge population with various challenges facing foster families hence the area was selected as a setting for the current study. The estimated population of Sedibeng District is 957528, with 330828 households (Statistics South Africa, 2018:20). It comprises of 1,118 child-headed households who reside in informal dwellings (shacks); (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), 2020:11). This implies that some of the adolescent foster children are among child-headed households. Sedibeng District is inhabited by people of different cultural backgrounds.

The total number of children in foster care placement is 4,027 as reported by the Gauteng Department of Social Development (2022: 75). These are foster children who are in receipt of foster care grants and DSW's are expected to monitor these placements in the form of foster care supervision. The current study was conducted in various parts of Sedibeng District. The selected areas in this regard were Lakeside, Ironside, Sebokeng and Evaton as well as some areas falling under the Midvaal Local Municipality, namely: Sicelo Shiceka, Silahluwe and Meyerton Farms. The researcher did not include Lesedi Local Municipality to avoid costs and time, although the area does also fall under the Sedibeng District Municipality.

For the researcher to gain contextual information about the study, she had one-on-one interviews (contextual inquiry) with the study's participants (foster parents caring for adolescent foster children and DSW's rendering foster care supervision) in selected settings (Duda *et al*., 2020:2). The researcher introduced herself to the participants by explaining the purpose of the study. This was done to build a relationship with the respondents before the interview process commences. For the benefit of the contextual design, the researcher observed participants in context when sharing their valid experiences, how they managed it, what kind of support they expect from the DSW's and why they need it (Duda *et al*., 2020:4).

The researcher actively listened to the participants to obtain what has been said because active listening involves curiosity and thinking (Pope & Mays, 2020:46). This has assisted the researcher not to impose her ideas but to rely on the information obtained from participants through observation, careful listening and probing. The

views of the participants were considered to be significant in order to develop post-placement guidelines for social work intervention.

3.4.4   Phenomenological Research Inquiry

Phenomenology focuses on meaning people attach to behaviour and the interpretation of factors. Phenomenological study as defined by Tracy (2020:65) refers to the design in qualitative research that focuses in describing the lived experiences of people and their environment. Maree (2016:77 and Wang 2021:288) state that phenomenological study in qualitative method describes the meaning of the lived experiences of individuals. Creswell (2014:42) refers to the phenomenological design as an inquiry that emanates from philosophy and psychology whereby the researcher describes the daily lived experiences of people about the phenomenon as described by the participants. Phenomenological research permitted the researcher to gain insight into the perceptions and experiences of foster parents when raising adolescent foster children and DSW's when dealing with foster care supervision.

Wang (2021:288) describes various approaches of phenomenological research designs such as transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology. Wang (2021:288) further defined transcendental phenomenological design as the process in which the researcher categorizes people's experiences, collect and analyze such experiences into important statements and combine into themes. In hermeneutics, the researcher interprets the reflective themes that have been contributed by participants such as transcripts. Tracy (2020:66) describes transcendental phenomenology as descriptive approach and hermeneutic phenomenology as interpretive approach.

Despite the diverse description of phenomenological study, authors such as Creswell, Wang, and Maree approve that the study is suitable in describing and understanding the lived experiences of respondents. Phenomenologists focus more on understanding people's interpretation through their experiences (Tracy, 2020:67).

In phenomenological studies, the researcher gathered data from the respondents who have experienced the phenomenon under study and described the essence of the lived experiences from the same individuals (Maree, 2016:78). For that reason, the researcher believed that the challenges faced by foster parents would only be defined and understood by the participants who have experienced it because they are likely to provide relevant information of the phenomenon under study. This relates with the aim of the design that describes and understands the lived experiences of respondents (foster parents and DSW's) based on what has been experienced and how they experienced it (Wang, 2021:288). For the researcher to make sense of the participants' experiences, she paid more attention to their valuably opinions during data collection (Tracy, 2020:66).

Twenty foster parents and five DSW's were interviewed by the researcher to explore their lived experiences led by the research questions (Wang, 2021:289). The researcher managed to learn the meaning that foster parents and DSW's make on their experiences as well as the experiences of other people. The researcher further collects and analyses data until no new information came from the respondents and this is called data saturation process (Pope & Mays, 2020:52).

The researcher selected descriptive phenomenological approach to describe and understand the challenges of foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children (Maree, 2016:77). DSW's were part of the participants because they are the drivers of the foster care placement hence their perception and experiences were significant in the study. Yet, the researcher managed to explore the challenges encountered from the respondent's point of view. It is a powerful tool for exploring challenging psychosocial issues of peoples' concrete practices of their daily lives.

Phenomenology is also referred as interpretive phenomenological analysis because researchers seek to understand how individuals understand and describe their world and interpret their meanings of events (Pope & Mays, 2020:122). It has allowed the researcher to examine the dynamics faced by foster parents and extended the exploration to the environment where the challenges are experienced and when are they likely to face challenges with the adolescent foster children. The researcher 's focus was on relating and interpreting what respondents have in common when facing

challenges with adolescents foster children for the development of post placement guidelines for the intervention of social workers (Maree, 2016:77). The researcher was looking for the common denominators that link the drivers of foster care placement so that the dynamics be explored and interpreted for the development of the post-placement guidelines for the intervention of social workers. This design is a supportive method of qualitative study of the three methods namely explorative, descriptive and contextual methods as it permits the researcher to gain insight from the participants' perspectives. The population and sampling methods, data collection, data analysis, research procedure and quality assurance are explained below.

3.5 Population and Sampling

For the purpose of the study, a population in qualitative research is a common denominator of the sample in which the researcher selected the participants of the study. Creswell (2018:212) refers to a population as a small segment of the entire population with similar characteristics in which the researcher intends to generalize the outcome of the study. The researcher selected the sample (foster parents and DSW's) of the study from the population (Department of Social Development). Grant (2019:20) defines a sample as a certain group of the whole population whereby the researcher will collect data from. Sampling refers to choosing people that will participate in the study with specific locations, date and time for the interviews (Tracy, 2020: 82). This was done in order to generate data from the foster parents and DSW's based on the questions that will be asked (Pope & Mays, 2020:48). The researcher used non-probability sampling methods that are entirely deep-rooted in the judgement of the author and participants were accessible, appropriate for study under exploration.

According to Maree (2016:1970 and Creswell (2012:145), researchers are guided to limit the use of non- probability sampling methods however, the researcher herein deemed it fit to select the different types of non-probability sampling methods, namely: purposive sampling and quota sampling methods for the purpose of the study.

3.5.1 Quota Sampling

Quota sampling has been defined as the process in which the researcher uses to obtain respondents who have similar experience and traits wherever the researcher found them to reach the required number of participants (Maree, 2016:197). However, the researcher did not utilize this sampling method because she had assurance that foster parents and DSWs are well suited to provide accurate knowledge relevant to the study were involved. The researcher utilized a non-probability purposive sampling method to find the participants who will assist her in attaining specified objectives of the study (Maree, 2016:197; Tracy, 2020:82).

3.5.2 Purposive Sampling

In purposive sampling, the researcher targeted participants who will provide information that will assist the researcher in achieving set research objectives. It permits the researcher to decide the criteria of the participants based on the research questions (Pope & Mays, 2020:49).

Purposive sampling method was embedded completely in the judgment of the researcher because she has chosen participants who are convenient and have a specific relationship to the intended study (Creswell, 2015:235; Creswell, 2012;145; Maree, 2016:198). Respectable qualitative researchers purposefully chose information that fits the parameters of the study projects, research questions, purpose and goals (Tracy, 2020:82). The researcher has carefully chosen participants who have a specific knowledge in foster care placement and supervision and who have cared for adolescents foster children (Maree, 2016:198).

3.6 Sample Size

The researcher believed that data saturation must be considered in the beginning stage of qualitative study. Data saturation is the stage where themes are saturated and there is no more new data produced (Maree, 206:84). The researcher was of the opinion that new data will not produce new insight for the development of themes. In qualitative study, sample size is determined by data saturation but not the size of the

sample (Creswell, 2018: 212).   The researcher could not interview the whole of Sedibeng in order to save time and cost. She interviewed twenty foster parents and five designated social workers until themes and categories were saturated.

3.7   Preparation of Participants for Data Collection

The research obtained permission to conduct the current study from the Department of Social Development (Gauteng Provincial Office) because foster care placement is in their domain of practice and it is the major welfare organization nationwide (Given, 2008:242).   The researcher also attained ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa and obtained permission to conduct the research.   The Department of Social Development as the gatekeeper and mediator has recruited potential participants who meet the criteria of the study (Pope & Mays, 2020:50).   Mediator has invited the potential participants and introduced them to the researcher via invitation letter or email. A meeting was conducted with the participants after they were requested to send, Please Call Me to the research assistant to show interest in the study as enshrined in the White Paper on the Transforming Public Service Delivery of 1997.

Before data collection began, research assistant helped with the process of attaining consent from the participants.   Participants were not manipulated to partake in the study (Given, 2008:214; Creswell, 2012:149).   The research assistant ensured that all participants understood the nature of research and agreed to make their contribution before signing the consent form because decisional capacity requires lot of thinking as outlined in Section 12 of Act 108 of the 1996 Constitution and in Section 35 of the Social Service Profession Act 110 of 1978.   As soon as consent forms were signed by all participants, the researcher made telephonic contact with them (Given, 2008:214).

An appointment was therefore made for an interview with each participant who showed interest in the study. Pope and Mays (2020:51) define qualitative research interviews as a method of social interaction in which the researcher ask questions, listens and encourage participants to feel safe in sharing their daily experiences. The researcher had an interview with the participants intending to gain understanding the ways in which participants make sense of their phenomena under investigation.   Interviews

were conducted on the date and time scheduled by the researcher and the participants (Maree, 206:94). These interviews were recorded with their permission for later transcription (Pope & Mays, 2020:51).

Focus group for social workers was conducted in their offices within the Department of Social Development (Given, 2008: 680). Pope and Mays (202:58) describe a focus group as kind of group interview where the researcher aimed to promote interaction between participants rather than one person respond to the questions. The researcher became a facilitator by shaping the discussion for rich data collection based on the topic of the study. Interviews with the foster parents were conducted in their homes in the absence of the adolescent foster children and were free from disturbances and noise (Pope & Mays, 2020:51). The researcher ensured that participants understood the reasons for conducting the interviews.

3.8 Data Collection Method

Researchers have various ways of data gathering and interviewing style (Pols and Limburg 2014:1). Maree (201:77) defines data collection as the process of gathering data in many methods such field notes, interview transcripts, journal records, observations, storytelling, letter writings etc. In other words, it is a process whereby the researcher gathers information from the participants using various instruments to gain knowledge about the topic of the study.

Since Sedibeng District has a multicultural population, including people from various countries, the researcher gathered data in the language that participants understood. The researcher used various sources of data collection (observation, semi-structured interview schedule and focus group interview) to collect data from the selected participants (designated social workers and foster parents) (Creswell, 2015:239). Individual interviews were used to get an in-depth understanding of the experiences of foster parents in caring for adolescent foster children (Tracy, 2020:5). Quantitative methods such as questionnaires may not offer the same benefit and were never used by the researcher. In-depth field interviews were the most suitable method of collecting data since the researcher was interested in attaining primary information from the participants (Creswell, 2018:188).

Moreover, interviews allowed the researcher to probe deeper in order to understand the views and ideas of the respondents and also to observe their non-verbal cues and to expose the challenges their experienced with adolescents foster children, feelings and belief systems (Maree, 2016:92). It was the researcher's obligation to ensure that the discussion is led in a direction that is relevant to the research study. The researcher used non-participant observation and did not make any suggestion but permitted the participants to share what they believe was critical (Wang, 2021:46). During the data collection process, the researcher returned to previous statement raised by participants and extract related data through rephrased questioning in order to integrate the information gathered (Shenton 2004:67). In situations where contradictions arise, the researcher does discard the data.

The researcher made prior arrangements with each participant for date and time for an individual interview. The interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participant(s) and verbatim transcriptions of these recordings were made by the researcher (Creswell, 2015:239; Maree, 2016:94). The researcher developed a set of questions to guide the interview process for the foster parents and the focus group interviews for the designated social workers. Focus group was used to achieve rich data through open discussion of respondents' opinions within the group (Pope & Mays, 2020:64).

3.9   Pilot Study

A pilot study is a preliminary kind of study which is conducted by the researcher to test the research tools before the actual study (Crossman, 2019:1). The researcher herein used a small number of respondents in which two foster parents and two DSW's who met the criteria and were willing to participate in the study (Pope & Mays, 2020:60). The main intention of the researcher in conducting the preliminary test was to determine the validity of the contents and to improve the research questions before the main study (Majid, Mohamed, Halim & Yusof, 2017). However, the pilot study was applied to certify that research questions are clear, and relevant to the study. Prior to the commencement of the interviews, participants were requested to sign the consent

forms of the testing process (Pope & Mays, 2020:64). With their permission, interviews were audio-recorded for later transcription and analysis (Pope & Mays, 2020:51).

At the end of the pilot study, the participants provided feedback to the researcher and there was no modification required to the research questions relating to phrasing, language or relevance. Crossman (2019:1) described the advantages of conducting a pilot study that is to identify and evaluate data collection tools, suitability of the sample size, estimation of time and costs of the interview process. The study has permitted the researcher to test her interviewing skills before the main study. Nonetheless, the data gathered from the respondents during pilot study are not reported in the study.

3.10 Data Analysis Method

Data analysis in qualitative research must be ordered and be meaningful for the researcher to easily locate patterns in the information of the data (Maree, 2016:114). The researcher did not use a computer or any software to transcribe recorded interviews, she utilized the traditional method of manually listening to the recordings to familiarize herself with the data (Kuckartz & Radiker, 2019:41). Qualitative data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to the bulk of data collected (Marshall & Rossman, 2011:207).

It consists of the following approaches: data familiarization, coding, theme generation, reviewing themes and classification, interpretation through thematic memos, defining and naming as well as report writing (Grant, 2019:49, Marshall & Rossman, 2011:209). It has allowed the researcher to search for general statements about relationships and underlying themes. Data analysis is an ongoing, emerging process, begun at the research location and continue throughout the period of the study (Maree, 2016:109). It is a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into smaller amount of content categories based on clear rules of coding (Maree, 2016:111).

Data analysis in qualitative research allows the researcher to go beyond unambiguous opinions, get rid of the raw data, discarding irrelevant statements that answers the research questions (Kuckartz & Radiker, 2019:46). The researcher selected important transcript from the non-important, strong perception of unclear patterns and building a

context for communicating the crux of what the data collected reveals (Ibrahim, 2012:13). The researcher was interested in foster parents' perceptions, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour when caring for adolescents foster children and this was obtained during the interview process. In qualitative research, data collection and analysis ordinarily occur concurrently to ensure the effectiveness of the data collection method (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2005:333; Ibrahim, 2012: 9; Maree, 2016:87; Wang, 2021:105).

During data analysis, the researcher organized data categorically, reviewing it repeatedly in order to familiarise herself with the data gathered and not to miss hidden messages in the content (Grant, 2019:49). The researcher continually arranged interrelated themes and categories in a meaningful way (Maree, 2016:114). Thematic analysis was used to analyse data collected from the participants through interviews and focus group discussion (Quest *et al.,* 2012:10). Grant (2019:48) defines thematic analysis as a method whereby the researcher identifies, analyse and report themes for review. This analysis was suitable for the study because it is explorative in nature, comprises of data collection, data display, data reduction and evaluation (Ibrahim, 2012:12). It is a process that allows the researcher to interpret, organise and combine or classify the coded data based on their similarities and differences (Ibrahim, 2012:13; Grant, 2019: 50; Wang, 2021:48).

In situation where participants discuss matters irrelevant to the research topic, the researchers discard the statement with an indication that participants presented unrelated information to the research topic.

Evaluation of data collected was done according to the questions asked and the opinions expressed by respondents during the interview process with the foster parents and social workers (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014:344). The researcher took into consideration of nonverbal cues, and words such as laughter, incomplete sentences, pauses as well as silences (Kuckartz & Radiker, 2019:42; Maree, 2016:116). During the initial phase of coding or labelling, data was divided into relevant themes of meanings with descriptive tags whereby data gathered from the foster parents and social workers were analysed separately to explore the challenges encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children. The

researcher arranged the codes into possible categories, grouped them together based on conceptual interrelations and combined into various levels of themes (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013:13). In order to bring order, the transcribed data were reduced by summarising and categorising so as to identify important aspects of the issue being researched (Grant, 2019:49 & Ibrahim, 2012:12). These codes and themes formed the basis of the research findings for the research study (Guest *et al.*, 2013:13).

3.11 Data Verification

Data verification in qualitative research is described as the process in which the research verifies the truthiness and reliability of the research findings (Maree, 2016:39). Trustworthiness is significant in qualitative research; therefore, four essential criteria were followed by the researcher in this regard such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Tracy, 2020:50; Maree, 2016: 123). Assessment of trustworthiness is the critical test of data analysis, findings verification and conclusion.

3.11.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the results of a study reflect the phenomenon being studies is congruent (Creswell, 2018:201). Saunders (2016:206) defines credibility as the equivalent criterion to internal validity. The researcher herein used participants that were purposeful selected and who meet the criteria of the study to ensure accuracy of the phenomenon under exploration. The researcher certified that the information gathered from respondents matches their intentions through member checking and triangulation to ensure credibility (Creswell, 2012:162).

The researcher sent the data back to the participants allowing them to clarify and confirm it for validity (Saunders, 2016:206). Member checking entails that the researcher reviewed the transcripts and the interpretations of the participants to ensure credibility (Maree, 2014:123). Member checking was applied whereby participants were also asked to propose additions or omissions from the data provided to enhance credibility of findings as well a frequent debriefing with her supervisor and

the researcher 's reflective notes (Creswell, 2018:200; Creswell, 2014:251; Maree, 2016:123).

Triangulation allows the researcher to utilize multiple forms of data collection methods with the aim of increasing validity of findings. Triangulation in qualitative research refers to multiple sources of data collection to answer research questions (Grant, 2019: 102). Triangulation was presented in 1950's and 1960's with the intention of supporting trustworthiness of the research results (Grant, 2019:103). In the current study, the researcher adopted multiple perspectives such focus group (designated social workers) and one on one interview for (foster parents) to broaden her understanding of their experiences when raising adolescents foster children.

3.11.2 Dependability

The researcher conducted interviews using the same interview schedule with different participants who have purposefully selected on the basis of their expertise on the subject matter of the study to enhance the dependability or trustworthiness of the findings. Dependability is more similar to reliability (Maree, 2016:124).
Maree (2016:238) further described reliability as the process in which tools are repeated to different participants for consistency. The researcher utilized the same data collection tools to interview participants throughout the research process. According to Weaver-Hightower (2019:149), researcher utilized member-checking to ensure validity of her interpretation with the respondents as well as stability of the findings.

3.11.3 Transferability

In qualitative study, transferability refers to the point where the result of the research study can be generalized above the limits of the study, whereby the challenges encountered by foster parents may be applicable to other foster parents caring for adolescent foster children (Maree, 2016:124). Transferability in qualitative research is determined by the readers to judge the transferability of the research (Saunders, 2016:206). A comprehensive description of research questions, context, participants and research methodology has been given by the researcher to enable the readers to

determine if the research is transferable to another setting other than that of the current study. The researcher has ensured that the context of the foster parents and social workers were reflected and expansively discussed in order to achieve transferability in the study (Creswell, 2018:201).

3.11.4 Confirmability

Confirmability of findings represents the views of participants and were not influenced by the researcher. According to Maree (2016:125), confirmability is defined as the stage whereby the results of the research are formed by the views of the respondents but not the interest of the researcher. Confirmability has been demonstrated by the researcher through the recorded responses and verbatim transcripts, ensuring accurate interpretation of the answers received from respondents not her assumptions (Maree, 2016:124). Maree confirmed the findings of the study through member checking. She asked participants to comment on the draft findings of the study to determine the correctness of the findings (Creswell, 2012:47; Maree, 2016:125).

3.11.5 Reflexivity

It is substantial in qualitative study to continually reflect on the interviews and see whether there were consistently unasked questions. Grant (2019:185) describes "reflexivity as the process of critically considering one's own effect on the research, sometimes also refer to as positionality". Reflexivity is the acknowledgement of the researcher's role that will negatively influence the process and the outcome of the study (Mays & Pope, 2020:50). It involves the awareness of the researcher's language, thoughts and influence has on the study (Creswell, 2018:334). The researcher kept a diary while planning, recruiting and conducting interviews to track the progress of the study (Mays & Pope, 2020:52).

Throughout the analysis process, she captured notes of the observation, interaction, feelings and responses of how it has affected the interview process to support reflexivity (Grant, 2019:138). Since the researcher understood that her assumption and prior experiences will influence the study. Triangulation was beneficial in reflexivity because it has allowed multiple perceptions to widen her understanding

through the combination of multiple reading (Grant, 2019:103). For the researcher to achieve reflexivity, she sent her first two transcripts to her supervisor to read and provide feedback on the appropriateness and objectivity of the interview process. This assisted the researcher to avoid bringing pre-conceived ideas and to solely rely on the information provided by participants.

3.12 Conclusion

The current chapter has confirmed the suitability of qualitative research for the study. Suitable methods and data collection instruments have been moderated by the researcher to obtain data from different foster parents from various background and DSW's who participated in the study. The data analyzed in this study has provided valuable findings on the experiences encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children post foster care placement.
The next chapter will present the analysis of the data findings of the current study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on the challenges experienced by foster parents when raising adolescent foster children, as well as the perceptions of social workers on the challenges encountered by foster parents after foster care placement. The researcher obtained permission from the Department of Social Development to interview participants, including foster parents and social workers. Ethical Clearance was also obtained from the University of South Africa in this regard. Semi-structured interview and focus groups were used to collect data, with all participants being interviewed after signing consent forms. A qualitative research approach was chosen due to its strong advocacy on natural settings. Appointments were made with participants prior to visiting them in their locations. Interviews with social workers took place in their private boardroom at the Department of Social Development while interviews with foster parents were conducted in their homes without the presence of the adolescent foster children. This was done to ensure the maintenance of confidentiality. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and thematic content analysis was used for analysis.

Themes and subthemes were developed to form the basis of the research findings. Data from social workers and foster parents were analyzed separately to gain insight into the challenges experienced by foster parents and the perceptions of social workers on these challenges when raising adolescent foster children. There are various reasons why children are placed in foster care. According to Section 150(i) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, children in need of care are those who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned by their parents or family members.

The researcher was particularly interested in exploring the challenges experienced by foster parents post-foster care placement in order to guide social workers in their supervision of foster care.

Previous studies identified factors that contribute to these challenges, including substance abuse, traumatic events, the dynamics of the adolescent stage, breakdown of the relationship between foster parent and foster child, insufficient supervision by social workers, parenting incapacity, and children's behavioural problems (Boning & Ferreira, 2013:518; Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017:166; Emovon, Ntombela & Gutura, 2019:11).

In South Africa, the foster care system is considered the primary means of child protection in response to child abuse, neglect, abandonment, and orphanage. Foster care is defined as the substitute family care of children who cannot be adequately cared for by their biological parents or family of origin. The South African Government is responsible for providing socio-economic rights for vulnerable children (Fortune, 2016:8). The Children's Act 38 of 2005 has been established to promote the rights of children and provide services to families and children including adolescent foster children. This chapter will consist of two sections: findings on the challenges encountered by foster parents when raising adolescent foster children, and findings on the perceptions of social workers regarding these challenges.

4.2   Findings on Challenges Experienced by Foster Parents.

4.2.1   Demographical Profile of Participants (Foster Parents)

The participants of the study were mostly black African females with one coloured female and two black males. They were from various parts of the Sedibeng District in the Emfuleni Local Municipality such as Lakeside, Ironside, Sebokeng, and Evaton. In the Midvaal Local Municipality, participants were from areas such as Sicelo Shiceka, Silahluwe, and Meyerton Farms. Participants from Emfuleni Local Municipality were from the Department of Social Development, while participants from the Midvaal Local Municipality were selected from an NGO funded by the Department of Social Development. Sesotho was the main language used by the researcher as it is the most dominant language in the Sedibeng District. However, participants were given the liberty to use the language of their choice for ease of interaction. Only one coloured participant expressed herself in English during the interview because she could not speak Sesotho.

Among the participants only four were employed, while seven were pensioners receiving an old-age grant. Most foster parents are unemployed and rely on the foster care grant which is not enough to provide for their own needs and those of the adolescent foster children they are meant to care for. The majority of foster parents have poor educational backgrounds, with four participants having no formal education and only one having a Bachelor's degree. The eldest participant was 69 years old while the youngest participant was 30 years old. There were no participants who were below the age of thirty years. The ten foster parents were married, six were widows, two were single, and two were divorced. Participants vary in terms of age, level of education as well as their relationship with the foster children. Table 4.1 below presents the biographical background information of participants as discussed above.

Table 4.1: Biographic background of foster parents

Participant	Race	Gender	Age	Relationship	Marital Status	Occupation	Has biological children	Education
P1	Black	Female	40	Paternal aunt	Married	Employed	Yes	Grade 10
P2	Colored	Female	56	Paternal Grandmother	Married	Unemployed	Yes	Garde 10
P3	Black	Female	44	Non-related	Divorced	Unemployed	No	None
P4	Black	Female	30	Sister	Single	Unemployed	Yes	Grade 12
P5	Black	Female	69	Maternal aunt	Widow	Pensioner	Yes	None
P6	Black	Female	51	Paternal aunt	Married	Unemployed	Yes	Grade 8
P7	Black	Male	52	Maternal uncle	Single	Employed	Yes	Grade10
P8	Black	Female	51	Maternal aunt	Married	Unemployed	Yes	Grade 12
P9	Black	Female	64	Paternal aunt	Married	Pensioner	Yes	Grade 5
P10	Black	Female	56	Maternal grandmother	Married	Unemployed	Yes	Grade 8
P11	Black	Female	65	Non-related	Married	Pensioner	Yes	Grade 8
P12	Black	Female	47	Maternal aunt	Married	Employed	Yes	Grade10
P13	Black	Female	60	Maternal grandmother	Widow	Pensioner	Yes	None
P14	Black	Female	56	Non-related	Married	Employed	Yes	Degree
P15	Black	Female	45	Sister	Divorced	Unemployed	Yes	Grade 12
P16	Black	Female	44	Sister	Widow	Unemployed	Yes	Grade 10
P17	Black	Female	59	Maternal aunt	Widow	Unemployed	Yes	Grade 12
P18	Black	Male	61	Paternal aunt	Married	Pensioner	Yes	None
P19	Black	Female	60	Maternal aunt	Widow	Pensioner	Yes	None
P20	Black	Female	65	Maternal Grandmother	Widow	Pensioner	Yes	Grade 6

4.3 Themes and Sub-themes with Regard to Foster Parents

The findings of the study, which explored the dynamics encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children, are evaluated and described in the section below. Six themes resulting from the data collected from participants (foster parents) are discussed to address these challenges and to develop guidelines for social work intervention. The themes include the relationship between foster parents and adolescent foster children, experiences of raising adolescent foster children, challenges experienced by foster parents, management of these challenges, factors contributing to the challenges, and the support foster parents acquire and require from social workers. These themes consist of subthemes, which are described in the Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Participants' opinions on challenges encountered by foster parents

Themes	Subthemes
1. Foster parents – adolescent foster child relationships: motivation and demotivation	1.1 Parental death and children's bereavement 1.2 Foster parents Altruism 1.3 Unfavorable environment for the child 1.4 Secrecy about biological parents
2. Experience of raising adolescent foster children	2.1 Compelling parental sensitiveness and favouritism avoidance 2.2 Adolescents foster children's behavioural mismanagement 2.3 Adolescent foster children's emotional turmoil
3. Challenges encountered by foster parents raising adolescents	3.1 Dynamics of adolescent's stage 3.2 Foster parent and adolescent foster child relationship breakdown 3.3 Foster children drug dependency as a problem

4. Management of the challenges experienced by foster parents	4.1 Application of authoritative parenting style 4.2 Usage of social work services 4.3 Religious principle as a behaviour management mechanism 4.4 Open communication
5. Factors that contribute to the dynamics encountered by foster parents	5.1 Insufficient supervision by social workers 5.2 Internal and external factors (home and community)
6. Foster parents 'required and acquired support from social workers	6.1 Life skills training programme 6.2 Foster care placement education 6.3 Integrated group work for foster parents and foster children

Theme 1: Foster parents – adolescent foster child relationships: motivation and demotivation

Foster parent and adolescent foster child relationships have been identified by researchers as a main theme consisting of four sub-themes. These sub-themes provide an explanation of the participants' experiences regarding their motivation and demotivation in raising adolescent foster children. Foster parents have the responsibility of meeting the physical, psycho-social, emotional, educational, and medical needs of the children in their care. Therefore, their role is multifaceted (Han, Owen, Lieneman & McNeil, 2020:11).

In the United States, the decentralization of foster care has led to no national database of foster parents. This hinders the understanding of the demographic makeup of available families and how they align with those in foster care (Hanlon, Feltner, Day, Vanderwill, Kim, Dallimore, 2021:120). This statement is supported by Zeijlmans, López, Grietens, and Knorth (2017), who state that organizational factors often conflict with the ability to act in the best interest of the adolescent foster child and limit choices due to a lack of available foster families. The matching process becomes complex in decision making. The responsibility lies in the hands of foster parents, as they have the final say on whether to foster the child.

It is also added that matching constitutes the beginning of a foster placement (Zeijlmans *et al*., 2017). Gilligan (2019) reveals that data shows a decrease in the number of applications to become foster parents.

Sub-theme 1.1: Parental death and children's bereavement

The findings from the study conducted by Hiyoshi, Berg, Grotta, Almquist, and Rostila (2021:3) revealed that parental death during childhood is highly traumatic and can lead to increased behavioural problems such as delinquency, substance abuse, violence, and externalizing problems in adolescent foster children. It also disrupts their developmental trajectories and coping abilities. Furthermore, it is also connected to mental health problems for the surviving parent, which affects the quality of care that adolescent foster children receive after the loss.

Leopold and Lechner (2017) mentioned that the death of a parent is associated with a reduction in well-being for children and identified three pathways that negatively impact their well-being. Firstly, the bereavement process itself involves significant emotional turmoil that can trigger negative emotions and overburden bereaved children, leading to prolonged stress or depression. Secondly, the loss of a parent transforms the child's identity and represents a major transition into adulthood, as they try to navigate new family roles and responsibilities. Thirdly, the death of a parent disrupts the emotional bond, as parents are a source of emotional comfort, resulting in a permanent reduction in the child's well-being. Perrin (2023) states that bereavement is personally and socially disruptive, and that death is an inevitable part of life that can affect anyone.

Numerous studies associate parental death with depression, suicide, lower school performance, more somatic symptoms, self-harm, and higher mortality rates. Condo-Sala and Garre-Olmo (2020:1052) confirmed that parental death in adolescents, whether it's the mother or father, is also associated with a high risk of dementia. A similar study by Rosenbaum-Feldbrugge (2019:1828) revealed that parental loss during adolescence is linked to lower educational achievement, lower socio-economic status, and an increased risk of school or academic failure in foster children.

Additionally, bereaved adolescent foster children often experience feelings of anger, helplessness, sadness, guilt, and low self-esteem compared to children raised by both parents, highlighting the traumatic impact of parental death on children in general. Few foster parents mentioned that:

[The content of what the foster parents indicated is missing, so it cannot be fixed.]

"They are my sister's children, their mother passed on. My family did not have interest in the children because they do not want the responsibility of helping them. As the one got older, she got a boyfriend, begun to be aggressive and when I reprimanded her, she did not want to listen, she got cheeky. She does not want to do anything in the house". (Foster parent 5).

Another participant mentioned that *"They are my younger sister' children, their mother passed on. They lived with me while the boy was 8 and the girl was 6 years old. I do have a small challenge however it is based on mental health. The boy is a slow learner but not the girl. Yes! I went through his school books and they weren't pleasing. He fails, they just keep on progressing him to the next grades". (Foster parent 7).*

She is my younger sister, my mother passed on while she was young and I had to care for her". (Foster parent 16).

"I am the grandmother of the children, their mother passed on". (*Foster parent 19).*

Children who experience prolonged separation from parents, with no hope of reunification, struggle to cope with the trauma of separation. Regardless of the level of security in their attachment, children typically find separation from their parents distressing and go through stages of distress, hopelessness, and detachment (Scharfer, 2017:3). Additionally, children often exhibit behaviours such as seeking proximity through desperation and vocalizing, as well as maintaining proximity through behaviours like laughing and clinging.

It is clear that losing parents at an early age can lead to mental health challenges in adolescent foster children. Ironically, children find it difficult to make sense of their loss, so it is imperative to help them deal with the pain and provide reassurance that they will be cared for.

The findings confirmed that most adolescent foster children who have lost their parents display behavioural problems that are associated with a lack of support from either their parents or their family. This finding aligns with the results of a study conducted by Gasva and Mutanana (2016), which found that adolescent foster children who have lost their parents suffer serious psychological consequences related to a lack of attachment. These consequences worsen when they are transferred to another placement, as they also experience developmental and emotional challenges due to inconsistent attachment and parenting from various foster parents. According to the White Paper on Families in South Africa (2021:210), families should have access to psychosocial counseling through DSWs in order to enhance their resilience during periods of acute stress such as loss and trauma. Adolescent children and their families require social work intervention that will support them in developing coping mechanisms and promote family wellbeing as they navigate their loss.

Sub-theme 1.2: Foster parents' Altruism

Understanding the motives and barriers to becoming a foster family is essential. There are numerous reasons that motivate and demotivate foster parents to care for adolescent foster children. Altruism refers to the genuine desire to benefit other people without the intention of reward (Pfattheicher, Nielsen & Theilmann, 2022:125). This altruism implies the provision of love, care, and protection to adolescent foster children from maltreatment (Frimpong-Manso, Tagoe; Mauso, 2020:3). Foster parents exhibit altruistic behaviour by caring for the welfare of the adolescent foster children without expecting benefits. ISCTE-IUL (2021) states that every child has the right to effective and individualized care within a family context that addresses their specific needs, given their developmental and performance.

The study conducted by Jose, Mumtaz, Anjail and Uvais (2018:1) revealed that altruism is the main motivation driving foster parents to care for adolescent foster

children. Migliorini, Rania, Cardinali, Guiducci, and Cavanna (2018:510) mentioned that some foster parents are motivated by the desire to fill the empty nest that their adult children left behind, love for children, status, information (advice, knowledge), money, goods, and services (work, labour). Similar factors were found in South Africa, where foster parents were driven by altruistic and intrinsic factors such as personal life experiences, the desire to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable children and fostering as a calling to put religious beliefs into practice (Emmovon, Gutura & Ntombela, 2019:10). However, the study conducted by Kaasboll, Lassemo, Paulsen, Melby, and Osborg (2019:1) exposed factors that demotivate foster parents from continuing or quitting fostering, including financial constraints, understanding the responsibilities that arise when raising the child, and lack of supportive services from DSWs in their parenting role. The foster care grant or reimbursement that foster parents receive is often not enough to meet the concrete needs of the adolescent foster children, and the support through interaction and training is often dissatisfactory (Fortune, 2016:12). The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), as an administrator for social assistance grants, regards the foster care grant as the financial means to assist foster parents in meeting the needs of the adolescent foster children. Ironically, it is utilized as poverty alleviation for the disadvantaged individuals (adolescent foster children and foster parents) and families (Masha & Botha, 2012:506).

Furthermore, a study conducted in Norway revealed that foster parents need more progressive training to meet the mental health needs of the children, but they are provided with little to no support, predominantly after the foster care placement (Kaasboll et al., 2019:36). Carroll (2014:1) and Diaz (2017:70) assert that the fundamental reasons for foster carers, compounded by a desire to foster, are often rooted in a rough childhood that was harmful to their well-being, such as abuse, neglect, and abandonment, similar to what the adolescent foster children have experienced. These findings show that foster parents are motivated by altruism but are demotivated by a lack of training and support from DSWs after the foster care placement. Altruism seems to be the primary reason that leads foster parents to build a foster home for adolescent foster children. One participant mentioned that:

"He is related to me because the mother of the child is my son's wife now. The mother of the child was staying in the small Zozo and my son did not want to go to work, spend most of his time there, sleeping there, but as parents we decided to take them to stay with us because we had a bigger room in the backyards". While they were dating, I did not know that there was a child involved until the maternal grandfather of the child came here and asked about the child that was the day I found out about the child. I decided to care for the child" (Foster parent 2).

"Even now she was away she has another baby. I will keep on caring for them because I love them, I cannot throw them away. I didn't take them in because of money I took them in out of love, I love children". (Foster parent 11)
"I felt sorry for the mother and children especially when I saw the boy with one leg (disabled). I then approached the mother and asked for her permission to take care of the boy as he wasn't being taken care of. When taking care of him, I made him a knee pads using recyclable items. I took the boy to Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital where they provided him with a prostatic leg" (Foster parent 9).

The findings of the study confirm the opinion held by Gouveia, Magalhaes, and Pinto (2021:2766) and Helder, Gunnoe, and Timmermans (2020:2) that both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons are ongoing motives associated with altruism for foster parents when caring for and nurturing adolescent foster children. The study conducted by Helder *et al.*, (2020:4) and Branco & Diogo (2019:1) align with these findings, showing that foster parents are motivated by altruism. Foster parents ensure the protection and care of adolescent foster children to meet their developmental needs and safeguard them from further harm and provide affection (Branco & Diogo, 2019:2).

Sub-theme 1.3: Unfavorable environment for the child

Childhood care and the environment in which individuals live may be the most important latent risk factor for maltreatment and neglect in children. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, environment refers to the surrounding or location (such as home, school, or community) in which a person or animal lives. An unfavorable environment is one that is not conducive and has a negative impact on a child's development.   The environment in which a child lives plays a significant role in determining the specific needs of adolescent foster children, as their experiences prior to foster care placement result in the development of certain needs. Monteiro, Carvalho and Santos (2021:4) emphasize that a warm and supportive environment provides children with the opportunity to focus on their emotions and behaviour. For the purposes of this study, an unfavorable environment refers to a setting that has a negative impact and is not conducive to the physical, social, emotional, mental, or cognitive growth of adolescent foster children.

A study conducted by Li, Wang, Wang, IPP, Sun, Jiang, and Jiang (2012:10) in China explored socio-economic inequality in children's mental health, as well as lifestyle and family environment during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings of the study revealed that unhealthy lifestyle factors such as sleep disruptions, lack of physical activity, and increased media exposure, as well as an unfavorable environment characterized by punitive parenting, poor parental mental health, and non-parental care, are interconnected with child mental health challenges. Some foster parents mentioned that adolescent foster children lived in an environment that was not conducive to their development. Here is what one parent said:

> "*I am not related to them at all they are brought by the social workers, their parents had them but they do not want to raise them*". *(*Foster parent 3*).*
>
> "*I am related to the children's mother because I am her uncle 's wife. The mother lives in the farm, she abuses alcohol and fails to care for the children*" (*Foster parent 9).*

Another participant demonstrates that whenever challenges arise in a foster family, adolescent children are swiftly transferred to another placement without thoroughly examining the underlying issue:

"They are my siblings, after the death of our mother in 2012, they were placed under my sister 's care. Then transferred into my care" (Foster parent 4).

These findings confirm that foster care placement disruption alters the family lifestyle, which in turn has an impact on the adjustment and growth of adolescent foster children. The study conducted by Okech and Mackinova (2020:42) indicate that the environmental context (physical or social) is viewed as the main area that has a direct or indirect influence on the child's development, such as the family and school environment. Adolescent children who have experienced multiple placements are obliged to learn new family rules and values and have to familiarize themselves with the new environment, which can be very traumatic. Foster parents also have a demand to be resourceful to the needs of the adolescent foster child by teaching new skills and encouraging good behaviour.

This was also confirmed by the findings of Okech *et a*l., (2020) who emphasized four factors that influence the development of children in the home environment, namely: proximal processes, characteristics of the foster parent, environmental context, and time variance from one placement to another. Therefore, the developmental trajectories will never be the same as children come from different backgrounds. Luckily, children are born innocent; it is the environment in which they grow up that mold their minds (Desai, 2020). According to Desai (2020), a child's behavioural pattern depends on various factors such as the love and affection that the child receives from parents or caregivers, the atmosphere at home, the environments in which the child is brought up, the type of education the child receives, and the influence of family members, peers or friends, educators, and other people with whom a child has contact. A bad environment at home can affect a child in various ways. These could range from tantrums in the playgroup to criminal behaviour later in adolescence. The study by Bereczkei and Csanaky (2001:503) concurs with Desai that rough childhood experiences have been found to have a serious impact on a child's sexual and reproductive behaviour.

Sub-Theme 1.4: Secrecy about biological parents

The theme explores the secrecy that exists between foster parents and adolescent foster children, which has a significant impact on the child's development. Secrecy can be defined as the intentional concealment of information from one or more individuals, and it can be harmful to their well-being. People often find themselves wondering about these secrets as secrecy promotes a feeling of disconnection from others (Slepia, Chun & Mason, 2017; Liu & Slepian, 2018).

Secrecy puts foster children in a hostile situation as they may live for extended periods without any information or contact regarding their biological parents. Some foster parents fail to disclose that the biological parents of the adolescent foster children are deceased. These children eventually discover the truth about their parents' death, they often exhibit behavioural challenges such as intense anger and mistrust towards their foster parents. Here are some of the exact words of some of the foster parent participants:

> *"People tell them that I am not their mother, I have been given them by social workers. I told them that I am their mother, I care for them" (Foster parent 11). "The problem was when they would call the children while they were playing, telling them that I am not their mother" (Foster parent 11).*

> *"It is difficult to raise a foster child, when we take them, we attend a workshop in which they advise us on how to treat the foster child, to treat them as our own, teach them household chores, but the foster child feels like their being ill-treated they go around the neighborhood telling people that they are being ill-treated. And I treated the child like mine whatever I did with my own I did for the child" (Foster parent 14).*

"I do not relate to the child; he was from social workers" (Foster parent 15).

For children who grow up in environments with multiple problematic features, safety is not guaranteed, especially when parenting is insufficient and compromised. These children are likely to be moved from their family of origin to another (Migliorini *et al*., 2018:510). In relation to sharing secrets, Liu and Slepian (2018:126) argue that secrecy is understudied and is an underlying factor in determining who people choose to share their secrets with and who is willing to act and help through those secrets. The researchers believe that every child needs a stable and supportive home environment for balanced physical, emotional, and mental development. Bereczkei and Csanaky (2001:1) reveal that unfavorable family conditions create an unpredictable and unstable environment for children, making them vulnerable to adopting opportunistic pairing strategies that have a negative impact on their growth and health. This study describes the secrecy that exists between foster parents and adolescent foster children, and how this secrecy has a major impact on the child's development. Secrecy can be defined as an intention to conceal information from one or more individuals, and it may be harmful to their well-being. People may find their minds wandering to their secrets because secrecy promotes a feeling of being less connected to others (Slepian, Chun & Mason, 2017; Liu & Slepian, 2018). Secrecy puts foster children in a hostile situation because they may live for a long period without any information or contact about their biological parents. Some foster parents do not disclose that the biological parents of the adolescent foster children are deceased. When adolescent foster children discover the truth that their parents have died, they display behavioural challenges such as intense anger and mistrust towards the foster parents.

Theme 2: Experience of raising adolescent foster children

This theme reveals that foster parents have various experiences when raising adolescent foster children. Foster parents are entrusted with the responsibility to improve the lives of adolescent foster children, although they come from different backgrounds and/or historically marginalized communities (Dzimudzi, 2022:2). Some adolescent foster children who have undergone traumatic experiences were reported to display behavioural problems when reaching adolescence (Harkin & Houston, 2016:15; Ntshongwane & Tanga, 2018:15).

However, foster parents have various experiences, such as positive experiences (provision of a stable home, love, nurturing home environment) and negative experiences (stress, anxiety, and depression) due to their desire to have a family and the behavioural challenges displayed by adolescent foster children. They describe the challenging behaviour as stressful, exhausting, and persistent (Ntshongwane & Tanga, 2018:15). Due to limited parenting knowledge, foster parents often fail to manage the associated behavioural problems, which consequently lead to the breakdown of their relationship.

According to Diaz (2017:71), foster parents face a lot of challenges in raising foster children, namely delinquency, emotional disturbances, special learning needs, developmental delays and disabilities, substance abuse, and addiction. Hence, there is an increased demand to interact with the family of origin, which creates anxiety for foster parents as they feel insecure. Fostering children with behavioural problems causes stress for foster parents, which may lead to burnout, guilt, distress, or feelings of failure (Miller, Cooley, Owens, Fletcher & Moody, 2019).

Sub-theme 2.1: Compelling parental sensitiveness and favouritism avoidance

This theme shows how foster parents cultivate sensitivity and avoid favouritism when dealing with adolescent foster children. In accordance with favouritism, Family Resource Group (2018) defines parental favouritism as when one or both parents display consistent preference towards one child over other. Differential parental is common phenomena in multi-child families and it has a major effect on individuals' later psychological development of self-esteem (Rolan & Marceu, 2018). Children whose foster parents show higher level of sensitive responsiveness and warmth display stronger language skill, and self-esteem compared to children who receive lower levels of such parenting (Madigan, Prime, Graham, Rodrigues, Anderson, Khoury & Jenkins, 2019:7).

In most cases, adolescent foster children show vulnerability, Ranjan, and Candola (2023:3165) emphasized that the perception of a person as a favourite enhances self-esteem where children with high self-esteem are more likely to adjust easily into

parent's positive emotional state while those with low self-esteem may be more sensitive to the preferential treatment of other children in the family. Therefore, self-esteem seems to have impact on adolescent foster children's perception of preference by foster parents.

One participant expressed her experience as follows:

"I have realized that you need to be sensitive when talking to them, they easily get hurt. They hold grudges, you need not to show favouritism, when you give them things you must share it equally" (Foster parent 1).

"Raising a child that isn't your biological child is difficult because at times you are afraid to be strict. You don't want them to feel as though you don't love them" (Foster parent 20).

"There's a lot that I've learnt. You need to be patient because they are sensitive. Sometimes when you try to reprimand them, they get easily offended and assume that you are mistreating them" (Foster parent 7).

The findings of the study revealed that foster parents were sensitive when raising adolescent foster children because they realized that these children often feel unloved and mistreated in their care. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Squire, Limke and Jones (2013: 136), which found that differential treatment by foster parents leads to feelings of being unloved and low self-esteem in adolescent foster children. Furthermore, this differential treatment or favouritism in adolescent foster children predicts jealousy and, in turn, negative challenges in their romantic relationships.

Parental competition typically occurs in families with more than one child, as children find themselves competing for their parents' attention. The behaviour of foster parents can also influence this competition, especially after the birth of a new baby, where more attention is directed towards the newborn.

The feelings of jealousy and rivalry become more intense, particularly when foster parents show preferential treatment towards their own children rather than the adolescent foster children. A study conducted by Jackson (2017) revealed that

comforting adolescent foster children when they are irritated, angry, or disappointed contributes to parenting sensitivity and reduces parental intrusiveness. It is crucial for foster parents to be mindful of their interactions with these children to ensure sensitivity.

Sub-theme 2.2: Adolescent foster children's behavioural mismanagement

Guedj-Bourdieu, Guilé, Rivière, Pace, Cohen, and Benarous (2021) indicated that behavioural problems in adolescent foster children are complex issues and often require the intervention of professionals from various disciplines. Being aware of this level of understanding can help prevent role confusion and provide more targeted interventions.   Assessing the behavioural problems of adolescent foster children requires taking a broad perspective and considering the entire system involved with the adolescent. Monteiro, Carvalho and Santos (2021:4) found a positive relationship between parents' work and family conflict and the behavioural problems of adolescent foster children.   Prihastiwi and Antawati (2023:446) emphasized that anger management focuses more on dealing with emotions after they have occurred, rather than preventing anger itself.   Therefore, anger management therapy is directed at addressing the behaviour after an anger flare-up. Self-concept and self-esteem play a dominant role in interpreting stimuli when dealing with emotional management intervention programmes that focus more on cognitive processes. Below are some of the exact words expressed by some of the foster parent in this regard:

> *"The thing with children is that when you show them their mistake, they get angry. They sulk but at that time when they sulk or get angry, they look like a robot. When I show the children their mistake, I become assertive and make my point, as I speak, I harden my hand and look at them to see as to how long the child will remain angry" (Foster parent 3).*

> *"I have learnt that it is difficult to raise orphans because you have to treat them well so that they are free children and not anxious children. You have to protect them from things like alcohol. I struggle mostly with peer pressure. It's the 17-year-old boy who ended up smoking dagga as a result of peer pressure. He has friends who are not good influencers. The groceries get used up before the*

month ends, the grant money isn't enough however we have never gone to bed on an empty stomach. That's what I am grateful for" (Foster parent 4).

"Yooh! these children are trouble because they know that they are orphans and they receive grant. She believes that the foster grant is enough to take care of her, she will make demands and give orders on how to use her grant forgetting that the grant is a supplement to what I have" (Foster parent 16).

The findings of the study confirmed that the lack of behaviour management skills among foster parents has a negative effect on the child. Foster parents do not have a positive approach to disciplining children; instead, they feel more confident when they observe externalizing and internalizing symptoms, which they perceive as the cause of their parenting stress. Parenting stress and parenting methods are strongly linked to psychosocial indicators in adolescent foster children (Mancinelli, Arciprete & Salcuni, 2021:17).

Sub-theme 2.3: Adolescent foster children's emotional turmoil

Parenting is defined as the process of encouraging and supporting the physical, emotional, psychosocial, and intellectual development of children from early stages to adulthood (Zilberstein & Popper, 2014:2).   However, many foster parents and caregivers believe that the most challenging phase of nurturing is the adolescent phase (Zilberstein & Popper, 2014:2). Furthermore, adolescent foster children face numerous risk factors that stem from their environmental conditions and experiences, including placement instability, visitation stress, loss, homelessness, trauma, and parental mental health issues (Zilberstein & Popper, 2014:4). Adolescence is a stage where children experience rapid changes in their bodies and brains, including physical, intellectual, and psychosocial challenges, as well as a higher risk of mental health issues such as depression, characterized by suicide, homicide, and substance abuse (Arulsubila & Subasree, 2017:7).

Emotional support in children can be demonstrated through parental involvement, which has been found to have a positive relationship with a child's motivation and engagement in life, education, and extracurricular activities. However, research shows

that foster parents' unwillingness or unavailability to discuss their children's behaviour and inadequate monitoring of their school work can serve as barriers to the success of adolescent children (Moyer & Goldberg, 2019:123). This indicates that adolescent foster children who have experienced traumatic life events are more likely to face various educational challenges compared to non-foster children, including special educational needs, poor school attendance, disrespect towards foster parents, and a lower likelihood of high school graduation. This has been confirmed by a few participants who had the following to say:

"I have realized that these children are jealous. They even get jealous of my children. At times I will buy something for my child and they would want that too. This other child demanded her foster grant every time after payment telling me that it is her money. She accused me of using her grant to buy cell phones for my children, I even bought her a cell phone but she was never satisfied" (Foster parent 5).

"Raising foster children while they are still young is enjoyable because at that age, they are still controllable once they reach the ages 15–16 they become a handful. The problem is that they begin smoking, drinking alcohol and so on. They become disrespectful and want you to take orders from them" (Foster parent 8).

"These foster children if they are siblings, they like to isolate themselves from other people in the home, even if you treat them well like your own children, they withdraw from others. They sing in the bathroom songs that you'll hear that they feel that if their parents were alive things would be better than what I was doing. Even if you do good or bad you do not know because they do not get satisfaction" (Foster parent 17).

Parenting plays a crucial role in the development of children, particularly during the challenging adolescent phase. Foster parents and caregivers must be aware of the unique challenges faced by adolescent foster children and provide the necessary emotional support and guidance to help them overcome these obstacles and achieve positive educational outcomes. Some clinical aspects of adolescents' behavioural

problem such as impulsivity or irritable are being generalized with those at extreme of the spectrum having high risk of associate psychiatric disorders (Guedj-Bourdlau et al., 2021). Steenbakker, van Der Steen and Grietens (2017) argued that adolescent foster children sometimes use avoidant behaviour as coping mechanism, avoid talking about their experience to avoid negative emotions or flashbacks and they tend to undertake activities to take their minds off their memories.

Theme 3: Challenges encountered by foster parents raising adolescents

Foster parents are expected to manage the multiple demands of caring for adolescent foster children with behavioural challenges without being trained by DSD. However, there has been little focus on preservice training for foster parents, leading to challenges after foster care placement. Literature reveals that foster parents assume the responsibility of caring for and nurturing adolescent foster children, protecting and supporting their physical and psychological needs without training by DSD (Mancinelli et al., 2021:1). In other countries, training is a legal requirement that provides foster parents with knowledge and skills to assist in fostering parent-child relations and managing behavioural problems that may arise (Kaasboll, 2019:1). Frimpong-Manso, Tagooe, and Mawutor (2020:4) mention that foster parents must deal with negative societal perceptions when it comes to fostering children, and financial constraints also contribute to the fear of losing the foster care grant and the bond they have with the child. Parenting roles and responsibilities are complicated and challenging, with multiple life stressors that go beyond typical parenting. These challenges affect their ability to provide proper care to adolescent foster children.

Sub-theme 3.1: Dynamics of adolescent's stage

According to Shpiegel (2015:7), adolescence is recognized as a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood. It is characterized by physical changes that affect the way children perceive themselves and how they are treated by others. During this time, teenagers often struggle with their own identities and require support and guidance from their parents. Saimons and Preet (2022:96) argue that this development stage typically occurs between the ages of ten and nineteen. It may continue until the individual has accepted their adult identity and behaviour. Parental

support and communication, as well as parental confidence in foster parents, play a crucial role in promoting self-esteem and social competence in adolescents.

The teenage years are a period of rapid development in the brain, body, and behaviour. This opens up opportunities for interventions that can have a significant impact on the health of adolescent foster children. According to the World Drug Report, adolescence is a critical phase where individuals between the ages of 12 and 17 often initiate drug and alcohol use (UNODC, 2020:14). The collective development of thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills interacts with social changes during adolescence. This can create emotional and behavioural vulnerabilities that are associated with mental health issues, peer pressure, substance use, and poor decision-making (National Library of Medicine, 2017). Adolescent foster children may sometimes express their emotions through nonverbal cues, which can indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The following extracts represent symptoms of trauma and the developmental stages experienced by adolescent foster children:

> *"The boy child seems to have forgetfulness problem, when you tell him something now, he shows understanding and after some time he has forgotten. While the girl child is getting to adolescent stage and I see a serious problem there. She has begun her menstruation period, and when you talk to her, she will just keep quiet, but the facial expression shows anger" (Foster parent 1).*

> *"The foster child seems to have anger because when I talk to her, she shouts at me, I ended up give up not knowing what to do" (Foster parent 13).*

Other participants highlighted a crucial opinion that adolescent foster children engage in substance abuse and theft.

> *"Oh my God the boy child! You will say you have put R20 here now, the next moment it isn't there. I have become aware of the fact that when the boy child has taken money the girl will tell me that "when he cries you must know that he has taken the money".*

Then the one who comes after her, began stealing her father's working tools. We then realized that the boy child no longer goes to school, he sits in the street and smokes cigarette, every morning he will leave wearing a trouser and shirt" (Foster parent 3).

"I encountered difficulties raising them. I heard through people that the girl child bunks classes and stays at her friend's place. They keep casual clothes in their bags. They change their school uniform and put on their casual clothes in order to go out with boyfriends. So, when I heard that, I asked for the friend's physical address. When she woke up in the morning going to school around 06h30, at around 09h00 I went to the said address. It was true, I found them together with her friend in casual clothes. I took the child and called the friend's parent and told her that the children were bunking classes. As I was making a call the friend's uncle arrived and began hitting them. I was surprised, he was using an electric cable to hit them, and he was hurting them. I asked him not to hit them". (Foster parent 9).

Adolescence is characterized by a high occurrence of emotional and behavioural problems, such as tension, anger, risky sexual behaviour, mood swings, and anxiety. These behaviours are often influenced by environmental factors such as peer pressure (Saimons & Robert, 2022: 97; Steketee, Jonkman, Naber & Distelbrink, 2021: 1). Many foster parents find adolescence to be a difficult phase to handle as they struggle to know how to address the behavioural challenges exhibited by their adolescent foster children. Some resort to corporal punishment. However, literature shows that poor management of children's behaviour, including harsh discipline, are linked to social and psychological challenges in adolescents (United Nations, 2009: 7).

According to ecological theory, individuals are influenced by both direct (microsystem) and indirect (mesosystem) contact with their environment (Moyer & Goldberg, 2019: 5). However, the impact of these systems varies from person to person. This theory aligns with the concept of person-in-environment, which provides a conceptual framework that assists social workers in focusing on individuals and their environments, recognizing that everything in nature is interconnected (Cheung & Leung, 2020: 2). Social workers cannot fully understand and address a client's

situation without considering the physical, social, political, economic, and spiritual environment in which they live (Teater, 2019: 202).

The role and responsibilities of foster parents are multifaceted and demanding, as they face multiple life stressors brought on by their adolescent foster children. Foster parents often report unmet needs and frustrations within the Department of Social Development (DSD), as they feel they lack emotional support and proper training, which exacerbates their parenting stress when dealing with behavioural challenges (Mancineli, Arprete & Salcuni, 2012: 1). In many cases, adolescent foster children view parental authority as unjust when foster parents try to control personal issues related to privacy, bodily control, and personal preferences (Smetana, 2017:20). Additionally, parental supervision has been seen as a way to prevent adolescent behavioural problems, such as substance abuse, truancy, and antisocial behaviour, as it allows for some autonomy while still enabling foster parents to keep track of their adolescents. Effective behaviour management involves setting boundaries, maintaining high standards, developing and enforcing rules through supervision and monitoring (Department of Education, 2009: 5). It is important for foster parents to be open about their feelings in order for the adolescent foster child to learn how to respond to emotions. Foster parent 15 reflected as follows on her positive experience regarding the management of behavioural challenges encountered post foster care placement:

> *"I have raised a teenage son who has once disturbed me and I have realized it was stage. We were taught about developmental stages of children that there are some changes in their behaviours. I have got experience and I am handling it my way as I have raised my son. He knows that when he begins misbehaving, he gets a punishment to stay home 4 or 5 days prohibited to go out with friends"* *(Foster parent 15).*

The findings of the study indicate that various foster parents have different experiences when faced with challenges in raising adolescent foster children. These findings highlight the importance of providing parenting skills training, as it does not only enhance the capabilities of foster parents but also helps address teenage behavioural problems. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Steketee, Jonkman, Naber, and Distelbrink (2021:2), which confirms that parental support programs can

bring about positive changes in both parents' competences and teenagers' problem behaviour. Therefore, it is crucial to empower foster parents with behaviour training programmes.

Sub-theme 3.2:   Foster parent and adolescent foster child relationship breakdown

This subtheme illustrates the breakdown of the relationship between foster parents and adolescent foster children. Moreover, parent-child relationships and families characterized by indifference, non-responsiveness, emotional insecurity, and lack of consistency in caring for and comforting children during the early years of development are associated with higher risks of depression, anxiety, and relationship problems among children and adults (United Nations, 2009:6). However, depression in childhood has also been associated with the use of drugs in early adolescence, leading to unhealthy relationships (Diaz, 2017:74).

An unhealthy relationship between foster parents and adolescent foster children may lead to the breakdown of the placement, resulting in multiple placements that ultimately contribute to the behavioural problems of adolescent foster children. Guidelines for early childhood development (2006:2) stipulated that tense relationships within the family constitute the most important risk factors encountered by foster parents raising adolescent foster children.

The most critical factor is for social workers to carefully assess and determine the quality of the relationship between foster parents and adolescent foster children, as these children are more prone to developmental delays and school-related problems, placing additional demands on foster parents (Botes, 2008:2; Diaz, 2017:71; Zilberstein & Popper, 2014:6). To demonstrate this point, here is what some of the parents had to say in this regard:

> *"There were many stories that came up when we spoke with the social worker it was decided that we meet the children's mother but the girl child left when she was pregnant" (Foster parent 2).*

"I have encountered naughty children that I managed to control but those ones were a handful we had to part ways but even when they left, they sometimes came back to my house. They were removed from my care but the girl child refused to leave and I was told that her foster grant would be closed" (Foster parent 3*).*

"I raised them from 2010, in 2018 they became problematic I had to put their luggage together and we went to the social worker, the other girl child left the house…" (Foster parent 4).

According to Arulsubila and Subasree (2017:3), every parent-child relationship is unique and personal because it is grounded in the interaction between individuals and their different personalities. They further revealed that some children are easy to manage, while others are more problematic. Easy children are likely to respond positively to discipline, while those with unique temperaments cannot be disciplined with severe punishment. It is important for foster parents to understand adolescent foster children based on their nature, inherent personality, and upbringing patterns. Notably, adolescent foster children need to be raised in a caring and safe environment that ensures their protection, development, and participation in family and social life (Guidelines for Early Childhood Development, 2006:2). The family or home environment should be free from violence, exploitation, discrimination, and abuse, as well as provide adequate basic needs.

A good relationship has a strong influence on the stability of foster placement, the self-esteem of adolescent foster children, and their emotional and behavioural development (Sprecher, Tuitt, Hill, Midgley & Sleed, 2021:249). The study conducted by Mmusi and Malan (2023) concurs with these findings that foster parents experienced psycho-social problem when caring for children with behavioural challenges.

According to Vanderfaeillie, Goemans, Damen, and Pijnenburg (2017), qualitative evidence suggests that a breakdown in the foster relationship leads to the child disconnecting from the foster family, especially the foster parent, which increases the risk of breakdown. Children who experience more breakdowns are more likely to be

victims of sexual abuse than physical abuse. Dozier and Bernard's (2019) study have shown that foster parents sometimes behave harshly towards foster children, using behaviours such as glaring angrily, smacking, grabbing children, and threatening them verbally in an attempt to control their behaviour. For instance, foster parents may find themselves overwhelmed and respond by causing pain when trying to control a chaotic situation.

For this reason, they developed an intervention called 'Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up' (ABC), which aims to address the adversity that foster children may have experienced in foster care. Jackson (2017) defines ABC as an approach used to assist adolescent foster children in dealing with the trauma they have gone through. It provides parenting skills to foster parents of adolescent foster children who have faced life challenges and offers these children an environment that enhances their ability to control their emotions.

Sub-theme 3.3: Foster children drug dependency as a problem

The sub-theme of reported drug dependence is a contributing factor to truancy that foster parents encounter with their adolescent foster children. This problem typically manifests as skipping classes and going out at night.

Factors such as lack of security, trust, and warmth between foster parents and adolescent foster children, lack of family structure, inappropriate discipline, and lack of boundaries put adolescent foster children at a high risk of substance abuse, mental health problems, and other issues (United Nations on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2020:9; United Nations (UN), 2009:1). Ongoing drug use can impact various aspects of life including education, employment, housing, finances, legal issues, physical and mental health, and relationships (Lintzeris, Mammen, Holmes, Mills, Black, Gardner, & Dunlop 2020). Mnisi and Botha (2016:83) and Hannah and Woolgar (2018) reveal that mental health challenges and experiences of trauma are factors contributing to disruptive behaviour among adolescent foster children. As a result, foster parents often feel overwhelmed when trying to cope with the social issues displayed by these children. According to Healthy Child Manitoba (2017:6), alcohol and drugs can affect

the brain development, behaviour, and growth of adolescent foster children. These substances also impact the parenting skills of foster parents.

Few participants expressed the challenges they are faced with adolescent foster children using drugs:

"… the child is going out at night, not wanting to bath, doing schoolwork for instance homework as well as not attending school consistently. I wish that the 17-year-old could go to rehab because I noticed that he is too much on it because when we are watching tv he quickly falls asleep and snores" (Foster parent 4).

"The contributory factors that I've noticed are cigarettes, alcohol, nyaope, boys, girls" (Foster parent 6).

While another participant has suspicions that the child might have been smoking because his friend's smoke.

"Currently I have not seen a thing but I am watching, I have people that are watching him because I suspect he smokes because his friends' smokes" (Foster parent 15).

Most foster parents are not equipped to deal with the behavioural challenges displayed by adolescent foster children. Many children who have experienced trauma and separation face serious implications as they grow older, often turning to alcohol and drugs to cope with their past trauma. The researcher has observed that adolescent foster children often experience challenges such as aggression, truancy, and drug dependency due to a lack of support from foster parents, social workers, and other key players in the foster care system. There are several factors that put adolescents at risk for substance abuse, including insecure relationships with foster parents, ineffective parenting, chaotic family environments, and a lack of attachment (UNODC, 2020:9).

The findings of this study align with a previous study conducted by Mnisi (2015:84), which revealed that some adolescent foster children turn to drugs due to peer pressure

and the desire for a quick fix to their problems. While peer pressure can contribute to alcohol and drug abuse, a positive family environment is the main factor that prevents adolescent foster children from engaging in substance abuse, as well as delinquency and early sexual activities (UN, 2009:9). According to the UN (2009:5), a dysfunctional family and lack of family structure are the main factors contributing to substance abuse in adolescent children.

Furthermore, a quality relationship between foster parents and adolescent foster children has a beneficial influence on the child's development and plays a crucial role in creating a stable placement. A study conducted by Botes (2008:3) revealed that although social workers recognize the importance of a quality relationship between foster parents and adolescent foster children, they often rely on common sense rather than addressing attachment issues. This highlights the need for social workers to be equipped in dealing with attachment-related issues that may arise during foster care supervision. Jackson (2017) emphasizes the significance of attachment in the growth of adolescent foster children and its importance in strengthening families. Play is regarded as an effective tool for bonding with these children.

Theme 4: Management of the challenges experienced by foster parents

This theme consists of four sub-themes, and participants demonstrated their ability and inability to manage the challenges encountered when caring for adolescent foster children. It is evident that participants had both positive and negative experiences in managing these challenges. The researcher aimed to understand how participants dealt with these challenges and wanted them to share their experiences based on the parenting styles they used, such as anger (United Nations, 2009:5). According to Prihastiwi and Antawari (2023), anger can be a healthy way to express negative feelings and thoughts if managed properly.

However, if handled negatively, it can lead to aggression and rage.   Anger management involves dealing with emotions after they have occurred, but the best approach is to prevent anger from happening in the first place. Poor management of behavioural challenges, such as harsh and inconsistent discipline, as well as a lack of opportunities to learn new social skills, have been linked to social, psychological, and

academic difficulties in adolescent foster children (Mantovani & Thomas, 2015:306). To successfully manage behaviour, foster parents should accept and consistently implement positive management strategies over time. The main objective of behaviour management is to equip foster parents with the skills to manage their own behaviour so that they can effectively manage the behaviour of others.

Sub-theme 4.1: Application of authoritative and authoritarian parenting style

Parenting refers to the process of socialization, which involves training, nurturing, caring for, and educating children in order to prepare them to navigate their environments (The National Academies of Sciences, 206:20). Arulsubila and Subasree (2017: 1) describe parenting as the act of raising a child, emphasizing the role of nurture rather than biological connection. On the other hand, parenting style refers to a psychological concept that represents the typical strategies parents and foster parents use to nurture children, which can have an impact on the well-being of adolescent foster children.

Authoritative parenting style is defined as a positive approach to discipline that promotes good behaviour and responsibility in children (Roman, Makwakwa & Lacante, 2016:3). It involves setting rules and guidelines and using both power and reasoning during discipline (Smetana, 2017:19). This style allows adolescent foster children to understand right from wrong and encourages them to change their behaviour. In contrast, authoritarian parenting style is described as a negative approach to discipline characterized by low warmth and high control, with the goal of shaping and evaluating the behaviour of adolescent foster children (Steketee, Jonkman, Naber & Distelbrink, 2021:3). The use of corporal punishment as an authoritarian parenting strategy is still prevalent among educators, parents, and foster parents (Smetana, 2017:20; Addy, 2020:57). Obedience is achieved through punitive discipline, with little or no communication.

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 defines corporal punishment as any deliberate harm inflicted on a child, including:

a) Assaulting a child deliberately and causing an injury

b) Abusing a child sexually or permitting a child to be sexually assaulted

c) Bullying by another child

d) Exploiting a child through labour practice

e) Exposing or subjecting a child to behaviour that may harm the child psychologically or emotionally.

Although corporal punishment has been banned in South Africa since 1996 due to its proven negative effects on children, such as pain, anger, withdrawal, and deceitfulness (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010), there are four instruments that South Africa has implemented to prohibit corporal punishment both at home and in school. These include the Bill of Rights, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, the Children's Act 38 of 2005, Abolition of corporal punishment Act 33 of 1997, and the School Act 84 of 1996 (Statistics South Africa (STATS SA), 2023).

Considering that foster parents have been entrusted with the responsibility of fostering a sense of belonging in adolescent foster children through care, protection, and warmth (Addy:2020:20), some foster parents have pointed out that authoritarian parenting styles, such as corporal punishment and the use of force, have been employed in disciplining these children, but have not resulted in positive behaviour. One participant mentioned that:

"I used to reprimand her but you know these children keep on repeating the same mistakes. I have tried to call her into order by beating her up but beating her did not help because she became worse. Another method was shaving her head, even her friends knew that if she has shaved her head, there is something that she has done but it has never changed her behaviour" (Foster parent 16).

Another participant expressed her use of an authoritarian parenting style when disciplining adolescent children:

"I give them a hiding, after giving these children a hiding, I shout at them and keep quiet and see how they are going to react, and then continue to reprimand" (Foster parent 3).

Research has shown the negative impact of the authoritarian parenting style on the lives of adolescent foster children. The authoritarian parenting style, which includes yelling and corporal punishment, is viewed as a form of violence against adolescent foster children, despite some foster parents still using it (Smetana, 2017:19; STATS SA, 2023). This parenting method results in adolescents being aggressive, developing conduct disorders, and becoming rebellious when given instructions (September, Rich, and Roman, 2016:1062). Consequently, this has led to delinquent behaviour, negative relationships between foster parents and children, and an increased risk of children becoming abusers in adulthood and in peer relationships. It is evident that negative parenting styles are linked to poor behavioural outcomes and cause many adolescent foster children to trust strangers more than their own family.

The family environment plays a crucial role in providing guidance based on the type of parenting used (Lestari, 2023). Li and Xie (2017) indicate that authoritative parenting style, which involves parents being in control and providing clear and firm directions for children, while also being flexible and warm in their relationship with the foster child, is beneficial. In contrast to authoritarian parenting, authoritative parenting focuses on positive reinforcement and teaching children about the negative and adverse consequences of their actions. A few participants emphasized the importance of using an authoritative strategy when communicating with adolescent foster children.

> *"I am talking with him but it goes in here and go out, I tell you he does not listen to me, yesterday this time he was not here when we dish up for dinner at six o clock, he comes home past 7 to 8 but I know he is just playing somewhere"* *(Foster parent 2).*

> *"Usually, I prefer sitting down with them. Firstly, I like to spend time with them, we would play and from there onwards I am able to express my emotions. I even tell them to inform me when I am at fault"* *(Foster parent 12).*

Yet another participant mentioned that:

> *"As a mother because I know foster children' challenges, I sit her down and tell her the benefit of listening to what parents says. She must study in order to be*

successful even the principal told us that children should avoid moving around with friends, they must focus on their school work. I always remind her about school work, she is a child I know she might not stick on what I have said, when I go out, she goes out too" (Foster parent 10).

The researcher has explored that the authoritative parenting style brings good behaviour in adolescent children, while the authoritarian parenting style is unfavourable and worsens their behaviour. Positive parenting involves positive reinforcement, discipline and problem-solving in relation to adolescent foster children.

Furthermore, the findings of the study conducted by Steketee, Jonkman, Naber and Distelbrink (2021:12) show that authoritative parenting methods happen to be the most effective strategy for enhancing the psychosocial wellbeing of adolescent children while the authoritarian parenting method is associated with behavioural challenges such as mental health problems, serious emotional distraction and affecting their development.

Sub-theme 4.2: Usage of social work services

This sub-theme explores the dissatisfaction experienced by foster parents in their interactions with social workers. The role of social workers is to support individuals who face social, political, and economic disadvantages, with the goal of providing hope and facilitating positive change (Rollins, 2019:3). However, social workers have been perceived as failing to deliver high-quality services to both foster parents and adolescent foster children. This is primarily due to a lack of human resources and insufficient time allocated to them (Zimudzi, 2022:10).

In 2003, the Department of Social Development (DSD) recognized social work as a scarce skill and critical profession, highlighting the severe shortage of social workers in South Africa (Kubheka, 2023; Mosimege, 2017:23). The country needs a minimum of 77,000 social workers, but as of 2022, there were only 17,500 employed social workers, with an additional 9,000 social workers unemployed due to funding limitations (Opperman, 2022:1). Clearly, the current number of employed social workers is

insufficient to meet the demands for social services, resulting in vulnerable children suffering.

Due to the shortage of social workers, the DSD has been unable to effectively implement the Children's Act, leading to a significant number of expired orders. As a consequence, social workers have been unable to adequately supervise foster care placements. This issue is confirmed by the following statements:

> "*I took her to the social worker for assistance and social worker asked her if she really wants to leave home. She confirmed to them that she does not want to stay with me anymore she wants to stay with her boyfriend*" (*Foster parent 5*).

> "*In order to deal with the challenges encountered, you need to seek help. Just as we get invited to schools for workshops. At those workshops there are different topics and if the topic is related to the challenges we encounter, we are told to write it down. When I go back to them and tell them that the child needs counselling. The person who conducted the workshops promised that they would send a counsellor to me however that didn't work for me because they were a no show. They never sent a counsellor to me. I would even give my contact numbers and address to them. They would promise that they would get back to me but they never did. At times I would feel guilty for exposing my family matters to people because it hurts sharing these matters with the hope to get help in return only to found that those people don't care about you*" (*Foster parent 8*).

> "*I have once gone to the Department of Social Development to ask about where I can take him to study, maybe taking him to the boarding school. The problem is that he is playful. If only someone can teach him handy work*" (*Foster parent 7*).

This finding confirms the views of Mampane and Ross (2017:12) that foster parents do not receive quality services from social workers because social workers primarily engage in administrative work (such as reviewing FCG to prevent lapses). They do not have enough time to provide psychosocial support that could help foster parents manage the challenges they face when caring for adolescent foster children. Although

foster parents describe their role as challenging and stressful, some managed to seek support from social workers, which proved helpful, while for others, it was inadequate. Furthermore, the study conducted by Rowan et al. (2023:200) aligns with the above findings, as foster parents expressed emotional pain characterized by exhaustion when dealing with behavioural problems of adolescent foster children and guilt when utilizing childcare services. These factors have diminished their interest and motivation to practice self-care.

Sub-theme 4.3: Religious principle as a behaviour management mechanism

According to Helder, Gunnoe and Timmermans (2020:1), religiosity involves the belief in the existence of God and the understanding of what God expects from human beings. The sub-theme explores the different ways in which foster parents provide religious support to manage stressful situations while caring for adolescent foster children. It is highlighted that this type of support is linked to stable discipline practices, characterized by interaction between foster parent and adolescent foster children. Foster parents who are motivated by their religious beliefs to care for adolescent foster children are less likely to experience parenting stress, as they believe that God is guiding them throughout the process. Frimpong-Manso, Tagoe, and Mawutor (2020:7) mention that foster parents take on the role of parenting because they feel a social responsibility and duty to give back to society. They believe that caring for vulnerable children is a way to serve their community and help reduce deviance and child delinquency. Here are responses from few participants:

> *"At times I would tell them to bring candles so that we can pray" (Foster parent 18).*

> *"I sat down with my child to discuss the issues and started going to church with her. My child thanked me and said mama that will never happen again. She said that doesn't want friends anymore, her schoolwork will be her friend" (Foster parent 9).*

> *"You have to pray countless times because sometimes these foster children will ask you questions you are unable to answer. They would ask me what illness*

their mother had before death because they would hear people talking about it in the neighborhood" (Foster parent 20).

Juwarini and Antawati (2023) define spiritual intelligence as the ability to access meaning, value, and purpose in order to live a richer and more creative life. Spiritual intelligence plays a role in helping individuals manage their thoughts and emotions when faced with provocative stimuli.

One way to cultivate spiritual intelligence is through attending church services and prayer, which can help individuals recognize stimuli correctly and reduce distortion (Mosimege, 2016:211).

Additionally, spiritual training can strengthen self-concept, self-esteem, and improve social-cognitive skills, leading to changes in behaviour and the ability to manage emotions. Prihastiwi and Antawati (2023) highlight the importance of strengthening self-esteem, social skills, cognitive reconstruction, and spiritual intelligence in effectively managing angry emotions in adolescent foster children and their foster parents.

The findings of a study conducted by Helder, Gunnoe, and Timmermans (2020:2) reveal that foster parents and adolescent foster children often attend church to strengthen their religious beliefs and find solace in the belief that God will protect and heal their emotions. Some foster parents rely on their faith and prayer to cope with the challenging behaviours exhibited by their adolescent foster children. This demonstrates a connection between religious beliefs and the parenting of adolescent foster children.

Sub-theme 4.4: Open communication

Each and every family requires support from the child protection system (DSD) in developing positive parenting skills, especially for children who are deeply involved in the foster care system. Therefore, open communication is crucial (Balsells, Pastor, Molina, Fuentes-Pelaez & Vazquez, 2017:813). Nelson and Colaner (2020) define communication openness as the extent to which adoption and foster-related issues and emotions are explored and communicated among foster kinship members.

Colaner (2022) explains that communication openness plays a vital role in supporting adoptive and foster families during this transitional development by creating a relational environment that emphasizes connection, free-flowing dialogue, and responsiveness. Horstman, Colaner and Rottenour (2016) state that families with open communication often create a climate in which all family members are encouraged to participate in unrestrained interaction, leading to conformity. Conformity represents the degree to which communication emphasizes a climate of homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs.

In most cases, foster parents do not utilize open communication when dealing with adolescent foster children. They have normalized negative parenting methods as the best way to correct the behaviour of these adolescents, which ultimately worsens their behaviour. The delegate assembly of NASW in 2003 has been against the use of negative parenting, such as corporal punishment, in all situations (Helder et al., 2020:4). Foster parents encourage the maturity of adolescent foster children by expecting them to be socially responsible and demonstrate mature behaviour, while also conforming to family rules. Okech and Mackinova (2020:45) emphasize that foster parents should use methods such as praising their talents, withdrawing privileges when they fail to conform to family rules, sharing family accomplishments, and emotional identification to encourage the maturity of adolescent foster children. These methods can help shape the behaviour of these adolescents. One participant expressed positive parenting method as reflected below:

"I used to sit down with them and talk, sometimes we visit social workers as they had classes with us and that has assisted us a lot" (Foster parent 18).
"However, when I sit down with them, I do tell them to study so that they can have a bright future and not end up like us. They listen. I told them that they will attend parties once they have finished with school" (Foster parent 11).

"Even last week I was off duty and I sat them down and explained to them that I treat you just like my children hence I am doing everything that I do for my children. Do not even include your father because he is not working, I am the one taking care of you" (Foster parent 1).

> *"I get help from our grandmother, if ever we went to the 'social workers' and we didn't get help, I then go to our grandmother she's the one that sits us down to talk"* (Foster parent 4).

The findings confirm that the South African foster care system experiences a massive need for social workers to provide quality services in the form of monitoring, supervision, and emotional support to both foster parents and adolescent foster children. A large number of children in South Africa find themselves in foster care placements that require social workers to monitor them by ensuring accountability, emotional support, and the provision of different perspectives (Malgas, 2011:7; Masha and Botha, 2021:509). Social workers find themselves with excessive caseloads and little manpower, resulting in inadequate monitoring and supervision of foster care placements, which is beyond their control (Naicker, 2021:349; Diaz, 2017:45; Masha and Botha, 2021:510).

The study conducted by Masha and Botha (2021:511) attests that there is a lack of manpower, resulting in DSWs failing to provide the required supervision, leading to foster children being abused and neglected by foster parents without their knowledge due to a lack of resources. DSWs are aware of the significant need to strengthen parenting knowledge to promote positive ways of discipline that reassure good behaviour and help them refrain from causing emotional pain to adolescent foster children. The study conducted by Steketee, Jonkman, Naber, and Distelbrink (2021:2) in the Netherlands shows that parental knowledge and skills, such as appropriate parental supervision and positive parenting, are recognized as key features in preventing harmful developmental outcomes for adolescent foster children.

It is evident that the nature of adolescent foster children, their upbringing, parenting style and knowledge, a constructive family environment, as well as the relationship between foster parents and these children, have a strong influence on their biopsychosocial development and can play a major role in protecting adolescent children from substance abuse. Frimpong-Manso, Tagoe, and Mawutor (2020:3) claim that having foster parents who are driven by religious beliefs encourages pro-social behaviour in adolescent foster children.

Theme 5: Factors that contribute to the dynamics encountered by foster parents

Issues such as health, trauma, challenging behaviour, disruptive behaviour, substance abuse, and inappropriate sexual behaviour appear to be the primary factors that foster parents encounter (Frimpong-Manso & Tagoe, 2020:7). This theme consists of two subthemes that contribute to the challenges experienced by foster parents when raising adolescent foster children. Sinclair, Wilson and Gibbs (2005), as cited in Cater and van Breda (2016:211), argue that good foster parents are not formed by strategic plans, but rather produced through comprehensive screening, appropriate education, and support. Therefore, if DSWs have enough resources, adequate knowledge, and skills in assessing prospective foster parents, it may result in stable foster care placements.

Sub-theme 5.1: Insufficient supervision by social workers

The National Department of Social Development has developed an effective foster care guideline for managing foster care placements in South Africa. However, the procedure does not explain the assessment process for foster parents (Cater & van Breda, 2016:13; Sibanda & Lombard, 2015:343). Social workers have a legal obligation and duty to assess and provide parenting skills prior to foster care placement, as well as offer adequate supervision to foster parents after placement. Nevertheless, social workers also need training to comprehensively assess and supervise foster parents (Naicker, 2021:344; Mampane & Ross, 2017:12). Siegel (2016:5) affirms that inadequate assessment and supervision can accelerate behavioural problems in children and lead to breakdowns in foster care placements, which is detrimental to the child's wellbeing. Social workers currently only briefly screen foster parents without clear guidance from the DSD, exacerbating the lack of training they receive at university or through orientation from their organization (Cater & van Breda, 2016: par.12). It is not surprising that social auxiliary workers, as a support system for social workers, expect foster parents to sign documents without any clarification. There is a gap in how social workers conduct screening and supervision of foster parents during and after foster care placements (Masha & Botha, 2021:510). One participant expressed a lack of adequate supervision by social workers. Here is what she had to say:

"The social auxiliary worker will call you in the car and say just sign here for me because you sign at the court that you will look after the foster child; I did not even read through the document. I just sign because I know that everything is on paper, with no explanation" (Foster parent 2).

Another participant highlighted the high turnover of social workers that affects the programme planned by the previous social worker. For instance, every time there is a change in social workers, the priority of services that need to be rendered changes. Here is what she had to say:

"I once highlighted my challenges, but our social workers are new most of the time, I do not remember having the same social worker every time, they bring new social worker, and these children need help" (Foster parent 17).

The findings of this study show that insufficient supervision and monitoring by the social workers contribute to the lack of behaviour management by foster parents. One participant mentioned that:

"If the social workers can talk to this child and find out his challenges, ask him why he does not want to assist with the household chores or to take out weeds in the yards. Maybe he will tell them" (Foster parent 18).

The lack of support from social workers has exacerbated the behavioural issues of adolescent foster children. Another participant's statement highlights their inability to help these children with their schoolwork due to a lack of education.

"I do not know what I can say. I think social workers can help me with their homework because I am not educated, I struggle with their school work. May be with the issue of them going out at night that is a problem that I fail to handle" (Foster parent 19).

The findings of the study show that there is little or no education among foster parents, hence they fail to assist adolescent foster children with schoolwork. Most foster

parents are elderly and cannot read or write, making it difficult for them to help the adolescent children with their schoolwork. The findings also support the idea that low literacy among foster parents is a reason for the poor performance of adolescent foster children and highlights the need for social worker support to improve (Lombard, 2011:234). Ceka and Murati (2016:62) revealed that in order for adolescent foster children to achieve the best results at school, foster parents should be involved in supporting them with their homework. They should act as two main educators, alongside the school educators. Therefore, parents should be familiar with the education process of adolescent foster children in order to provide support.

Research shows that parental involvement and support in education can improve the performance of adolescent children and reduce absenteeism. This also helps to restore the confidence of parents, as learners will know that their caregivers are supportive and monitoring their attendance (Ntekane, 2018:2; Balayar & Langlais, 2020:180; Steketee, Jonkman, Naber & Distelbrink, 2021:2). However, Cooley et al. (2019) assert that foster parents often struggle to meet the special needs of adolescent foster children due to inadequate supervision by social workers. Kaasboll et al. (2019) and Leathers et al. (2019) emphasize that foster parents usually do not receive enough support or supervision from social workers due to factors such as excessive caseloads, low incomes, political interference, and lack of support from management. This situation puts pressure on them to provide quality foster care services, leading to demoralization among social workers. Naicker (2021:347) also points out that social workers are sometimes required to prioritize political campaigns over their professional duties, making it impossible for them to give each case the attention it needs according to the Children's Act. These challenges have a significant impact on the development of adolescent foster children and the quality of services provided by social workers, often leading to foster parents becoming demotivated and quitting fostering, leaving vulnerable children at risk.

These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Barnet, Jankwski, Butcher, Meister and Parton (2018:1) and Herbert and Kulkin (2017), which reveals that foster parents require more advanced training to better address the psychosocial needs of adolescent foster children. Davies, Webber and Briskman (2015:1) also suggest that social workers should assess the training needs of foster parents to ensure that the

training provided is relevant to their needs. Additionally, social workers have been found to be inadequate in providing quality foster care services, including preservice training, monitoring, supervision, reviewing lapsed orders, and providing psychosocial support to foster parents and adolescent foster children (Fortune, 2016:8).

Sub-theme 5.2: Internal and external factors (home and community)

Contact with their biological families could result in challenges in developing secure relationships, inconsistent parenting, and conflicting loyalties, which may lead to behavioural problems in adolescent foster children if there are no parenting rules or plans outlined (Addy, 2020:21). However, Lewis, Muruga, Williams, Barth, and Lee (2022:2) argue that the development of a healthy relationship between adolescent foster children and their birth parents may cultivate successful family reunification. Foster parents who lack financial means negatively affect adolescent foster children because they depend on the grant to support their children and foster children or the entire family. The foster care grant should be viewed as a child protection strategy rather than poverty alleviation. Few participants expressed their demotivation to foster as well as lack of information regarding foster care placement below:

> *"The neighbors will say I am mistreating the children because they are not mine however that is an outsider, I do not mind it. Words are words, I appreciate that we can share the problems that we have. That is the insult that we receive from neighbors and as foster parents we have to live with" (Foster parent 3).*
> *Children will always be children if you sit down with them and talk to them, provide guidance on their behaviour they must listen, but I finally decided that I will no longer foster a child because of the influence that these children get from the community getting involved in how we raise these children)" (Foster parent 14).*

> *"Once community members realize that you are not the children's biological parent, they take advantage of them. They will send the children on errands such as sending them to go buy alcohol, these people will send the children to sell drugs on their behalf instead of using their own children. I don't know whether they have a conscious or not. I confronted these people as a parent and asked them to stop using my children for all these bad things because my children were*

no longer focusing on their schoolwork, they failed. I am the one responsible for these children" (Foster parent 13).

There is a need to support foster parents through information giving so that they understand the purpose of foster care and the FCG, as well as the rights of the adolescent foster children in their care. They seem to have little knowledge regarding the parenting role and responsibilities. It is imperative to believe that the foster care grant is not regarded as supplementary funds to enhance the foster parent's income, but as an income itself.

Theme 6: Foster parents required and acquired support from social workers

Social workers and other child welfare professionals are the primary source of support for foster parents and foster children. They play a crucial role in helping foster children achieve their goals related to independence, education, and employment (Courtney et al., 2016).

When it comes to trauma, social workers must recognize that it not only affects physical and emotional well-being but also has an impact on social relationships and interactions within the family structure (Harkin & Houston, 2016:15). To address this, social workers can utilize an ecological approach, which allows them to focus on individuals and their environment, recognizing the interconnectedness of all elements in nature.

Cooley et al., (2019) highlight the importance of social support as a significant predictor of foster parents' satisfaction and confidence. Social workers should prioritize creating a healthy environment for both foster parents and adolescent foster children through therapeutic interventions.
Therapy can be particularly beneficial in improving parent-child relations, especially for those who have experienced trauma (Cooley, Veldorale-Griffin, Petren & Mullis, 2014:191).

Henson, Schelbe and Lee (2023) note that foster parents are eager to assist foster children with their transition out of care. However, there are barriers such as a lack of

collaboration between service providers, insufficient training and support for foster parents in helping with the transition, and limited resources for independent living. It is crucial to strengthen and support the capacity of foster parents to provide adolescent foster children with the best possible start in life.

Sub-theme 6.1: Life skills training programme

The sub-theme suggests that social workers do not provide a life skills program before or after placing a child in foster care. However, it is the role of social workers to assist in the development of individuals (foster parents) and children, helping them become stable and productive adults (Parton, 2015:3). Social workers should consider social skills and life skills training as essential programs, as they are necessary for both foster parents and adolescent foster children. Life skills refer to the abilities needed to interact respectfully and successfully with others (Behroz-Sarcheshemeh, Karimi, Mahoudi, Shaghaghi & Jalil-Abkenar, 2017:178). For instance, a person may unknowingly use inappropriate skills due to a lack of specific social skills. Four participants expressed a strong need for social worker services in the form of a life skills programme. Here is what they had to say in this regard:

"I think they must educate, talk to children on what they must do and not to do. They do not really do a home visit, they come here when they need you to fill in a form or want you to sign something. There is no support from social workers. Sometimes they can come to talk to him in the new year, tell him to study, to listen to me and also talk about adult's things, girlfriends and other things, because it is their responsibility as social workers" (Foster parent 2).

"Being provided with classes and workshops for parents would make us happy" (Foster parent 9).

"They must be given some classes just like in the rural areas where children are provided with guidance on how to conduct themselves. The most important thing for these children is education, most available jobs require education nowadays. A child who is not educated is a problem" (Foster parent 10).

"According to my observation there is no father figure in the household for the boys to learn from, on how to carry themselves. Boys need a male person to guide them on how to behave" (Foster parent 4).

Park, Powers, Okpych and Courtney (2020) state that to promote a smooth transition out of foster care into adulthood, the foster care system seeks to help adolescent foster children develop life skills. For life skills to be successful, agency investment in support for foster children is crucial. The only way to achieve effective programmes is to ensure that foster children have access to resources that help them develop life skills (Henson et al., 2023).

Currently, the South African foster care system is grappling with funding constraints, high caseloads, and inadequate resources to ensure quality foster care services (Zimudzi, 2022:5). This has highlighted the role of social workers in providing life skills training to foster parents and adolescent foster children. Literature has revealed that the challenge of inadequate foster care is present in other developed countries such as Australia (Gowan, Peel, Elcombe, & Blythe, 2023:200). The findings confirm those of Mnisi (2015:131) that there is a lack of life skills training for foster parents, as social workers have limited time to spend with them. Most foster parents become demoralized and struggle to continue their fostering role because they do not understand the current education system and find it difficult to provide support to the children they foster (Diaz, 2017:45).

The findings of the study align with those of Arulsubila and Subasree (2017:1) indicate that life skills training has an important effect on managing the behavioural challenges faced by foster parents, to enhance the psycho-social health of the adolescent foster children. It empowers adolescent foster children to develop coping skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, and open communication. The researcher believes that family life skills training should not only involve adolescent foster children and foster parents but should include anyone who is considered part of the family to strengthen their knowledge and skills.

Sub-theme 6.2: Foster care placement education

According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW (code of ethics) (2005), social workers should adhere to their standard of practice by seeking appropriate training, supervision, or consultation within their scope of practice to meet the needs of their clients, specifically foster parents and adolescent foster children. It is the duty of social workers to provide the knowledge and skills necessary to address the needs of these clients during and after foster care placement, ensuring that the adolescent foster children are protected and nurtured in a healthy and stable environment.

Naicker (2021:369) emphasizes the importance of considering the age gap between the foster parent and the child, as well as their ability to respond to the emotional, physical, and therapeutic needs of the adolescent foster child. It can be challenging for a foster parent who has experienced trauma and never received emotional support to care for an adolescent child facing similar problems. Therefore, it is crucial to provide parenting intervention and education to foster parents, equipping them with effective parenting skills. This intervention does not only help foster parents provide a healthy environment for the children but also allows the children to reach their full potential and be protected from victimization and abuse (Shenderovich, Eisner, Cluver, Doubt, Berezin, Majokweni, and Murray, 2019:1005).

Unfortunately, some foster parents do not fully understand the rights and responsibilities of adolescent foster children, leading to insecurity when social workers listen to the child's voice in their absence.
Participants in this study shared their negative experiences when visiting social workers for behaviour modification. Below are some of what they had to say in this regard:

> *"We love that the social workers could help us, but when we take the problem to the social worker and tell them what the child is doing, they say that we must leave so that they can have a separate session with the child. As a result of this I won't know what is being said by the social worker to the child" (Foster parent 3).*

"The problem with the social worker is that we have no say, they take only what the child says, as foster parents we are not heard, we are not listened to, the social workers law is to listen to the child. When I go back to the social worker and ask as to why they only listen to the child more than me when I am the one living with the child for more than 10 years, they have no response" (Foster parent 6).

Social workers often lack the time to address issues between adolescent foster children and foster parents. This lack of time leads to foster parents failing to acquire the critical knowledge needed to be effective foster parents, which in turn leaves them dissatisfied with the intervention (Diaz, 2021:58). There is a need for preservice training as a preparatory stage before children are placed in foster care and before foster parents take on the parenting role (Emovon, 2019:97). Mersky, Topitzes, Tanczewski, and Macneil (2016:3) emphasize that if foster parents receive regular parenting skill training, they may improve their understanding of the rights and responsibilities of adolescent foster children, as well as their ability to manage behavioural problems and parenting stress. Konjin, Admiraal, Baart, van Rooij, Stams, Colonnesi, Lindauer, and Assink (2019) point out that the main goal of foster care placements is to provide stability in a child's living situation and maintain family connections and relationships. They also endorse the idea that foster parent training interventions have shown improvement in handling challenging behaviours of foster children.

The findings of the study conducted by Miller, Randle, and Dolnicar (2019:18) revealed that additional evaluations should be conducted during the screening process, focusing on the key markers of successful placements identified in this study. Furthermore, more emphasis should be placed on developing support networks among foster parents and families and involving them in preservice training processes.

The study conducted by Fortune (2016:8) emphasizes the need for human resources to manage, coordinate, and implement services required by law to address the parenting challenges faced by foster parents within the foster care system. Preservice training will equip foster parents to handle the pressures of the parenting role, become

resilient, and reduce placement breakdown. According to Haslam, Mejia, Mathew, Sanders, and de Vries (2016:2), parenting programmes were created to equip and support foster parents with effective disciplinary skills, with the hope of protecting adolescent foster children from future hardships. In other words, parenting programmes aim to provide foster parents with specialized parenting skills, promote non-violence, and improve parent-child relationships in order to reduce the development of behavioural problems.

Frimpong-Manso, Tagoe, and Mawutor (2020:4) argue that in Australia and South Africa, most foster parents are unable to receive the necessary interventions (such as financial, emotional, and training support) to fulfill their parenting role and responsibilities due to various factors, including the high workload of social workers and lack of resources.

Another unemployed participant expressed her expectation of receiving a salary while caring for adolescent foster children, this shows lack of information regarding foster care placement:

> *"I feel that what could make matters better if they could pay us. When the child's money comes, we buy shoes, we share their money, we have to buy a lot of things like food is expensive, and clothes are also expensive too" (Foster parent 3).*

Foster parents who lack financial means have a negative impact on adolescent foster children because they rely on the grant to support both their own children and the foster children, or the entire family. According to Emovon (2019:121), most foster parents do not have a source of income and instead they depend on the Foster Care Grant (FCG) and the old age grant, which is insufficient. The Foster Care Grant should be seen as a means of child protection rather than poverty alleviation. It is crucial to provide support to foster parents so that they understand the purpose of the grant and the rights of adolescent foster children in their care. It is important to recognize that the foster care grant is not meant to supplement the foster parent's income, but rather serves as their primary source of income.

Sub-theme 6.3: Integrated group work for foster parents and foster children

A group work article conducted by Mersky, Topitzes, Grant-Savel, Borondino and McNeil (2017) using Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) found that foster parents who received group-based training and individual phone consultation showed a decrease in foster children's internalizing and externalizing symptoms over time. The study also indicated that children who stopped receiving treatment at eight weeks did not make the same progress as those who continued treatment beyond eight weeks. The findings suggest that ongoing treatment leads to continued improvement.

Lougheed and Coholic (2016) discovered that art-based mindfulness is crucial in conducting group work with adolescent foster children. It helps them develop self-awareness, respect, and resilience, which are essential for navigating the transition. The study also revealed a lack of integration and coordination of services within the foster care system. Although child protection services are interdisciplinary, there is a need for interaction between the key players in foster care placement and other professionals to effectively protect vulnerable children.   Some foster parents expressed a need for psychosocial support, especially when it comes to parenting siblings at a young age before entering foster care. Considering the parenting stress and demands they face; it is not surprising that foster parents seek guidance on parenting skills and behaviour management techniques to enhance their abilities. One participant strongly suggested that social workers should consider pre-foster care placement.

> *"Foster parenting doesn't come with a guide or whatever, I need guidance on parenting. I became a parent for too many people at a young age, I don't know what is right or wrong. Even when you are doing well you need someone to tell you that you are doing well. I also need counselling because my mother's death is still troubling me, I didn't get time to heal. Even my siblings need counselling too" (Foster parent 4).*

Another participant mentioned the need for integrated group work between them and adolescent foster children:

"Social workers shouldn't just invite us parents, they should invite the children too. These children should explain who they are, where they are from and where do they see themselves in future. They should motivate the children". (Foster parent 8).

While another participant expressed that children should be kept busy with certain activities that will make stay away from the streets:

"I think these foster children should be kept busy with school work or with meetings and do certain work so that they can stay away from the street". (Foster parent 10).

The South African government has adopted an integrated and developmental approach to promote economic and social development, ensuring the participation of all stakeholders (Lombard, 2011:231; Herselman; Schuller & Tanga, 2023:63; White paper, 1997). This approach has opened the way for social workers to use the social investment method to bring about social change through integrated socioeconomic development for all. The primary role of child protection social workers is to protect children by providing early prevention services. This includes conducting thorough screenings of prospective foster parents, taking into account their age, mental health, and parenting knowledge, to ensure a healthy and stable placement.

The researcher believes that social workers should shift their focus from prioritizing social problems to preventive-oriented programmes, such as prevention and early intervention services, in order to promote developmental welfare (Herselman, Schuller & Tanga, 2023:65).

In many cases, adolescent foster children enter the foster care system with emotional and behavioural challenges, which can place strain on foster parents and may require the support of social workers.

The researcher believes that social workers should encourage foster parents to be actively involved in the lives of adolescents for their growth and psychological well-being. Therapeutic services and life skills programmes can be valuable for both foster parents and adolescent foster children, promoting a collective healthy lifestyle (Mthembu, 2022:140). Therapy should be the main intervention to help them build and rebuild their life experiences, especially for those who have experienced traumatic situations. Life skills training helps foster parents and adolescent foster children

develop strengths and resources, build self-esteem, and foster creative thinking to achieve balance.

4.4 FINDINGS ON THE PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY FOSTER PARENTS

The findings obtained from the social workers who participated in the focus group are presented in this section. The researcher has analyzed the qualitative data to ensure credibility. The researcher's discussion is followed by two themes and ten subthemes that are discussed in this section. The findings of the study are explained based on these themes and subthemes, using information from the transcribed focus group interviews. The researcher successfully achieved the objectives of the study by using a qualitative research approach and considering the perspectives of foster parents who care for adolescent foster children in the Sedibeng District. The intention of the study was to develop a post-placement guideline for social work intervention that addresses the challenges faced by foster parents in caring for adolescent foster children.

These findings are useful for ensuring that the guidelines provide intervention strategies for social workers to strengthen the skills of foster parents in raising adolescent foster children.

To gain the necessary insight, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with foster parents and focus group interviews with social workers. Thematic content analysis was used to analyze the gathered data, while adhering to ethical standards. The discussion of the findings is presented below.

4.5 Demographical Profile of Participants (Social Workers)

There were five participants in the study, all of whom were black females working for the Department of Social Development in foster care supervision. These participants were registered with the SACSSP and had more than two years of working experience. The researcher visited the workplace of the participants to conduct interviews, which took place in English in the participants' boardroom. However, the participants were

allowed to choose the language they felt most comfortable using. In total, only five female social workers participated in the study, as no single male participant who was dealing with foster care supervision within the Department of Social Development was found. Table 4.3 below details the biographical backgrounds of the social worker participants as explained above.

Table 4.3: Biographic background of social workers

Participants	Race	Gender	Age	Marital status	Registered with SACSSP	Work experience as Social Worker in Foster care supervision
P1	Black	Female	36	Single	Yes	7 years
P2	Black	Female	32	Married	Yes	3 years
P3	Black	Female	35	Married	Yes	7 years
P4	Black	Female	48	Married	Yes	10 years
P5	Black	Female	33	Married	Yes	9 years

4.6 Themes and Subthemes with Regard to Social Workers

There are two themes derived from the perceptions of social workers of the challenges experienced by foster parents post foster care placement. The themes and sub-themes are explained in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Perception of social workers on challenges experienced by foster parents.

Themes	Subthemes
1. Post-placement challenges experienced by foster parents-social workers' perception	1.1 Foster parents' lack of understanding parental responsibilities and roles 1.2 Lack of resources to ensure effective parenting 1.3 Foster children's drug dependency 1.4 Foster children 'school drop-out 1.5 Parental sensitiveness in application of parenting style 1.6 Internal and external interferences (family and community)
2. Social workers' supportive role towards foster parents	2.1 Emotional support through group work method 2.2 Informal educational support to foster -parents

	2.3 Formal educational support to foster children
	2.4 Financial literacy support

Table 4.4 above lists all the perceptions held by social workers regarding the challenges experienced by foster parents.

Theme 1: Post-placement challenges experienced by foster parents-social workers' perception

There are numerous challenges experienced by foster parents after adolescent foster children have been placed in their care. Some of these challenges are fueled by a lack of resources, as foster parents often have little knowledge about their responsibilities and the role of parenting. This lack of knowledge can result in inappropriate behaviour displayed by the adolescent foster children.

Sub-theme 1.1: Foster parents' lack of understanding parental responsibilities and roles

The findings of the study indicate that foster parents lack understanding of foster care. Masha and Botha (2021:507) support this finding, by stating that foster parents are unaware of the rights of adolescent foster children and their responsibilities as parents. Section 188 of Amendment Act 41 of 2007 outlines the responsibilities and rights of foster parents, stating that they have parental responsibilities and rights in relation to the child as specified in: (a) the order of the children's court that places the child in the care of the foster parents; (b) the court order assigning parental responsibilities and rights under section 23; and (e) a foster care plan agreed upon by the child's parent or guardian and the foster parent.

This section lacks clear guidelines and expectations regarding the parenting role and responsibilities of foster parents. Section 23 of the same Act addresses the contact and care of the child through court orders, but it is not very clear about what is expected from foster parents (Mnisi, 2015:81; Masha & Botha, 2021:507). The participant mentioned below that foster parents have limited understanding of their parental responsibilities and roles:

"I think most of the foster parents do not understand what foster care is. We have a huge challenge of foster parents who will say your child to the social worker, it is like whatever is needed for the foster child they will send it to the social worker to do it. Things like they want the social worker to go to the district to look for the school for the child, most of them do not take the initiative to actually parent the child in the absence of the social worker" (Social worker 1).

"I think if we have group work and if we also have to work with substance abuse group so that they can come and talk to these children. That way they won't present any problem, if they know what they are supposed to do so that it becomes better for the foster parent" (Social worker 4).

The participants' responses revealed a lack of understanding among foster parents regarding foster care. Foster parents often fail to fully assume their nurturing responsibilities for adolescent foster children because they do not comprehend their parental role. Consequently, they often transfer their responsibilities to social workers. Social workers provide little to no training on parental responsibilities and rights, both before and after foster care placement (Masha & Botha, 2021: 507). Section 188 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 supports Masha and Botha's statement, highlighting the lack of clarity surrounding the parental responsibilities and rights of foster parents. This ambiguity creates challenges and uncertainties regarding the parental role and responsibilities of foster parents, especially when compared to the roles and responsibilities of biological parents. Another participant echoed the sentiments of the previous participant, stating:

"It goes back to what was said, when she said that they really don't know what foster care is. So, I think the problem really starts from the beginning before allowing someone to be a foster parent, there's something that needs to be done thoroughly" (Social worker 2).

The statement provided by one of the participants confirms that foster care training is not adequately conducted by social workers during the screening of prospective foster

parents. It is apparent that social workers do not have enough time to thoroughly assess and provide clear specifics of foster care placement and its function to the prospective foster parent prior to placement. According to section 156 (e) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, it is a legal mandate for social workers to place children with a suitable foster parent who has undergone adequate screening, as sufficient screening improves healthy and stable placement.

Cater and Van Breda (2016:209) suggest that foster parent assessment guidelines should be considered to ensure that foster parents know and understand foster care, their expectations, roles, and functions before committing to raising adolescent foster children. A similar sentiment was reported by Naicker (2021:343), where it was revealed that social workers are disappointed with the decision-making process regarding foster care services, as there are no guidelines provided other than acting in the best interest of the children.

Masha and Botha (2021:510) confirm the improper screening of foster parents, which poses confusion as they fail to manage the problematic behaviour of adolescent foster children. The researcher is adamant that the call for thorough screening with guidelines will ensure that adolescent foster children are placed with appropriate foster parents who are capable of managing the challenges exhibited by these children post-placement.

Sub-theme 1.2: Lack of resources to ensure effective parenting

This subtheme is closely related to the previous subtheme, which discusses how intake social workers are unable to conduct thorough screenings. As a result, it becomes difficult for supervision social workers to effectively train foster parents on parenting techniques. Effective parenting and teaching are both rewarding and challenging endeavors. Foster parents often face insecurities when it comes to raising and assisting adolescent foster children in managing their behaviour (Harris, Fung, Ellis & Schmeer, 2015:2). In order for foster parents to develop healthy parenting and educational practices, they need to understand the different types of misbehaviours that adolescent foster children may exhibit. This can include goal-getting, seeking reactions, being lazy or failing to complete tasks, and forcing a child to confront their fears. According to the Children Act 38 of 2005, it is mandatory for foster parents to

undergo proper assessment and training in order to address the challenges that may arise after a foster care placement. The researcher believes that conducting thorough screenings of prospective foster parents can help identify healthy behavioural management practices and provide strategies to alleviate the challenges experienced by foster parents after placement. One participant in the study highlighted the fact that intake social workers do not thoroughly conduct screenings for prospective foster parents. Here is what this participant had to say:

"Another thing is that we at supervision level we don't start with the foster parents. So, the screening is done by intake and then we get the case already in process. We discover so many things after we get the case. I think the intake people don't do the thorough screening and then we end up facing the challenges and then we must rectify what was not done from the beginning" (Social worker 1).

Another participant pointed out that high caseload and limited time spent with foster parents make it hard for social workers to monitor foster care placement. Here is what this participant had to say in this regard:

"For each social worker, we are expected to monitor the foster care placement. When are we going to get time to monitor the placement? Because they don't ask "how is this one doing?" They just ask "No, I see here on your evidence you only saw 4 people, why?" And we will receive a report that says we are underperforming" (Social worker 2).

Another participant highlighted a very important perspective regarding parenting skills to foster parents:

"We fail to use our skills due to numbers as we have already indicated, actually it looks like it was supposed to be done in the intake level and when we receive the file from intake, we already know what is happening and we continue with the work not doing the group work that was supposed to be done" (Social worker 3).

The scarcity of social workers in South Africa reveals the excessive risk of harm for vulnerable groups and contributes to a lack of capacity in implementing policies and

programmes related to social issues such as child protection, substance abuse, poverty, HIV and AIDS, and food insecurity (Mampane & Ross, 2017:2; Skhosana, 2020:109). Although the mandate of the Department of Social Development (DSD) is to provide effective social services to vulnerable groups, the available social workers fail to ensure child protection due to a shortage of staff.

Social workers are unable to work according to the knowledge and skills acquired from university because they prioritize meeting the quantity requirements set by the DSD due to limited time allocated to them. Additionally, when conducting group sessions on effective parenting as a form of support to foster parents, they prioritize quantity over quality. A study conducted by Gasva and Mutanana (2016:11) revealed that effective parenting skills should be provided to foster parents to address the psycho-social and emotional needs of adolescent foster children.

However, literature shows that social workers only visit foster families when the foster care grant is due for review, neglecting the emotional needs of the adolescent foster children (Mampane & Ross, 2017:13). This occurs because the limited number of social workers cannot cope with the overwhelming demand of foster care cases, resulting in a failure to effectively meet the best interests of the adolescent foster children (Fortune, 2016:16; Diaz, 2017:75).

The challenges in the foster care system are unmanageable due to a shortage of resources such as social workers, social auxiliary workers, and child and youth care workers, as those in the system experience high caseloads. Similarly, Naicker (2021:348) and Masha and Botha (2021:508) found that the foster care system lacks social workers, vehicles for home investigations, office space, motivation, and experiences high turnover of supervisors and staff. These factors impact the interconnected functions of the DSD (social services, social security, and justice) and exacerbate the foster care backlog, leading to delays in protecting adolescent foster children. The findings show that a lack of resources, thorough screening of prospective foster parents, and monitoring of placements have a detrimental impact on ensuring effective parenting by social workers. Social workers do not spend adequate time on foster care cases and instead focus more on the number of cases handled, as their performance evaluations are based on office work and paperwork (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017:174; Skhosana, 2020:109; Naicker, 2021:343; Mampane

& Ross, 2017:1; Masha & Botha, 2021:508). Management does not prioritize the quality of services rendered; what matters to them is the number of cases reached. This approach discredits the skills that social workers possess.

Sub-theme 1.3: Foster children's drug dependency

The subtheme interconnects with the next subtheme, which indicates that adolescent foster children who present behavioural challenges are also exposed to drugs and are likely to perform poorly in school. There is a link between poor school performance, drug use, and school dropout, as some children turn to drugs when they struggle to cope with difficult situations, such as academic performance issues (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018:166).

 According to Kelly, Laurence, Milletich, Hollis and Henson, (2015:12); Goldberg and Blaauw (2019:960), and Mnisi (2015:84), drug use in adolescence is associated with poor school performance, low self-image, little religiosity, dysfunctional families, overly or underlie controlling parents, and divorce. Furthermore, early drug influence may come from the family. For instance, children born to parents who are dependent on drugs have shown a genetic tendency toward drug abuse. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2009:1; UNODC 2020:13) has outlined that many parents struggle to provide support to their families due to challenges such as balancing work and family, managing financial commitments, maintaining social contacts, and finding time for family.

Foster parents of adolescent foster children who struggle with substance abuse problems are likely to neglect the needs of their children. Children who experience maltreatment often run away from home and turn to alcohol and drug abuse, as well as unintended pregnancy (Goldberg & Blaauw, 2019:964). According to Kuppens and Ceulemans (2018:168), providing adequate support to children is associated with positive development outcomes and can prevent alcohol and drug abuse, as well as deviant behaviour, in adolescent foster children.

Lack of positive parenting and drug dependence are interconnected. Children who are exposed to drugs are more likely to follow the same path that they have observed

(Lipari & van Horn, 2017; September 2016:1061). They argue that parents are the greatest role models for their children, and when parents use drugs in front of their children, it has negative effects because children tend to imitate what adults do. Providing support to adolescent children from their parents' perspective strengthens their ability to perform tasks at home or school (Ceka & Murati, 2016:63). The researcher believes that parenting is learned through socialization, and the way foster parents handle their tough days helps children learn to handle their own. One participant mentioned that drugs and teenage pregnancy are some of the behavioural challenges encountered by foster parents in their parenting role. Here is what some of the participants had to say:

"Other problems are behavioural problems, drugs and teenage pregnancy and when they start dating. Some they mostly get pregnant" (Social worker 5).

"I forgot to mention another problem that is recent, the challenge that the foster parents are facing now is drug abuse. Now these children are using "lean" and they are using "crystal meth". It's new and it's coming, we've been receiving so many cases. We are referring for rehabilitation so many times this year" (Social worker 1).

"I also think for those adolescents there has been some group work to help them" (*Social worker 2).*

Many adolescent foster children find support from their peers to manage their life stressors, as their foster parents often fail to provide a safe, secure, and nurturing home (Mnisi, 2015:81). As a result, they may turn to drug use, which poses significant harm to their lives. However, foster parents who practice positive parenting can help prevent the influence of peer pressure and drug usage. Harris, Fung, Ellis, and Schmeer (2015:4) found that three essential healthy parenting practices - warmth (being empathetic and available), connectedness (encouraging and maintaining open communication), and monitoring (being consistent and offering positive discipline) - can promote healthy emotional growth in adolescent foster children and strengthen foster parent relationships.

A protective feature that fosters resilience in adolescent foster children is crucial. Resilience is a skill that people use to overcome adverse situations (Shpiegel, 2015:7; Parton, 2015:4). It involves positive adaptation when faced with high-risk circumstances. Mantovani and Thomas (2015:300) argue that resilience is linked to high intelligence and helps adolescent foster children navigate difficult situations by avoiding relationships with delinquent friends.

Additionally, a study conducted by Kelley, Laurence, Milletich, Hollis, and Henson (2015) highlights the importance of a foster parent's level of depressive symptoms in their risk for mistreating an adolescent foster child during discipline.

Sub-theme 1.4: Foster children 'school drop-out rate

This sub-theme is interrelated to the previous one, which states that school drop-out and drug use among adolescent foster children are consequences of child maltreatment. Child maltreatment leads to unmet needs, such as mental health problems, which in turn interfere with education in adolescent foster children (Steenbakkers et al., 2017:8). If these children's needs are met, it can have a positive influence on their satisfaction of other needs, ultimately encouraging learning. Another contributing factor to the high dropout rates among adolescent foster children is the progression policy. This policy fails to motivate learners, as they do not see the reason to work hard and achieve better results. This is because those who fail are still progressed to the next level without demonstrating competence (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021:202). This policy impacts the quality of learning and the importance of education for adolescent foster children. The following participants demonstrate the inconsistency between the progress report of an adolescent foster child and the proof of attendance provided by the school:

> *"There's no match between the child's progress and proof of attendance, It is so inconsistent" (Social worker 4).*

Another sad response that contributes to school drop-out and lack of support by the school:

"And I also think the challenge with regards to the schools is that us as social workers we don't know what the school is supposed to do when it comes to a child who is struggling academically. I have cases when a child is struggling with academics, there has to be a psychological assessment done. When we go to the school, we receive a different story until I went to the district to speak to the school psychologist. That's when they explained that the duty of the teachers is to write a certain report and bring it to us. And the following year, they do that for two years – this year they write a report the psychologist suggested some things that could maybe improve the child's performance. The following year they write to say "we've tried what you said we must try but nothing worked the child is still the same". When they bring it back that's when the school psychologist will come to the school to assess the child" (Foster parent 3).

"Even they don't go back the following year to write the report and the school psychologist assumes that whatever the solution they have given them worked" (Social worker 2).

This sub-theme is interrelated to the previous one, which states that school drop-out and drug use among adolescent foster children are consequences of child maltreatment. Child maltreatment leads to unmet needs, such as mental health problems, which in turn interfere with education in adolescent foster children (Steenbakkers *et al*., 2017:8). If these children's needs are met, it can have a positive influence on their satisfaction of other needs, ultimately encouraging learning.

Another contributing factor to the high dropout rates among adolescent foster children is the progression policy. This policy fails to motivate learners, as they do not see the reason to work hard and achieve better results. This is because those who fail are still progressed to the next level without demonstrating any competence (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021:202). This policy seriously impacts the quality of learning and the importance of education for adolescent foster children.

The following participant demonstrates the inconsistency between the progress report of an adolescent foster child and the proof of attendance provided by the school:

"*But when we check the progress report, these things don't go together, do not match*" (Social worker 4).

Sub-theme 1.5: Parental sensitiveness in application of parenting style

The findings demonstrate that foster parents are not sensitive to the emotions of adolescent foster children when applying their parenting methods (Steenbakkers *et al.*, 2017:7). This lack of sensitivity is significant because attentive and sensitive parenting is necessary to satisfy the needs of belonging, self-esteem, coping skills, and self-regulation skills of adolescent foster children.

Additionally, sensitive parenting not only fulfills the needs of these children, but also assists in meeting their psychological needs, providing learning opportunities, and preventing mental health challenges.

When foster parents or significant others understand the needs of adolescent foster children, they are more likely to be sensitive to their emotions and concerns. The relationship between foster parents (foster mother and foster father) and adolescent foster children plays a significant role in the development and adjustment within the foster family. Macinelli *et al.*, (2021) assert that unfavorable parenting styles, such as authoritarian and indulgent parenting, which are associated with harsh and inconsistent discipline, negative control, criticism, and rejection, can be harmful to the adjustment of adolescent foster children. On the other hand, authoritative parenting, which involves parents being involved in setting rules and discipline, is associated with more positive outcomes for these children (September *et al.*, 2016:1061).

Furthermore, the authors state that the adjustment of adolescent foster children is constantly affected by the relationship between foster parents, rather than the structure of the family. The authoritative parenting style is considered the most beneficial for the well-being of adolescent foster children. There are various types of parenting, including authoritative parenting (where parents set clear boundaries and rules), authoritarian and neglectful parenting (which involve strict discipline without emotional sensitivity), permissive parenting (where parents are uninvolved and the child makes decisions), and indulgent parenting (which lacks discipline and allows the child to have everything they want) (Smetana, 2017:19). Some children who have experienced

traumatic events are more likely to exhibit uncontrollable behaviour, and it can be challenging for some foster parents to effectively discipline them (Ntshongwana & Tanga, 2018:15).

Adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by strong emotions related to physical and cognitive changes. Adolescent foster children may have concerns about the death of their parents, adjusting to a new environment (foster placement), and adapting to new rules (Smetana, 2017:19).

Discipline should aim to educate children about self-discipline and correct unacceptable behaviour, rather than resorting to punishment such as name-calling, yelling, hitting, or denying a child food (Smetana, 2017:20). One social worker participant had the following to say:

"Even if they don't label them as the social workers' children, those children have anger. I think from my experience the anger comes from whenever they try to discipline the child and foster parents use phrases such as "I didn't kill your mother". Those things build up, they build up until the child now becomes rebellious" (Social worker 2).

Another social worker also emphasized that foster parents have little knowledge in dealing with the behavioural challenges of adolescent foster children instead they use harsh discipline:

"Some foster parent when it comes to issue of discipline, some are afraid because there are too many rights for these children, bearing in mind that these children are not biologically theirs. They put everything to the shoulders of the social workers" (Social worker 3).

"And the some of them it is lack of knowledge and parenting skills while others it is laziness, they do not want to do parenting per say and then it is easier for them to put whatever to the social workers, it is their easier way out" (Social worker 4).

Literature has shown that harsh and inconsistent discipline, as well as a lack of parental involvement and supervision, can lead to anti-social behaviour or delinquency (Social Policy Research Centre, 2010:15). Foster parents who use punitive discipline may cause adolescent foster children to develop anger and rebel against them. A study conducted by Mnisi (2015:89) confirmed that inconsistent parenting leads to behavioural problems in adolescent foster children. Mnisi also suggests that a lack of parenting knowledge, such as inappropriate discipline, appears to contribute to the behavioural problems these children display. Participants in the study emphasize the importance of empowering foster parents with parenting skills to enhance their knowledge and ensure placement stability.

Subtheme 1.6: Internal and external interferences (family and community)

The prominence of this subtheme was emphasized by a social worker who reported that neighbors had a negative influence on adolescent foster children. This made it difficult for foster parents, especially those receiving foster care grants, to fulfill their fostering role. Two participants mentioned that:

"When community members see a child working in the home, they will ask her why is she working and tend to say you are working because you are not her child. Even these children should refrain from listening to community members, listen only to their parents (foster parent) things will be fine). And these children do not like noise, you should talk to them nicely)" (Social worker 3).

"And also, the relationship between the foster parent and foster child is ruined by the neighbors. I had so many cases like that where a neighbor would know that they are receiving foster care grant because this child doesn't have parents. Now what they will do is they will call the child, give the child nice things and say bad things about the foster parent so that the child can start disrespecting this foster parent and liking them. Sometimes we even get cases where the child will say "I no longer want to stay with my grandmother, I want to stay with sis so and so (neighbor)" (Social worker 5).

This concept was also well reported by the views of the following participant who said that:

"Also, relatives yes. Once they learn that there is foster care grant involved now, they want to be involved too. They want to get something; you can have a person applying for foster care grant while they are staying in the Gauteng province yet the child is staying in Free State" (Social worker 4).

Literature has revealed that the environment in which adolescent foster children live plays an important role in identifying their needs, behaviour, and satisfaction (Steenbakkers et al., 2017:2). As highlighted in the symbolic interactionist theory, interactions of people guide the manner in which they view things and behaviour based on what they believe rather than on what is objectively true. Adolescent foster children learn how to behave in the community through role performance. Specifically, interference from family and the community can lead to relationship difficulties between foster parents and adolescent foster children. A study conducted by Miller, Randle, and Dolnicar (2019:1) found that conflicts between foster parents and adolescent foster children contribute to the link between the quality of the foster parent-partner relationship and the foster parent's role and responsibility demands. This can also challenge the role and responsibilities of foster parents and their competence.

The study further suggests that screening prospective foster parents should focus on key indicators of placement success, such as developing support networks among foster parents, friends, family, and providing education on parenting training. Considering the multiple challenges experienced by foster parents, it is evident that the South African foster care system is facing a crisis due to enormous caseloads, a shortage of resources, a lack of parenting skills, internal and external interference, foster children's drug dependence, and high dropout rates, all of which impact the support provided to foster families. The environment in which people lives contribute a lot into their behavior.

Theme 2: Social workers supportive role towards foster parents

This theme confirms that social workers experience enormous caseloads and are unable to provide support to foster parents and adolescent foster children. Foster

parents face multiple life stressors, including health challenges and dealing with behavioural problems of adolescent foster children that other parents may not experience. According to Miller, Green, and Lambros (2019:110), foster parents face several stressors that are unique to managing the emotional challenges of integrating the various needs of foster children into a pre-existing family system. They often have many responsibilities without necessary support on how to effectively manage them. As a result, foster parents often feel overwhelmed and exhausted, with little or no knowledge on how to handle these challenges. Therefore, social work support is critical. Mampane and Ross (2017:3) argue that the foster care system in South Africa is in crisis due to excessive administrative caseloads. As a result, social workers tend to focus more on the material needs of adolescent foster children and neglect their psychosocial needs.

Sub-theme 2.1: Emotional support through group work method

The sub-theme highlights how social workers provide superficial screening and supervision services due to their pressure to meet targets set by the DSD. According to Kaasboll *et al.*, (2019:34), the group work method used in parenting skills training for foster parents has shown a positive impact, resulting in fewer behavioural problems in children compared to those who have not received the training. It is important to note that foster care education is linked to higher levels of parenting skills needed to handle the challenges of caring for adolescent foster children. One participant also emphasized the significance of emotional support through group work and the obstacles that hinder their ability to provide this support.

> *"Parenting skills, doing lot of group work on parenting skills, I think that can help the foster parents as to how to go about with the challenges that they face because now we do not have time and we are on the rush, rush even the group work sometimes we skip it because we cannot we are overwhelmed our caseload are so huge that we cannot do all these things, we are rushing for the targets. That's where we lack, we can play our role but under this working environment and the demotivation it becomes impossible for us" (Social worker 2).*

Other participants expressed their frustration as follows:

"We want to do it (group work); we know we are supposed to do it but we are unable to do it due to high caseload" (Social worker 3).

"Even us because we also work with numbers. A simple thing, the norm for each social worker is supposed to have 60 files. We have more than 100, I think we have 120 plus." (Social worker 2).

Yet another participant pointed out that:

"We are trying but we are doing more awareness than group work. Like we can do a one-day awareness event than doing group work which will take about five sessions or six sessions" (Social worker 4).

There is a need for increased support for new placements, especially when they have previously experienced placement disruptions. Every disruption in placement can lead to a vicious circle of further disruptions and behavioural challenges (Miller, Randle & Dolnicar, 2019:2). Foster care disruptions are unexpected and leave adolescent foster children feeling demoralized and rejected.

Foster parents play an important role in raising socially, cognitively, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually competent children. These qualities are influenced by family care, which is affected by family finances, parenting style, environmental language, and the parents' educational level (September, Rich & Roman, 2016: 1061). The researcher has observed that foster parents who are warm and supportive towards adolescent foster children are more likely to raise well-adjusted children.

Moyer and Golberg (2019:124) indicated that foster parents need guidance on how to effectively respond to the needs of adolescent foster children in order to develop these qualities. For example, when foster parents are supported and given the opportunity to make decisions about these children, they are more likely to gain confidence in addressing the behavioural challenges they face. Furthermore, it is important to note that adolescent foster children struggle with schoolwork not because of lack of effort,

but because of the traumatic events they have experienced, such as the loss of biological or foster parents, or a history of abuse or neglect.

Children in foster care are more likely to experience absenteeism and trauma and are more likely to require special education services compared to non-foster care children (Miller 2019:107 and Moyer & Golberg, 2019:123). This is because their academic and socioemotional outcomes are shaped by various contextual systems, such as their direct relationship with school and foster parents (micro system), as well as the indirect relationship (meso system) between their foster parents and schools.
It is clear that the strained relationship between foster parents and schools has an impact on the academic achievement of adolescent foster children, highlighting the need for support from foster parents and social workers.

The findings revealed several factors that contribute to social workers' failure to support foster parents. These factors include inadequate assessment and training of foster parents, as well as unmanageable caseloads for social workers, making it difficult for them to provide support. These findings align with a study conducted by Masha and Botha, which found that a shortage of human resources and inadequate supervision and support for foster care placements are the major contributing factors to the lack of support for foster parents. Social workers tend to overlook other issues and only focus on reported cases or cases that are due for review in order to prevent foster care grants from lapsing. This hinders social workers from providing quality services to the people they serve.

Sub-theme 2.2: Informal educational support to foster parents

Most foster parents are elderly and have little or no formal education (failure to read or write), which makes it difficult for them to understand the challenges faced by adolescent foster children and support them in overcoming their learning barriers. It is crucial for foster parents to be equipped with knowledge that can help them understand and enhance the potential of these adolescents (Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support) (SIAS), 2014:38). Unfortunately, social workers are unable to provide this support and empowerment due to their overwhelming caseloads.

"They also have a challenge when it comes to discipline. We have a lot of foster parents who are elderly people, and some of them are not illiterate as such but they are having a challenge when it comes to the recent syllabus. So, they have a challenge in assisting the children. Also, what I've noticed with the children that are completing matric that are supposed to further with their studies and go into whatever it is that they want" (Social worker 1).

"Most foster parents do not know how to guide. The schools also don't have career guidance to prepare them in most of the challenges that these children are experiencing" (Social worker 2).

Another social worker mentioned that foster parents lie about the whereabouts of the biological parents for the children, they apply for foster care grant even though the child has a good relationship with the*:*

"Yes, they do it even if the father is alive and maintaining the child, grandmothers apply for foster care placement without the father's knowledge" (Social worker 5).

The perception of the participants demonstrates that elderly foster parents are unable to manage the behaviour of adolescent foster children. The findings of the study conducted by Mampane and Ross (2017:2) found that elderly foster parents have concerns about financial pressure and poor health, which influence their ability to meet the emotional needs of the adolescent foster children, especially those with behavioural challenges. The study conducted by Ceka and Murati (2016:62) supports these findings by stating that parental support is the key mechanism for the successful education of an adolescent foster child. It is clear that the educational level of the child depends largely on the level of support provided by the foster parents, enabling them to assist when needed. Foster parents could not assist adolescent foster children with their homework due to lack of education and training.

Sub-theme 2.3: Formal educational support to foster children

According to Ceka and Murati (2016:3), parents are seen as the primary educators within a family. It has been proven that adolescent foster children have different experiences and gain valuable skills through participating in various activities within different family environments. This is why foster families, or foster parents, have different educational abilities and parenting strategies.

The foster care grant has a positive impact on the education of adolescent foster children, but it provides little support in helping these children identify effective learning methods to better understand and retain information in school.
This lack of support influences the quality of their education (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017:170). In many cases, the foster care grant becomes a problem that affects the parenting role of foster parents, and they require education and support to learn how to manage it. However, it is unrealistic to expect foster parents to save money while relying solely on the foster grant.

Some studies have revealed that there are educational challenges faced by adolescent foster children with disabilities, as their issues are often overlooked (Steenbakkers *et al*., 207:7). These children may experience delays in cognitive measures, such as mental health or behavioural problems, which can hinder their learning.

The education system in South Africa is declining, as some adolescent foster children, aged seventeen and eighteen, are still in primary school, at grade six or seven (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017:170). Participants in the study believe that there is a lack of integration of services between the Department of Education and the Department of Social Development (DSD). Here is what one of them had to say:

> *"So hence we know that there are children in the mainstream who cannot cope. And they are good with their hands and the school doesn't do anything about that. That in itself frustrates the children because when they get to Grade 12, they get stuck because they are being pushed from lower grades up until to Grade 12" (Social worker 3).*

The progressive policy implemented in South African schools does not allow learners to repeat a phase or Grade. Instead, they are promoted to the next phase with the intention of providing support, regardless of their poor performance or failure to meet promotion requirements (Department of Basic Education, 2016). This approach aims to uphold learners' dignity, boost their self-esteem, and encourage age-appropriate socialization (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021:196).

Participants made it clear that, in many cases, the proof of school attendance for adolescent foster children in the middle of the year does not align with their progress reports.
Consequently, these children drop out of school because they struggle to cope with the educational pressure. Another concern raised by a participant is the lack of communication between schools and social workers regarding the learning challenges experienced by these children:

"And then that where the behaviour and everything starts because they can't cope. As a social worker what can you do because you are not at school. And you pick up all those things and we ask ourselves this question "but at school why are they passing like that. The child is receiving level one in the school progress report but when you ask for the proof of school attendance, they write excellent, satisfactory and whatever" (Social worker 4).

Another participant mentioned an important matter regarding lack of integration between the key players of foster care.

"There has to be intervention from all the departments. There are children who don't have birth certificates, and the Department of home affairs has to be involved. We need psychological assessment from Education Department, medical assessment from the Health Department. We need so many departments need to work with us to ensure quality foster care services" (Social worker 5).

Another participant confirmed what the previous participant explained regarding lack support in the schools.

> *"So, it's difficult for us (social workers) and we cannot be at school and at the same time do the psycho-social part. So, we are allover we are everywhere. And with the cases that we have we can't do everything"* (Social worker 4).

Social workers are unable to adequately support foster parents due to their high caseloads. They spend most of their time on administrative work, which is one of the five social work methods primarily used in foster care cases.

It is evident that some foster children face educational challenges, such as mild cognitive abilities, and without the assistance of social workers and psychologists, schools are unable to identify these issues. However, the Department of Social Development (DSD) does not provide enough educational opportunities for adolescent foster children due to the age limit specified in the Children's Act (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017:171).

There is a lack of coordination between the key stakeholders in foster care, including the Department of Social Development, Department of Health, and Department of Education, resulting in insufficient support for the education of adolescent foster children (Lombard, 2011:17). It appears that psychologists do not conduct adequate assessments, relying instead on educators who are overwhelmed with a large number of students requiring Support Assessment Needs (SNA). Additionally, some parents are in denial about their child's learning challenges, further hindering proper assessment. The researcher believes that this entire process is delayed, creating barriers to learning and negatively impacting the well-being of adolescent foster children, as they are progressing to the next phase with unresolved learning challenges.

Sub-theme 2.4: Financial literacy support

South Africa has a high unemployment rate, with many people relying on social assistance grants for survival (Patel, Dikoko & Archer, 2023:4). Despite their limited

financial skills, most foster parents feel compelled to care for adolescent foster children because they do not want them to be placed with strangers. They take on this responsibility to preserve the family, help these children escape extreme poverty, and strengthen social protection, even though they may not have the financial means to support the adolescents.

Financial literacy refers to the knowledge and skills needed to make informed financial decisions and maintain a healthy economic life (Rabbior, 2018:1). In the context of foster parents, financial literacy means understanding how to manage the foster care grant for the upkeep of adolescent foster children.

However, the foster care grant is often insufficient, especially considering that most foster parents are unemployed and rely on the grant to support their entire family, including the adolescent foster child and the foster parent's own children. As a result, the foster care grant is not always used in the best interest of the adolescent foster child (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017:170). This was confirmed by one participant, who stated:

"Another challenge is money I think the foster care grant is not enough, so when teenagers, especially the girls, foster parents will come to complain that they need to buy toiletry for them, to do their hair, so I think money is the biggest issue" (Social worker 3).

"One participant stated that "*As soon as the child knew that she was receiving foster care grant that's when everything started to change. The child started demanding the foster care grant from the grandmother and began disrespecting her*" (Social worker 2).

"And then that is one of the challenges we face because there's this thing whereby the children think that it's their money. Even the child support grant and all other grants, they (foster parents) always say your money. So now the child has that entitlement and they will demand and demand." (Social worker 3).

Another social worker expressed her frustration that foster parents receives double dip where there is parents' estate and they also receive foster care grant for the child.

"We also having a challenge that when someone was working for the government there was money that was going to come out. The estates! We were supposed to know how much the child was going to receive because now they come here for foster care and also receiving monthly income from the deceased's estate. So now it becomes a problem they are receiving more money than they are supposed to receive. Because remember when you are receiving money from SASSA, they are looking at the total income of the household". (Social worker 5).

The findings of the study revealed that most foster parents are elderly and unemployed. Therefore, there is a need for financial literacy or socioeconomic development to help them understand that the foster care grant is not sufficient to support the adolescent foster child and the foster parents without additional funds. These circumstances lead to behavioural challenges associated with a lack of parenting skills on the part of the foster parents. They sometimes fail to employ parenting methods or rules that can help manage the behaviour.

In contrast, a study conducted by Mnisi (2015:90) revealed that foster parents sometimes use the foster grant for personal gain or for the needs of other children in the family. This results in adolescent foster children questioning the use of the foster grant. As a result, adolescent foster children are seen as disrespectful, and foster parents lose hope and relinquish their parenting role, relying on the foster grant to provide for them.

4.7   Conclusion

The chapter explored the findings on the challenges encountered by foster parents when raising adolescent foster children and findings of the perception of social workers on challenges experienced by foster parents. The overview was presented with six themes and related sub-themes from the foster parents and two themes from social workers with subthemes that occurred during data analysis. These findings have been verified through literature.

The next chapter will outline the development of guidelines for social work intervention post-placement.

CHAPTER FIVE

DEVELOPING POST PLACEMENT GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

5.1 Introduction

Foster parents struggle to raise adolescent foster children after they are placed in their care. This is mainly due to the challenges they face. Social workers have a mandate to ensure that foster parents provide effective care and protection to these children by screening and supervising them. Section 156(3)(i) of the Children's Act states that designated social workers should provide supervision services to the foster family after placement. This should be done to address any challenges which may arise from both the foster parents and the adolescent foster children.

As discussed earlier, social workers often fail to conduct foster care supervision due to a lack of resources and an excessive caseload within the Department of Social Development (DSD). This means that there are no regular home visits to ensure that an adolescent foster child is adjusting well to his or her new environment and that any challenges identified before placement are being effectively addressed. At present social workers only attend to reported cases that require review, thereby neglecting the emotional needs of the foster children. It is crucial for social workers to support foster families by monitoring the placement to ensure that foster parents can raise healthy, well-balanced children and prevent behavioural challenges in adolescence. The researcher herein has identified gaps in the supervision and parenting training after foster placement based on the challenges faced by foster parents.

Foster parents face challenges such as behavioural problems resulting from parental death and the affected child's bereavement, substance abuse, traumatic events, the dynamics of adolescence, breakdown of the relationship between foster parent and foster child, insufficient supervision by social workers and parenting incapacity. These challenges have had an impact on their parenting skills. To address these challenges, the researcher developed guidelines for social work intervention that respond to the dynamics encountered by foster parents within the foster family.

The researcher obtained data directly from participants (social workers and foster parents) and reviewed relevant literature and theories in this regard. This approach was taken in order to gain insights into addressing the challenges faced by foster parents after foster care placement. The main aim of this chapter is to develop guidelines for post-foster care placement that will assist social workers in their supervision of foster care. The chapter covers various concepts, including defining guidelines, providing background information, discussing an integrated approach and its principles, explaining the guideline development process, discussing different theories used by the researcher, outlining the foster care placement process and highlighting the role and functions of key role players in foster care and the role of social workers in providing supervision after placement.

5.2 Defining Guidelines

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2015: 22) and Filippi and Motyl (2020:52) define guidelines as a set of non-mandatory rules, suggestions, or recommendations for clinical practice. Guidelines are procedures that guide individuals on how things should be done. In this study, guidelines are described as systematically developed directives for social workers to supervise and monitor foster care placements. These guidelines aim to assist foster parents in dealing with the challenges they encounter after a foster care placement.

5.3 Background to the Guidelines

In South Africa, children are protected by various legislations and international conventions, including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Children 1990 (ACRWC), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC), the United Nations Children's Fund 2010 (UNICEF), the Children's Act 38 of 2005, the Criminal Procedure Act, and the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008. These laws provide guidance on programmes and services for children in South Africa. However, the Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1971 allows for different approaches to children accused of crimes, while the Child Justice Act 75 of 2008 aims to protect the rights of children and adolescents who are foster children by developing the criminal process for them.

Despite this, Section 150 (1) (c) of the Children's Act states that children in need of care and protection should be prioritized, but adolescent foster children do not receive the same level of service due to social workers having excessive caseloads.

Adolescent foster children in South Africa often face behavioural challenges, as foster parents struggle to manage these issues. The study identified factors that contribute to these behavioural problems. These factors are, among others: substance abuse, inadequate supervision by social workers, lack of education and interference from the home and community. These factors were discussed in the previous chapter.

According to South African Council for Social Service Profession, social work is a practice-based profession that aims to improve people's quality of life by promoting social change, problem-solving and in empowering individuals to find a balance (Reyneke, 2020). Social workers play a crucial role in supervising foster care placements and in assisting foster parents in managing the challenges that come with caring for adolescent foster children, ensuring a healthy and stable environment. Parenting training has been found to be essential in helping foster parents navigate the dynamics of foster care. Many foster parents are elderly and lack formal education or understanding of foster care and child development. Social workers, with their professional knowledge, are equipped to provide support and services to foster parents and adolescent foster children in various contexts, helping them manage the challenges they face.

The study revealed a significant need for parenting training to support foster parents as this aspect seems to be neglected, putting vulnerable children at risk. The researcher believes that parenting training is crucial in helping foster parents address the behavioural challenges displayed by adolescent foster children. Given the demands and challenges faced by foster parents, support in a form of training to enhance their parenting knowledge and skills could be of great assistance. Therefore, this study focused on foster parents and social workers because they play a crucial role in the approval and supervision of foster parents in the Children's Court system. Social workers are specifically targeted for the implementation of the proposed guidelines as they are the primary drivers of foster care supervision in South Africa.

5.4   Integrated Approach to the Development of Guidelines and Its Principles

The integrated approach has been developed to enhance the services provided to foster parents and adolescent foster children through teamwork.   There are key principles of the integrated approach, namely: human rights, community involvement or participation, partnership and empowerment. These principles are discussed by the researcher below.

5.4.1   Human rights

After the downfall of the Apartheid government in South Africa, human rights became essential and the Constitution was promulgated to safeguard these rights. Children in South Africa are currently protected by the rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 and the Children Act 38 of 2005. Respect for human rights and dignity is fundamental in social work practice because self-determination is a human right that must be adhered to.   Naturally, human rights are interrelated; therefore, the violation of one right can lead to the violation of others, which can have an impact on the feelings and behaviour of the affected human being. Consequently, social workers should ensure that adolescent foster children live in a conducive family environment that caters to their psychological and emotional needs. Social workers should utilize their knowledge and skills to amplify the voices of adolescent foster children and to further advocate for the protection of their rights.

5.4.2   Human participation

The challenges faced by foster parents are interrelated and as such require community participation, decentralization, inter-departmental and inter-sectoral collaboration among all the key role players. There is a need for coordination with the role players such as the Department of Health, Department of Education, South African Social Security Agency, Department of Home Affairs, Department of Justice and Constitutional Development NGO'S and the community of foster care to address these challenges.   Active community participation will promote a well-functioning social welfare as people will be part of decision making and implementation. According to Alma-Atta Declaration, people have the right and responsibility to participate

individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of programmes on issues that affect their lives (WHO, 1997:17). Section 10 of the Children 's Act declared that every child has the right to participate on issues that affect them. Social workers should encourage human participation (foster parents and adolescent foster children) through developmental programmes that will strengthen their knowledge in managing the behavioural problems they may encounter.

5.4.3 Partnership and empowerment

Collaboration with essential stakeholders and the empowerment of foster parents and children is pivotal in addressing challenges encountered within the foster care system. Each individual possesses unique circumstances, dynamics and challenges, making it essential to recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach in establishing partnerships. Social workers should actively engage with pertinent stakeholders to cultivate working relationships that enhance the provision of high-quality services to adolescent foster children.

In the realm of social work practice, the realization of social change hinges on the promotion of socio-economic development at a macro level, involving key stakeholders to create an enabling environment. Adolescent foster children, nurtured by both relatives and non-relatives serving as foster parents, are safeguarded by essential role-players providing crucial services. To effectively support these foster parents, whether relatives or non-relatives, it is imperative to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the challenges they may encounter.

In the pursuit of establishing effective partnerships, social workers should coordinate the services offered by diverse role players, fostering a collaborative approach that instigates positive change within foster families. This collaborative effort aims to create an environment that nurtures the well-being of foster children and supports the foster parents in their crucial role.

5.5 Different Theories Adopted by the Researcher in Developing Guidelines

Utilizing a solitary theory to navigate the complexities faced by foster parents in raising adolescent foster children is unlikely for social workers. The researcher outlines four theories informing the formulation of guidelines. This approach acknowledges that in social work practice, theories synergize to effectively address diverse issues impacting individuals (Healey, 2022:2; Rubin & Babbie, 2008:56). The identified theories encompass developmental theory, Strength-based theory, Symbolic Interactionist theory, Ecological theory and integrated theory. These theories are discussed in greater detail below.

5.5.1 Developmental theory

The developmental approach advocates for the collaboration of welfare services with essential stakeholders, facilitating the social worker's ability to design programmes for intervening in the challenges confronted by foster parents. This strategy necessitates for a cross-sector collaboration to effectively tackle these issues. As per van Breda (2015:11), developmental social work is distinguished by attributes such as accessibility to resources, social change, social justice, capacity building, partnership, active community participation, sustainable livelihood and appropriateness.

5.5.2 Symbolic Interactionist theory

Symbolic interactionist theory explains social behaviour in terms of how people interact with each other using symbols. The aim is to assist in the formulation of human behaviour. This sociological theory focuses on how people interact with each other and their environment depending on how they interpret things based on the meaning those things have for them.

5.5.3 Ecological theory

The ecological theory integrates a method of practice that spans across individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Its aim is to sustain a dual and a more simultaneous focus on both individuals and their environment. This theory is

marked by interdependent environmental systems that strive to achieve a harmonious fit (Deacon & MacDonald, 2017:88).

5.5.4 Strength based theory

In the strength-based approach, social workers focus on an individual's strengths, abilities, resources, and achievements (Teater, 2020:38). The goal is to guide and assist clients in reflecting on and in utilizing their strengths to develop coping skills that are effective for them. To support clients in reaching their self-determined goals, social workers, along with other stakeholders, need to recognize that every person, group, and community possesses strengths. It is their responsibility to identify and enhance the strengths of foster parents and adolescent foster children, rather than concentrating solely on their weaknesses.

5.5.5 Integrated theory

Integration involves consolidating common functions within and between organizations to address shared problems and to foster a commitment to a collective vision and goals (WHO, 2015:2). It entails merging separated structures and functions under the coordination of social workers to accomplish social welfare objectives. In order to facilitate a more multi-disciplinary approach, social workers should furnish a comprehensive resource list containing contacts and services offered by various stakeholders and ensuring seamless referrals. This approach aims to enhance access to welfare services and to promote an effective holistic strategy.

5.6 Roles and Functions of the Key Role Players of Foster Care

5.6.1 Social workers

Social workers bear the responsibility of implementing prevention and early intervention strategies. They deliver statutory services to adolescent foster children identified as requiring care and protection, as stipulated in Section 150 (C) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

Creating an enabling environment and providing emotional support to enhance therapy for these children is within the purview of social workers. They take on the role of educators, initiating, informing, and equipping individuals with actionable information and training to empower them in addressing the challenges faced by foster parents.

Assuming the position of counselors, social workers guide clients in understanding social problems and identifying the root causes through psycho-social support. Additionally, social workers act as researchers, contributing new knowledge to foster social change. They advocate on behalf of vulnerable individuals, partnering with key stakeholders to influence positive transformations. Collaborating with other stakeholders, social workers establish connections between individuals and relevant resources in their environment. In conflict situations, social workers serve as mediators, assisting people in addressing conflicting issues causing strain in their lives.

Social workers also function as programme developers, creating and evaluating programmes tailored to meet the specific needs of foster parents and adolescent foster children. They conduct workshops to empower foster parents with knowledge and skills related to foster care placement. Furthermore, social workers are responsible for training stakeholders on legislation related to child protection and care. In supporting social workers, auxiliary social workers assist by performing roles such as:

5.6.2 Community development workers

Social workers fail to develop the formal partnership with community development workers because of the time pressure to complete cases within the limited time allocated (Mathonsi, 2022:14). Community development workers are responsible in identifying the challenges faced by people in the community including child protection in the form of profiling. Since the challenges encountered by foster parent are different, they should work closely with social workers, registered counsellors, psychologists and psychiatrists to address the psycho-social and emotional needs of adolescent foster children than waiting for a problem to become a crisis. In partnership with other stakeholders, auxiliary social workers offer life skills programme to foster parents and adolescent foster children.

5.6.3 Foster parents

Social workers should develop support networks among foster parents and affected families by involving them in pre-service and in on-going training processes to equip foster parents to handle the pressures of the parenting role. This will assist foster parents to become resilient in dealing with the behavioural challenges they are facing.

a) Home Affairs Department

The Department of Home Affairs is responsible in providing the birth certificates of the children as well as the passports and death certificates of the parents. This will assist in the application of foster grants to provide for the basic needs of adolescent foster children.

b) Department of Health

As part of the stakeholders, the Department of Health assists in the development and implementation of programmes that will address physical, emotional and mental health needs of the adolescent foster children. This Department provides an enabling environment, screening, care and management of health care for adolescent foster children.

c) Education Department

The Department for Education provides proof of school attendance and progress reports for the children as well as providing support on learning barriers. They provide educational support to learners through referrals to social workers and psychologists for assessment and therapeutic services.

d) The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development

The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development issues the court orders for the application of foster care grants in the form of financial support at SASSA.

This Department liaises with social workers in promoting the identification of adolescent foster children to get into criminal justice system through the diversion programme.

e) Social Security Agency (SASSA)

SASSA as an administrator of social assistance grants assists in the application and processing of the foster care grants for foster parents. Social workers, working with SASSA ensures that this grant is used in the best interest of the adolescent foster children.

f) Non-Government Organisation (NGO)

The social workers of the NGO's are responsible for the implementation of the Children's Act and other related legislation in the area of child protection. They, through early intervention programmes with foster parents, should ensure that the rights of foster parents and those of adolescent foster children are considered.

g) South African Police Service

South African Police Service also assists with the certification of the affidavit of the statement provided by the foster parents on the whereabouts of the child's parents. Social workers should train police officials on the implementation of the Children's Act such as completion Form 22 and Form 36 in order to protect adolescent foster children from abuse or from being used by adults to commit crime as highlighted by foster parents in the previous chapter. This will lessen the challenges faced by foster parents.

5.7 Foster Care Placement Process

The researcher deems it essential to outline the foster care placement process before elucidating the post-placement role of social workers. In the realm of social work,

supervision and monitoring are undertaken once adolescent foster children have been placed in foster care.

The foster care system is widely recognized as the primary source of care and protection for vulnerable children on a national scale. The overarching objective is to shield and care for these children by providing a secure and a healthy family home with positive support (Dhludhlu, 2015:3). Social workers within the Department of Social Development, serving as the primary catalysts for foster care, are guided by the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

The core mission of the Department of Social Development (DSD) encompasses capacity building, programme development as well as the addressing of social issues through community participation. This is done with the sole aim of enhancing the well-being of vulnerable individuals, including adolescent foster children.   The DSD is tasked with implementing the Children's Act, bearing the professional responsibility to observe, care for, protect, and safeguard the rights of children. As defined in Section 180 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, a child is labeled a foster child when he/she is placed with a related or an unrelated person who is willing to provide a safe and a caring home environment. Consequently, foster care placement is delineated as the temporary arrangement for children who cannot reside with their biological parents due to histories of abuse and absent parenting, as discussed in chapter one.

5.8 Role of Social Worker Rendering Supervision Post Foster Care Placement

Social workers bear the responsibility of overseeing and assessing foster care placements to provide support to foster parents, ensuring adherence to placement standards and meeting the child's needs effectively. It is the duty of social workers to assist foster parents in maintaining accountability. Nevertheless, social workers often lack the resources. The high caseloads which the social workers face on a regular basis also prevent them from actively supervising or monitoring foster care placements as expected. This practice commonly focuses on cases that have been formally reported, as indicated by the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (2019).

Although the Department of Social Development (DSD) has divided the role of foster care social workers into three stages — assessment, placement, and supervision and support — to ensure effective management of foster care and child protection (DSD, 2009), Botha and Masha's study (2021:510) discovered inadequate monitoring, supervision, and support in foster care placements due to non-involvement of supervisors, high caseloads per social worker, and a shortage of manpower. The current study's findings align with this, indicating that foster parents grapple with the behavioural challenges of adolescent foster children post-placement. Social workers typically respond to reported behavioural issues by foster parents or cases requiring review, as they often fall short in conducting proactive supervision.

5.9   Guideline Development Process

The study findings, alongside the literature review in chapter four, suggest the development of the following guidelines: Outreach services, Community-based programmes, Multidisciplinary teams, intersectoral collaboration, and Capacity Building. Post-1994, the South African government inherited a fragmented welfare system lacking a focus on the development and collective empowerment of black people (WHO, 2007:2). The primary focus of the guidelines is a developmental and integrated approach related to human rights, empowerment of key role players, and community participation for the delivery of developmental welfare and social work services (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997). A holistic approach was employed to ensure community involvement and to guard against fragmented services.

The guidelines are rooted in partnership and the coordination of services with the drivers or key role players of foster care placement. The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery in 1997 aimed at providing a policy and practical implementation strategy based on the principles of accessible and information service standards to ensure accurate services are received by those in need. Meanwhile, the White Paper for Social Welfare asserts that welfare policies and programs should be based on the principle that all welfare programs strive for excellence and the provision of quality services.

Both social workers and foster parents underscored the importance of inter-sectoral collaboration to protect the rights of adolescent foster children. Key role players need to recognize these rights when delivering coordinated and integrated services. However, social workers in the study indicated a lack of coordination, especially with relevant stakeholders such as the Department of Health, Department of Education, SASSA, and the Department of Home Affairs. Instead of complementing each other, they appear to be in competition for the accomplishment of developmental social welfare services. It becomes the responsibility of social workers to forge partnerships with other stakeholders to coordinate services for the benefit of foster parents and adolescent foster children (Layland, 2019:75).

Partnership development is likely when role players are willing to collaborate, sharing goals and objectives (Muleya, 2020:473). There is a pressing need for the provision of ample resources for social workers to deliver quality services. Social workers expressed concerns that the employer prioritizes quantity over quality services, compelling them to meet numerical requirements set by the Department of Social Development.

5.10 Suggested Guidelines for Social Workers Post Foster Care Placement

The study's findings propose guidelines for social workers to intervene and address the challenges encountered by foster parents in raising adolescent foster children. These suggested guidelines encompass the following elements: Outreach services, Community-based programs, Multidisciplinary teams, Intersectoral collaboration, and Capacity building.

5.10.1 Outreach Services

a) Social problem identification

Social workers specialize in promptly recognizing social issues and implementing human processes to effectively address these problems. The foster care procedure begins with designated social workers identifying a child requiring care and protection, then seeking a suitable placement possibility as delineated in Section 155 of the

Children's Act. The social worker plays a pivotal role in identifying clients' problems through interviews and surveys. By involving clients in the problem identification process, the social worker gains a more profound understanding of their needs, facilitating the development of effective goals. Additionally, a social worker is mandated to conduct a thorough assessment of prospective foster parents who are willing to take on the parenting role.

b) Assessment of prospective foster parent

Social workers excel in aiding clients in recognizing their strengths, abilities, weaknesses, and resources for the purpose of achieving social change (Teater, 2020:38). In the assessment process, social workers employ a strengths-based perspective, utilizing various questioning methods to uncover strengths that could bring about positive change in individuals. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of foster parents is crucial, as it helps them recognize their own strengths and resilience gained through life experiences. This involves the social worker considering factors such as the foster parent's age, environment, housing conditions, family composition, criminal record, education level, religious beliefs, household income, willingness to care for a non-biological child, and capacity to assume responsibility, among others, as outlined in Section 150 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. Assessment is a key component during engagement and throughout the entire foster care placement process. The primary aim is to determine whether the foster care placement is in the best interest of the child.

This assessment or screening should specifically focus on the age gap between the foster parent and the child on one hand and the chosen foster parent's ability to address the therapeutic needs of the foster children on the other (Naicker, 2021:20). Social workers are adept at assessing clients' situations to gauge progress toward goal attainment. However, due to the time constraint of the allocated ninety days and the overwhelming number of cases they handle, social workers often do not conduct a comprehensive assessment of prospective foster parents.

c) Intervention

The social worker engages in the analysis of the situation, proposes alternative methods to tackle challenges, and assists in implementing interventions. Acknowledging the impermanent nature of foster care placement, the screening process holds paramount importance as it serves as the primary tool to ascertain the best interests of the children. Upon completion of the assessment, the social worker compiles a comprehensive report for the court, recommending the placement of the child in the care of suitable foster parents who have undergone the screening process as stipulated in Section 155(4)(a) of Act 38 of 2005. The social worker ensures that prospective foster parents are accountable for caring for vulnerable children experiencing behavioural, emotional and developmental problems.

A prospective foster parent is required to appear before the presiding officer, also known as the magistrate, as requested by the social worker for the finalization of the foster care placement. A court order is then issued to the foster parent, enabling him/her to apply for the foster care grant with SASSA in accordance with Section 7 of the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004. However, social workers remain obligated to supervise the placement, addressing the needs and challenges faced by both foster parents and foster children. They are also responsible for reviewing the court order issued by the court and extending it every two years, as outlined in Section 159 of the Children's Act.

d) Integration of services with the key role players to ensure appropriate referral services

Social workers do not function independently; instead, they engage in collaboration with various stakeholders, integrating their knowledge to understand human behaviour and to effect social change in people's lives. As noted by Muleya (2020:473), social workers can facilitate social change by advocating for socio-economic development at a macro level in collaboration with key stakeholders thereby creating an enabling environment for the lives of adolescent foster children. It is anticipated that key role players will collaborate to safeguard vulnerable children.

5.10.2 Community Based Programmes

Steps in the community-based approach involve a social work case manager taking on the role of a coordinator and assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of programmes designed for foster parents and adolescent foster children. The social worker engages the community in developing objectives to instigate social change in the lives of foster parents and adolescent foster children. Community participation holds significant importance in addressing the complex needs of foster placement.

The initial stage involves registering problems identified by members of the outreach programme. The second stage entails problem identification through assessments to determine issues impacting the client (foster parent and adolescent foster child). An intake social worker, having received the reported problem and with the client's consent, records the case for attention or referral to the relevant social worker.

The third stage focuses on intervention, during which the social worker determines necessary actions through an individual development plan. Community development workers and community leaders are involved to seek their participation in the child protection process.

The fourth step involves referral, guided by the developmental plan. The social worker may refer the foster parent or adolescent foster children for therapeutic services when deemed necessary.

5.10.3 Multidisciplinary Team

This entails collaboration across different societal sectors and involvement from various departments, including the Department of Health, Department of Education, South African Social Security Agency, Department of Home Affairs, Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, NGOs, and the community. It is evident that social workers must collaborate within a multi-disciplinary team to guarantee the protection of children's rights.

5.10.4 Intersectoral Collaboration

Social workers, in conjunction with the key stakeholders in foster care, should engage in collaborative efforts to provide high-quality services to both foster parents and adolescent foster children. While the Department of Social Development (DSD) holds a central role, it cannot operate in isolation and requires the involvement of various role players. As the primary facilitators of foster care placement and supervision, social workers need to coordinate with other stakeholders to address the challenges faced by foster parents. This underscores the importance of inter-sectoral collaboration, highlighting that no single sector can adequately handle these challenges. The shared responsibility among various departments is a fundamental requirement for effectively serving foster families.

5.10.5 Capacity Building

The social worker's responsibility includes conducting training programmes to empower key stakeholders, focusing on legislation and policies related to child protection, such as the Children's Act, Criminal Procedure Act, and Child Justice Act. The aim is to address the specific needs of foster parents and adolescent foster children. Additionally, social workers should provide training on parenting skills to help manage the complexities encountered in raising adolescent foster children. This training should be tailored to the individual needs of foster parents, recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective due to the diverse challenges displayed by adolescent foster children.

a) **Social worker brokering foster care information to the community to ensure that the rights of foster parents and adolescent foster children are protected**

In the role of brokering, social workers undertake various functions such as facilitation, advocacy, negotiation, consultation, advice, innovation, and observation. It becomes the responsibility of social workers to engage community gatekeepers to facilitate access and mobilize individuals crucial for building healthy relationships. Social workers are instrumental in brokering information, serving as a neutral third party in

interactions between two or more parties to drive social change in response to the needs of foster parents and adolescent foster children.

Furthermore, social workers should play a role in creating maximum opportunities for the well-being of individuals (foster parents and adolescent foster children), groups (foster families), and the community (neighbours) who might be involved in or impacted by the foster care placement. Brokering assists social workers in evaluating resources and facilitating changes in the behaviours of adolescent foster children that may affect their relationship with foster parents. Prior to intervention, social workers need to comprehend what needs to be changed, how, at what level, and the potential effects of the change. Given that foster care placement is an ongoing process, it's crucial to recognize that a single change is unlikely to have a permanent effect.

5.11 Evaluation

Assessing the developed programme will offer an assessment of the quality rather than of the quantity of services provided by the social worker. Social workers are responsible for consistently providing feedback on the effectiveness of the services delivered to their clients. Despite the prevalent practice among social workers within the DSD to prioritize reporting the number of cases over the merits of each case, it is the duty of social workers to uphold accountability by presenting the outcomes of the services rendered in addressing the challenges faced by foster parents.

5.12 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to suggest guidelines on an integrated approach for social work intervention post foster placement. This chapter was grounded on objectives, goals and findings of the study in addressing the challenges encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children. The guidelines suggested in this chapter are intended for all the key role players in foster care placement and all those who are providing services to adolescent foster children.

The next chapter will outline major findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   Introduction

The challenges encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children and the perceptions of social workers towards these challenges were identified by participants and are outlined below. The current chapter offers a summary of the findings, conclusion drawn from the findings and recommendations for social work intervention and recommendations for future research.

6.2   Summary of Findings of the Study Based on Foster Parents

The findings of the study on challenges experienced by foster parents when raising adolescent foster children are presented below:

6.2.1   Foster Parents' Motivation and Demotivation to Foster and Their Experiences of Raising Adolescent Foster Children (Theme 1 and 2)

The findings of the study confirmed the existence of psycho-social factors that motivated foster parents to become foster parents. They further outlined how the same factors demotivated these parents to quit their fostering role.   These factors are traumatic events such as parental death and children's bereavement, foster parents' altruism, unfavorable environment for the child and secrecy about biological parents, as stated by foster parents.   Furthermore, foster parents' experiences such as compelling parental sensitiveness and favouritism avoidance, adolescent foster children's behavioural mismanagement, and adolescent foster children's emotional turmoil are not making their role any easier.   Traumatic events lead to behavioural problems that foster parents fail to manage due to lack of parenting skills.

Although foster parents are driven by altruistic factors to care for adolescent foster children, they become demotivated to continue fostering when they lack training and supportive services from the social workers in dealing with the behavioural challenges

of these children.   The findings of the study emphasized the significance of empowering foster parents with parenting skills in order to empower them to manage the behavioural challenges exhibited by adolescent foster children placed in their care. Additionally, some factors raised by foster parents that contribute to the behavioural problems cited above is that they sometimes avoid disciplining these children as a way of avoiding to make them feel unloved and unappreciated.

6.2.2   Challenges Experienced by Foster Parents Raising Adolescent Foster Children (Theme 3)

The findings of the study show that the main challenge faced by foster parents is the stage between childhood and adulthood. Foster parents find this transition to be the most difficult phase to handle as they often struggle to know how to manage the behaviours displayed by adolescent foster children.   During this transitional stage, adolescent foster children usually grapple with their own identities and they require support and guidance from a parent.   There are also other challenges which are encountered by foster parents such as the breakdown of the relationship between the foster parent and the adolescent foster child and the foster child drug dependency.

Foster parents suggested that social workers should provide emotional support and training to lessen their parenting stress while caring for these children. Some foster parents mentioned that some children bunk school and smoke cigarette in the street with friends. Others turn to drugs due to peer pressure and a desire quick fix their traumatic issues.   These challenges affect their ability to provide proper care to adolescent foster children. The findings of the study suggest that safe a home environment and parental supervision can prevent adolescent behavioural problems such as substance abuse, truancy, and anti-social behaviour.

6.2.3   Management of the Challenges Experienced by Foster Parents (Theme 4)

The findings of the study revealed the approaches that are being used by foster parents in the management of behavioural problems that they experience with adolescent foster children. These factors are authoritarian (negative) and authoritative

parenting style (positive), social work services, religious principles and open communication. Foster parents acknowledged that authoritarian parenting style such as corporal punishment and force have worsen the behaviour of adolescent foster children while authoritative (setting of rule and guidelines) and open communication and religious principle promoted good behaviour and responsibility in children. The findings of the study suggested that authoritative parenting strategy is the most effective method to use in enhancing psycho-social well-being while authoritarian strategy may lead to a variety of behavioural challenges in children. Poor management of these behavioural challenges are closely linked to social, psychological, and academic difficulties in adolescent foster children.

The findings of the study emphasize a massive need for social workers to offer quality services through supervision and monitoring foster care placement to ensure accountability and emotional support to foster parents and adolescent foster children. The government should provide enough resources so that social workers can perform their duties or meet the demands of social services as required.

6.2.4 Contributing Factors to the Challenges Encountered By Foster Parents (Theme 5)

The findings show that foster parents have experienced few contributing factors to the challenges such as insufficient supervision by social workers and internal and external factors when caring for adolescent foster children. These factors emerged from the social workers' failure to provide adequate supervision and from the foster families and community at large. Although social workers are obligated to provide support in the form of training to foster parents, they fail due to excessive caseloads, low incomes, political interference, and lack of support from management.

The findings of this study found that inadequate supervision and monitoring by the social workers contribute to the lack of behaviour management by foster parents. The contacts between adolescent foster children and their biological families may lead to challenges such as inconsistent parenting and conflicting loyalties, which may lead to behavioural problems in adolescent foster children if there are no parenting rules. It is therefore not surprising that many foster parents quit fostering due to community

interference on how to raise these children. A healthy relationship could cultivate effective family reunification.

6.2.5 Foster Parents Required and Acquired Support From Social Workers (Theme 6)

Social workers should understand that trauma does also have an impact on physical, emotional and social relationships as well as on the interaction with their families. They should therefore focus on individuals and their environment, recognizing the interconnectedness of all elements in nature to address challenges they face with adolescent foster children. They should also strive to create a healthy environment for both foster parents and adolescent foster children through therapeutic interventions. As revealed by the findings of the study, foster parents seek guidance on foster care placement, integrated group work, parenting skills as well as on behaviour management techniques. This is mainly to ensure that they do enhance their abilities and knowledge in the area of parenting adolescent foster children and to meet the demands arising there from.

The findings confirmed that social workers should consider social and life skills training as essential programme. These skills are deemed to be necessary for both foster parents and adolescent foster children. Social workers should coordinate and collaborate with other key role players to ensure a more integrated provision of services. Integrated and developmental welfare services with key role players should be implemented to ensure that socio-economic development in this space does take place.

6.3 Summary of Findings of the Study Based on Social Workers

The findings of the perceptions of social workers regarding the challenges encountered by foster parents when raising adolescent foster children are presented below.

6.3.1 Perception of Social Workers towards the Challenges Post Foster Placement (Theme 1)

The findings of the study show that foster parents encountered numerous challenges post foster placement. These include, among others, the following: lack understanding of foster care placement, foster children drug dependency, foster children's school drop-out rate, parental sensitiveness in the application of parenting style, lack of resources to ensure effective parenting and internal and external interferences. These challenges are interrelated and are exacerbated by excessive caseloads, lack of resources, limited time to spend with foster parents and monitoring the placement which have detrimental impact on ensuring effective parenting by social workers. Irrespective of the efforts of the social workers in ensuring effective services to adolescent foster children, foster parents fail to manage this behaviour due to limited parenting knowledge and their inappropriate discipline methods which contribute to the behavioural problems paraded by these children.

Notably, social workers do have the responsibility to provide appropriate education and supervision to the foster parents and to ensure that they understand foster care, parenting role and responsibilities as outlined in the Children's Act. These social workers should therefore be given enough resources that would assist them to deepen the knowledge of foster parents in the performance of their parenting roles and to ensure that this happens in line with the basic standards of foster care. The findings also revealed that social workers fail to provide supervision because they are rushing for targets as required by DSD (Quantity versus quality services). This is mainly because their performance appraisal is based on the number of cases, they have conducted rather than on the amount of time spent in each case as well as the impact of services rendered.

The findings show that intake social workers do not have enough time to conduct thorough assessment and to provide clear specifics for foster care placement and its function to the prospective foster parent prior to placement. The researcher suggests that thorough screening can assist in the identification of healthy behavioural management practices, ensure healthy stable placement and to provide strategies to lessen the challenges experienced by foster parents after placement.

6.3.2 Social Workers Supportive Role towards Foster Parents (Theme 2)

The findings of the study show factors that contribute to the failure of social workers to support foster parents. These factors, which include inadequate screening and training as well as overwhelming caseloads make it hard for social workers to provide support to foster parents. Social workers confirm that they turn to neglect other issues and concentrate more on cases that are due for review. This is mainly done with a view to prevent foster care grant from lapsing. The study reveals that social workers are under immerse pressure to reach targets as the main focus is on quantity than quality, and this leads to poor service delivery. Social workers can educate and disseminate information to foster parents in order to foster change. The latter suggests that social workers should develop people through workshops in the given topic to contribute in addressing the challenges faced by foster parents.

6.4 Conclusion on the Research Process

The conclusions based on the findings of the study are outlined below.

6.4.1 Research questions

The research questions which guided the exploration of the challenges of caring for adolescent foster children were as follows:

a) What are the dynamics of caring for adolescent foster children?

This question was adequately replied to by foster parents by expressing the challenges and the contributing factors to the challenges display by adolescent foster children in their care.

a) What support do social workers provide to foster parents to deal with the dynamics of raising adolescent foster children?

This question was answered in chapter four wherein social workers expressed their perception on the challenges encountered by foster parents when raising adolescent foster children.

6.4.2 Research Goals and Objectives

The goal of the study was to explore the dynamics of caring for adolescent foster children post-foster care placement in order to guide social workers in their supervision of foster care. The goal was obtained by attaining the following objectives:

Objective 1: To explore the dynamics encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children.

This objective was attained in chapter four wherein foster parents expressed their challenges of lack of understanding of the developmental stages of children, the breakdown of their relationships with adolescent foster children and foster children depending on drugs.

Objective 2: To develop the post-placement guideline for social work intervention.

The guidelines for the intervention of social workers were developed by the researcher herein in chapter five. These guidelines would assist social workers in addressing the challenges encountered by foster parents when caring for adolescent foster children.

6.4.3 Research Approach

The researcher used qualitative research method when collecting and analyzing data in order to understand the challenges experienced by foster parents in dealing with foster adolescent children and the perception of social workers towards these challenges. The chosen research method has enabled the researcher to addresses the questions why, how and what instead of how often or how many.

6.4.4 Research Design

Exploratory, descriptive, contextual and phenomenological research designs were used by the researcher to explore the challenges and perceptions of participants. The intention was to gather accurate and detailed information from the participants'

experiences and on what they think might be the cause(s) of the challenges. These research design methods are explained below as follows:

In exploratory research design, the researcher relied more on the information obtained from participants to shape the follow up questions. This permitted the researcher to gain familiarity and to achieve the desired influence for the development of post-placement guidelines for social work intervention.

Descriptive research design allowed the participants to describe what they know best regarding the challenges experienced when raising adolescent foster children.

Contextual research has assisted the researcher to rely on the information gathered from participants through observation careful listening and probing. It has helped the researcher to gain contextual information about the study.

Phenomenological research allowed the researcher to gain insight of the perception and experiences of foster parents when raising adolescent foster children and DSWs when dealing with foster care supervision. It has assisted the researcher to focus more on understanding the participants' interpretation through their lived experiences.

6.4.5   Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to the highest scientific and professional standards throughout the duration of the study. Ethical matters such as informed consent, confidentiality and debriefing of participants were taken into account. The rights of participants were protected and no single participant was forced to partake in the study.

6.5   Conclusion Based on Research Findings

The following section provides conclusions drawn from the research findings based on the ten themes and the twenty-nine sub-themes drawn from the data analysis process in chapter four.

6.5.1 Conclusion Based on Foster Parents' Motivation and Demotivation to Foster and Their Experiences

Foster parents expressed their motivation to foster children and demotivation to quit fostering adolescent foster children. Foster parents are motivated by altruism and demotivated by lack of support and training from social workers to deal with the behavioural challenges they face. The demotivational factors were traumatic events, secrecy about their biological parents, unfavorable environment and poor parenting skills on their part as foster parents. Adolescent foster children find it hard to cope with the loss of their parents without the support from both foster parents and social workers instead they display behavioural problems that foster parents fail to manage.

Social workers should provide therapy to adolescent foster parents and to equip foster parent with parenting skills through much needed training in order for them to address the challenges they face. This will make foster parents feel supported and motivated to continue with their parenting role. Foster parents will become resilient and confident to deal with the challenges they are facing up with.

6.5.2 Conclusion Based on Challenges Experienced by Foster Parents Post Foster Placement

Foster parents encountered numerous challenges such as adolescence, breakdown of relationship between foster parents and the child, dysfunctional family, drug dependency, emotional disturbances, special learning needs and teenage pregnancy. The main conclusion is that social workers should enhance the capabilities of foster parents by helping them address the behavioural challenges of adolescent foster children. Social workers together with the key role-players should empower foster parents with behaviour training programme to meet the psycho-social needs of adolescent foster children in their care.

6.5.3 Conclusion on Management of the Challenges Encountered by Foster Parents

Social workers should provide quality services through emotional support to both foster parents and adolescent foster children so as to assist them address the challenges they encounter. The conclusion is that social workers should develop behaviour management programme to equip foster parents with the skills to manage their own behaviour so that they can effectively manage the behaviour of these children. DSD should provide enough resources to social workers for them to be able to provide sufficient supervision and monitoring of foster care placement. This will enable them to safeguard the well-being of adolescent foster children.

6.5.4 Conclusion on Contributing Factors to the Dynamics

Social workers should assume the responsibility of coordinating services with other stakeholders for the benefit of foster parents and adolescent foster children. Adequate supervision and monitoring should be provided in order to identify the root cause of the contributing factors to the challenges that have negative impact in adolescent foster children.

The first conclusion is that social workers should develop a heathy environment for both foster parents through therapeutic interventions that will deal with the contributing factors to the challenges encountered. This will assist adolescent foster children to develop coping mechanisms such as problem-solving skills. Secondly, social workers should liaise with stakeholders to conduct education that will assist in empowering foster parents and the community regarding foster care placement and the applicable legislation in this regard.

6.5.5 Conclusion on Foster Parents Required and Acquired Support from Social Workers

Social workers and child welfare professionals are the main source of support for foster parents and adolescent foster children. This therefore means that they should cooperate with their objectives and goals towards addressing the challenges they face.

The majority of foster parents expressed that they do not receive training prior and post placement hence the findings of the study suggested for the provision of both social and life skills training. The conclusion is that foster parents should be supported through life skills training programmes to lessen the encountered challenges.

6.5.6 Conclusion on the Perception of Social Workers towards the Challenges Post Foster Placement.

Social workers expressed their challenges that have an impact in the provision of quality services to foster parents and adolescent foster children. These challenges include lack of resources and limited time to render effective services to people. They should engage in collaboration with other stakeholders by sharing responsibilities that will address the challenges encountered by foster parents. The conclusion is that social workers should broker information through evaluation of resources that will foster change in the lives of both foster parents and adolescent foster children. Training in parenting skills should also be provided with the intention to assist foster parents to manage the complex behavioural challenges they face when caring for adolescent foster children.

6.5.7 Conclusion on the Supportive Role towards Foster Parents

In supporting foster parents, social workers should develop and evaluate programmes tailored to meet the needs of foster parents and adolescent foster children. Social workers should empower foster parents with information related to foster care placement in order to enhance their parenting skills. The conclusion is that in partnership with the key role payers, they should provide life skills programme in order to foster parents and adolescent foster children.

6.6 Recommendations

The recommendations are suggested on the basis of the research findings to address the challenges faced by foster parents in caring for adolescent foster children. These are tabled below.

6.6.1 Recommendations for Foster Parents

a) Foster parents should provide protection and care to adolescent foster children in order for them to meet their developmental needs. They also need to safeguard these children from further harm.

b) Foster parents should demand training from social workers before and after placement in order for them to understand their parental roles and responsibilities.

c) Foster parents should be transparent about the whereabouts of foster children's biological parents.

d) During the time of acute stress, foster parents should understand that adolescent foster children and their families do require support.

e) Foster parents should understand the behavioural problems of foster children in order to offer needed support.

f) Foster parents should help adolescent foster children to deal with the pain of loss and provide reassurance that they will be cared for.

g) Foster parents should teach new skills and good behaviour in order for them to shape the behaviours of adolescent foster children.

h) It is crucial for foster parents to understand the developmental stages of children in order to deal with the behavioural vulnerabilities of adolescent foster children.

i) Foster parents should accept and consistently implement positive management strategies over time.

6.6.2 Recommendation for Social Workers

a) In recognition of the challenges faced by foster parents, social workers should work with other stakeholders in the attainment of the goals established by the researcher in the current study.

b) Social workers should actively engage with pertinent stakeholders to cultivate working relationships that enhance the provision of high-quality services to adolescent foster children.

c) Social workers should coordinate the services offered by diverse role players to foster a collaborative approach to promote positive change within families.

d) They should facilitate inter-sectoral collaboration between the role players for joint service delivery.

e) Social workers should facilitate a multi-disciplinary approach through a comprehensive resource list of various stakeholders to ensure relevant referrals.

f) Social workers should identify and enhance the strengths of foster parents and adolescent foster children.

g) Social workers should equip foster parents with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the challenges they may encounter.

h) Social workers should empower foster parents with knowledge related to foster care placement.

i) Social workers should provide therapeutic services to address psycho-social needs of adolescent foster children.

j) Social workers should support these children in developing coping mechanisms and to promote family wellbeing as they navigate the loss of their parents.

k) Social workers should encourage community involvement to promote quality services to adolescent foster children.

l) Social workers should raise awareness in order to educate people about foster care placement.

m) The suggested guidelines on integrated approach should be considered by the National Department of DSD for the benefit of adolescent children.

6.6.3   Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study suggest that further research should be conducted on the experiences of adolescent foster children being raised by foster parents who had their own children.

The current study did not explore the perception and experiences of adolescent foster children towards the challenges encountered by foster parents. Foster parents possess invaluable insights into the subject of the current study. These insights may be of great assistance in the development of appropriate programmes that will serve as an intervention for social workers and other key role players in foster care.

6.7 Conclusion

The current chapter offered a brief overview of the study. It also provided general conclusions and recommendations of the study. Recommendations for future research were also suggested, based on the findings of the research. The researcher is optimistic that the recommendations of the study will provide some guidance for social work practice in addressing the challenges encountered by foster parents when raising adolescent foster children.

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APPENDIX A

Research Ethics Clearance Letter

UNISA | university of south africa

COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

31 January 2022

Dear Ms Nomlinda Mashiloane

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 31 January 2022 to 31 January 2027

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # :
67123589_CREC_CHS_2022

Researcher(s): Name: Ms Nomlinda Mashiloane
Contact details: 67123589@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s): Name: Dr K.J. Malesa
Contact details: maleskj@unisa.ac.za

Title: Exploring the dynamics of caring for adolescents foster children: developing post-placement guidelines for social work intervention.

Purpose: PhD

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

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

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

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

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

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.

7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date **(31 January 2027)**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **67123589_CREC_CHS_2022** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

Signature: *Khan*

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

Signature: PP *AHMudusi*

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

APPENDIX B

Application To Conduct Research

Request for Permission of conducting a research study at the Department of Social Development

Date: 28 November 2020
The Head of Department
Ms Thembeni Mhlongo
Gauteng Department of Social Development
011355 7879/0765110006
thembeni.mhlongo@gauteng.gov.za

I Nomlinda Mashiloane, I am doing research with my supervisor, Professor KG. Malesa in the Department of Social Work towards a PhD in Medical Sociology, at the University of South Africa. I am expected to conduct a research project as part of the requirements of my study. My tittle reads thus; **exploring the dynamics of caring for adolescents foster children: Developing post-placement guidelines for social work intervention in Sedibeng district, Gauteng province**. The aim of the study is exploring the dynamics of caring for adolescents foster children post-foster placement with the intention to develop guidelines for social work intervention. Your department has been selected because you work directly with foster parents and adolescents foster children and you have knowledge and experience in relation to foster care placement and supervision.

This study will be conducted in the Sedibeng region in Gauteng Province and will involve a semi-structured interview. The sample will comprise of twenty-five participants (foster parents caring for adolescents foster children and social workers working for the Department of Social Development dealing with foster care supervision and also registered with the South African Council of Social Service Profession (SACSSP). The findings of the research will be published through research dissertation. I therefore request that your response be in writing. My contacts are 072 269 9054 or rhulanimashiloanee@gmail.com.

Your cooperation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Nomlinda Mashiloane -Social Worker & a PhD student

APPENDIX C

Permission To Interview Social Workers and Foster Parents

GAUTENG PROVINCE
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: Dr. Sello Mokoena
Tel: 082 331 0786
File no.: 01/10/23

Dear N Mashiloane

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

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

Your application on the research on *"Exploring the dynamics of caring for adolescents foster children: developing post-placement guidelines for social work intervention."* as approved by University of South Africa has been considered and approved for support by the Department as it was found to be beneficial to the Department's vision and mission. The approval is subject to the Department's terms and conditions as endorsed on the 13th November 2019.

You have permission to interview departmental officials and beneficiaries, conduct observations and access relevant documents where necessary.

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

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

With thanks

Dr Sello Mokoena
Director: Research and Policy Coordination
Date: 17/1/ 2023

APPENDIX D

Participants Information Leaflet and Consent Form

INFORMATION REGARDING THE CONSENT FORM FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: exploring the dynamics of caring for adolescents foster children: developing post-placement guidelines for social work intervention.

Primary investigator: Nomlinda Mashiloane
Address: No 56 Seymour Road Meyerton
Contact number: 072 269 9054

You are kindly invited to take part in a research project that forms part of my qualitative research **is** to develop post-placement guideline for social work intervention to address the dynamics encountered by the foster-parents when caring for adolescents foster children. Kindly read the information presented carefully, it explains the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is significant that you clearly understand the purpose of this research and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary,** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time, if you feel uncomfortable and even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the **Human and Research Ethics Committee of the College of Human sciences of the University of South Africa (UNISA-240816-052)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of the University and principles of the National Health Research Ethics Council.

This study will be conducted in the Sedibeng region in Gauteng Province and will involve focus group for social workers and a semi-structured interview for foster parents. The Interview process will involve three social workers (participants) dealing with foster care placement and supervision. The researcher has been trained to use the method mentioned above.

The purpose of the study is to explore the views of social workers regarding the dynamics encountered by the foster-parents when caring for adolescents foster children.

You have been invited to participate because you work directly with foster care placement in their daily practice. You have also complied with the following inclusion criteria: you have knowledge and experience in relation to foster care placement and supervision.

You will be expected to participate in the semi-structured interviews of three questions. The researcher might substitute face to face interview for online interviews and observations of the field during lockdown. During this process you are expected to respond honestly and to the best of your knowledge throughout the interaction with the researcher. There are no wrong or right answer, every answer is recognised. The interview process will be recorded so that I can be able to analyse the data with my supervisor Prof. KJ Malesa in the later stage. The process will only last for one hour. The information will be accessed by only me and my supervisor in a private setting to ensure confidentiality. I will not divulge any information with anyone except to my supervisor. Your identities will not be mentioned to in any of the document including the audio records. You will not be penalised if you withdraw or refuse to participate in the study because participation is voluntary.

CONSENT FORM FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY.

You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw at any point even after you have signed the form to give consent without any consequences.

Should you be willing to participate you are requested to sign below:

I _____ hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the above-mentioned study. I am not coerced in any way to participate and I understand that I can withdraw at any time should I feel uncomfortable during the study. I also understand that my name will not be disclosed to anybody who is not part of the study and that the information will be kept confidential and not linked to my name at any stage. I also understand what I might benefit from participation as well as what might be the possible risks and should I need further discussions someone will be available.

_____

Date

_____

Signature of the social worker (participant)

_____

Date

_____

Signature of the person obtaining consent

APPENDIX E

Information Regarding the Consent Form for Foster Parents

INFORMATION REGARDING THE CONSENT FORM FOR FOSTER PARENTS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: exploring the dynamics of caring for adolescents foster children: developing post-placement guidelines for social work intervention.
Primary investigator: Nomlinda Mashiloane
Address: No 56 Seymour Road Meyerton
Contact number: 072 269 9054

You are kindly invited to take part in a research project that forms part of my qualitative research developing post-placement guideline for social work intervention to address the dynamics encountered by the foster-parents when caring for adolescent foster children. Kindly read the information presented carefully, it explains the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is significant that you clearly understand the purpose of this research and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time, if you feel uncomfortable and even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the **Human and Research Ethics Committee of the College of Human sciences of the University of South Africa (UNISA- Rec-240816-052)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines of the University and principles of the National Health Research Ethics Council.

This study will be conducted in the Sedibeng region in Gauteng Province and will involve a semi-structured interview. The Interview process will involve 20 foster parents (participants) who have cared for adolescents foster children. The researcher has been trained to use the method mentioned above. The purpose of the study is to explore the dynamics encountered by the foster-parents when caring for adolescents foster children.

You have been invited to participate because you are registered foster parent approved by the DSD offices in Sedibeng region. You have at some point in time cared for adolescents' child/children.

You will be expected to participate in the semi-structured interviews of eight questions. The researcher might substitute face to face interview for online interviews and observations of the field during lockdown. During this process you are expected to respond honestly and to the best of your knowledge throughout the interaction with the researcher. There are no wrong or right answer, every answer is recognised. The interview process will be recorded so that I can be able to analyse the data with my supervisor Prof. KJ Malesa in the later stage. The process will only last for one hour. The information will be accessed by only me and my supervisor in a private setting to ensure confidentiality. I will not divulge any information with anyone except to my supervisor. Your identities will not be mentioned to in any of the document including the audio records. You will not be penalised if you withdraw or refuse to participate in the study because participation is voluntary.

CONSENT FORM FOR FOSTER PARENTS

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY.

You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw at any point even after you have signed the form to give consent without any consequences.

Should you be willing to participate you are requested to sign below:

I _____ hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the above- mentioned study. I am not coerced in any way to participate and I understand that I can withdraw at any time should I feel uncomfortable during the study. I also understand that my name will not be disclosed to anybody who is not part of the study and that the information will be kept confidential and not linked to my name at any stage. I also understand what I might benefit from participation as well as what might be the possible risks and should I need further discussions someone will be available.

_____   _____

Date   Signature of the foster parent (participant)

_____   _____

Date   Signature of the person obtaining consent

APPENDIX F

Leqephe le Foromo ya Boitlamo Hammoho le Dintlha tsa Bohlokwa Ho Motho Ya Nkang Karolo Patlisisong

LEQEPHE LE FOROMO YA BOITLAMO HAMMOHO LE DINTLHA TSA BOHLOKWA HO MOTHO YA NKANG KAROLO PATLISISONG LE THUTO YA BATSWADI BA HLOKOMELANG BANA BA HLOKANG TLHOKOMELO

SEHLOHO LE MORERO WA PATLISISO: Ho hlahloba mekgwa wa ho hlokomela ban aba hlokang tlhokomelo: - ho theha ditataiso tsa kamora ho beoa bakeng sa tshebetso ya boiketlo ba setjhaba / ntshetso pele ya setjhaba

MMATLISISI YA KA SEHLOHONG: Nomlinda Mashiloane
ATERESE: No 56 Seymour Road, Meyerton
NOMORO TSA MOHALA: 072 269 9054

O memelwa ho nka karolo morerong wa dipatlisiso eo e leng karolo ya dipatlisiso tsa ka tsa boleng tse ntshetsangpele tataiso ya kamora ho bewa bakeng sa tshebetso ya boiketlo ba setjhaba ho sebetsana le maemo ao batswadi ba ba hodisang ba kopanang le 'ona ha ba hlokomela bana ba batjha.

Ka kopo hle, nka nakwana ho bala dintlha tse hlahellang mona ka hloko, tse hlalosang ka botlalo maikemisetso le sepheo sa patlisiso ena. Ka kopo o ka botsa le ho botsisa mmatlisisi potso kapa dipotso tse o kabang le tsona haholo tse o sa di utlwisiseng ka botlalo. Ho bohlokwa haholo hore o kgodisehe le ho utlwisa sepheo sa patlisiso ena le thuto le ka moo seabo sa hao seleng bohlokwa ka teng. Hape ho nka karolo ha hao **ke buithaopo**, o lokolohile ho ka hana kapa ho dumela. Ha o re tjhe, le hona ha ho na tshusumetso efe kapa efe. Ebile o lokolohile ho ka ikgula thutong ena nako e ngwe le engwe, leha o dumetsi ho nka karolo.

Thuto ena, e dumeletswe ke lefapha la **Human and Research Ethics Committee of the College of Human sciences of the University of South Africa (UNISA- Rec-240816-052)** mme e tla rutwa tlasa tataiso ya molao le melawana ya ethical guidelines of the University and principles of the National Health Research Ethics Council.

Thuto le patlisiso ena e tla tshwarelwa tulong ya Sedibeng Region, Gauteng, South Africa, mme e tla hloka mehato e kenyeletsang lenane la dipotso. Bonyane batho ba 20 ba tla nka karolo patlisisong le thuto e leng ba kileng ba hlokomela bana ba dilemong tsa botjha / bohlankana le barwetsana. Mofuputsi o rupetsoe ho sebedisa mokhoa o boletsweng ka hodimo. Sepheo le maikemesetso a thuto ena ke ho theha ditataiso tsa kamora ho bewa bakeng sa tshebetso ya boiketlo ba Setjhaba / ntshetso pele ya setjhaba.

O emong wa batswadi ba ngodisitsweng le ho dumellwa ke kantoro ya lefapha la tshebeletso ya setjhaba le tswelopele (Sebokeng). O memelwa ho nka karolo hobane o se o kile wa hlokomela ngwana / bana ba dilemong tsa botjha / bahlankana le baroetsana.

O lebelletswe ho nka karolo lenaneng la dipotso le sa hlophiswang, ka mohala kapa sefahleho le sefahleho, le tla tataiswa ke potso tsa bohlokwa tse supileng. Lenanehong le na dipotso le tshebetso o lebeletswe ho araba dipotso ka botshepehi le tsebo ya hao ho mmatlisisi. Dipotsong tsena tsohle ha ho na tse nepahetseng kapa tse fosahetseng, ho bohlokwa ke maikutlo a hao. Lenane la dipotso le tla hatiswa ka tumello ya hao, hore ke tlo kgona hlekahleka ditaba tsohle ha morao le moetapele waka e leng Prof. KJ Malesa. Lenane la dipotso le tlameha ho nka motsotso e ka bang 30 hoya ho hora e le ngwe. Ha ho no ba le kahlolo; bakeng sa motho ya hanang ho nka karolo kapa ya ikhulang thutong ena, hobane ho nka karolo ho e tswa ka bolokolohi ha ho setlamo.

FOROMO YA TUMELLO

HO NKA KAROLO THUTONG ENA KE HO ITHAOPA

O lokolohile ho hana ho nka karolo thutong ena, kapa ho ikgulela morao nako efe kapa efe le ka mora hotekena foromo e fanang ka tumello ntle le hobana le ditlamorao.

Ha eba o dumela ho nka karolo o kopjwa ho tekena ka fatse:

Nna _____ ke ithaopa le hodumela ho nka karolo thutong eseng e hlalositswe ka hodimo. Ha ka hatellwa ho nka karolo ebile ke utlwisisa hore nka ikgulela morao nako efe kapa efe ha kesa phuthuluha ka hara thuto ena. Ke utlwisisa hore lebitso laka ha leno hlahiswa ho mang kapa mang a senang karolo thutong ena, ebile lehlasedi lena letla bolokwa ele sephiri hape ha leno amahanywa le lebitso laka. Ke utlwisisa se nka se unang ha ke nka karolo le se se kannang sa etsahala, ebile motho otla fumaneha ha ke hloka dipuisana hoya pele.

_____   _____
Letsatsi   Tekeno ka monka karolo

_____
Aterese ya email ya monka karolo

_____
Nomoro tsa mohala tsa monka karolo

_____   _____
Letsatsi   Tekeno ka motho a kopang tumello

APPENDIX G

Interview Guides for foster parents: English and Sotho versions

Interview schedule for foster parent

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. How many children do you foster?
4. How old is /are the foster children you are fostering?
5. Share with me the experience of raising foster child/ children?
6. What are the challenges have you encountered in caring for the adolescents foster children?
7. How do you deal with the challenges that you experience when raising adolescents foster child/ren?
8. What factors do you think contribute the dynamics encountered by foster parent when raising their adolescents' foster child/ren?
9. What do you think social workers can do to address the possible dynamics after foster care placement?

Puisano e reretsweng batswadi ba hodisang bana ba hlokang tlhokomelo

1. O dilemo dikae?'
2. Bong ba hao ke bofe?
3. Bana ba ka tlasa tlhokomelo ya hao ba bakae?
4. Bana ba ka tlasa tlhokomelo ya hao ba dilemo dikae?
5. Abelana le nna maitemohelo a ho hodisa ngwana/bana ba hlokang tlhokomelo?
6. Ke mathata afeng a o kopaneng le 'ona ha o hodisa bana ba hlokang tlhokomelo?
7. O sebetsana jwang le mathata ao o tholanang le ona ha o hodisa bana badilemong tsa botjha kapa bohlankana le barwetsana?
8. Ke dintlha dife tseo u nahanang hore di tlatsetsa phetohelong eo batswadi ba hodisang ka yona haba hodisa bana ba dilemong tsa botjha kapa bohlankana le barwetsana? O nahana hore basebeletsi ba Ntshetso pele ya Sechaba ba ka etsa eng ho sebetsana le maemo a ka 'nnang a etsahala ka mora hore ho behwe bana tlhokomelong ya hao?

APPENDIX H

Interview Guides for social workers

Focus group interview schedule for social workers

1. You are requested to introduce yourself by mentioning your years of experience as a social worker and your field of specialization within the department social development.
2. What do you think are the challenges experienced by foster parents post foster-care placement?
3. What role can social workers play post foster care placement to support foster parents?

APPENDIX I

Question guide for the face-to-face focus group interviews with foster parents and social workers

The following face-to-face questions were posed to the foster parents:

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. How many children do you foster?
4. How old is /are the foster children you are fostering?
5. Share with me the experience of raising foster- child/ children.
6. What are the challenges have you encountered in caring for the adolescent foster children?
7. How do you deal with the challenges that you experience when raising adolescent foster child/ren?
8. What factors do you think contribute to the dynamics encountered by foster parent when raising their adolescent foster child/ren?   What do you think social workers can do to address the possible dynamics after foster care placement?

The following focus group questions were posed to the designated social workers:

1. You are requested to introduce yourself by mentioning your years of experience as a social worker and your field of specialization within the Department of Social Development (DSD).
2. What do you think are the challenges experienced by foster parents post foster-care placement?
3. What role can social workers play in post foster care placement to support foster parents?

APPENDIX J

Permission to Provide Counselling to Participants

LifeLine Vaal Triangle
Reg. No. 001-885NPO
Monument Road, Duncanville 1939
P.O. Box 20
ARCON PARK 1937

Office: (016) 428 1740
Fax: 086 773 2350
24 Hour Counselling: (016) 428 1640
National 24 hour number: 0861 322 322
e-mail: director@lifelinevaal.co.za
website: www.lifelinevaal.co.za
https://www.facebook.com/LifelineVaal

LifeLine

Building Community Heart

Date: 05 January 2021

To whom it may concern

Lifeline Vaal is granting permission to Ms Nomlinda Mashiloane to refer the research participants (Social Workers and Foster Parents) that may be negatively affected during her research study. These participants will be provided with psycho-social support if need may arise.

Lifeline Vaal has four Centers in the Sedibeng Region: Main office in Duncanville, Tshepiso in Sharpeville, Zone 13 Sebokeng, and Palm Springs Mall.

The research topic is **Exploring the dynamics of caring for adolescents foster children: developing post-placement guidelines for social work intervention.**

Yours in Lifeline

Signature: _____

Ms Zamaswazi Shongwe

Social Worker (10-50669)

LifeLine Vaal Triangle
LifeLine Vaal Shelter
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1937
Reg No. 001-885 NPO
016 428 1740

Chairman: Jacques Loots • Director: Colleen Rogers

APPENDIX K

Certificate of editing

Mhlongo Goodfriday writer's box
Independently contracted editing work

28/06/2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

EDITING CERTIFICATE LETTER

This serves to confirm that the academic work in a form of a PhD thesis belonging to:

NOMLINDA MASHILOANE

(STUDENT NUMBER: 67123589)

Titled

EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF CARING FOR ADOLESCENT FOSTER CHILDREN: DEVELOPING POST-PLACEMENT GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

was proofread and grammatically edited by the undersigned language specialist during the period June 25-28, 2024.

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