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The challenges and experiences of youth leaving foster care system in South Africa

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DECLARATION

This dissertation was not submitted in full or in part of the honor of any degree beforehand. It is my own job. Through huge commitment to, and citation in, this thesis was credited to, and quoted and referenced from, the work or works of others.

Signature: ███████   Date: 25 March 2021

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DEDICATION

"We did not come to fear the future. We came here to shape it."

Barack Obama

"It always seems impossible until it is done."

Nelson Mandela

"I think that probably the most important thing about our education was that it taught us to question even those things we thought we knew."

Thabo Mbeki

"Many are the plans in a man`s heart, but it is the Lord`s purpose that prevails" (Proverbs 19:21). He is the Lord yesterday, today and tomorrow. I therefore dedicate this study to the children and youths from disadvantaged communities. All I can say is that everything is possible if you put your mind into it.

ABSTRACT

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Foster care placement in the Republic of South Africa remains the primary alternative care option for children seeking treatment and safety as illustrated in Section 150 of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005. Foster care seeks to ensure the care, protection and care of children in a safe and healthy condition. These children are provided monetary help in a form of foster child grant. Youngsters placed in foster care are viewed as legally adults at the age of 18 and, therefore, presumed capable of caring for themselves.

The main goal of the study conducted, was to explore the challenges and experiences of youth leaving foster care system in South Africa. The researcher has followed the qualitative approach for the aim of this study. Explorative, descriptive and contextual research designs were applied to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa. A total of 18 social workers and 18 care leavers in the Gauteng Province (Tshwane District Municipality) from the Department of Social Development (DSD) and various Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCC) were purposively selected for the study. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The theoretical frameworks employed to anchor the study are Ecological Systems Theory, Social Support Theory, Resilience Theory and

Attachment Theory. Besides, the researcher utilised the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm in order to understand the participant`s viewpoints.

In this study conducted for my Doctoral studies, it was found that these youths face the risk of losing much of the financial aid after leaving care. The South African Social Service Agency (SASSA) ceases the foster child grant when the child completes matric and have reached the age of 18 or do not go on with their school. This occurs irrespective of whether the child is unemployed or in work.

According to the findings, children are put in foster care after they have been identified as children who need guidance and preservation as provided for in Section 150 of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005. The findings also indicated that the foster child grant play a significant part in meeting the fundamental and financial demands of children and youth placed in foster care. Furthermore, it was found that foster care placement offer various opportunities which includes provision of basic needs, therapy or counselling services, provision of family environment and shelter, educational opportunities, recreational or extra-mural activities, poverty alleviation, and promotion of independency.

The participants indicated the following challenges; unemployment and lack of housing post foster care, change of foster care homes, lack of support from social workers and no re-unification services, teenage pregnancy and school dropouts, sexual abuse and prostitution. Lack of guidelines for preparing youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa was also identified as a challenge. Social workers always use their own discretion on preparing youth leaving care in South Africa. Furthermore, the findings indicate that care-leavers experienced inadequate provision of social support services from social workers and their families. In spite of lack of social support services, it was found that care-leavers often rely on their peers, siblings, religion, school and educational system as part of their social support or resilience. In

addition, some of the care-leavers relied on abusing substances and they also engaged in sexual activities.

The study concluded that youth who leave the foster care system should be thoroughly prepared to leave the foster care system in order to become independent young adults. Recommendations include making mandatory for foster parents and CYCCs to save money for foster children, rendering of supervision services post foster care placement, introduction of preparatory programmes for youth leaving care from 15-18 years, extending foster care placement beyond the age of 21 and establishment of shelters for youth leaving foster care system. Lastly, linking youth leaving care with available resources.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter is intended to send a glimpse of the study conducted. Moreover, to introduce the topic about the challenges and experiences of youth leaving South Africa foster care system. It will cover the background and context of the study, statement of the research problem, rationale and significance of the study, goal and objectives of the study, research questions, assumptions, clarification of key concepts, and the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background and context of the study

Every mortal being in this world, young and old undergo transitions from each stage of his or her life. As children, we change grades, schools, friends, caregivers, as well as subject choices. As adults, we transition into and out of relationships, homes, and places of residence, educational institutions, communities, jobs, religions, communities, health status, and political party's preferences. These transitions are either planned or unplanned, positive or negative, smooth or fraught, and traumatic or joyful. While youth transition to young adulthood, most of them do not necessarily have a smooth transition and support from the state, social workers and foster care parents and there are very few aftercare services rendered to them to promote independent living (Bond, 2018; Tanur, 2012). The above arguments indicate that in one way or another, we do go through transitions in our lifetime and these transitions either result in positive or negative outcomes.

Therefore, this study will focus on the challenges, experiences and resilience amongst the youth leaving foster care system (Specifically youth leaving residential care or cluster foster care in Tshwane District Municipality, South Africa). Youth leaving care in South Africa, like any other country in the world need transition services and programmes to prepare them to deal with social and economic problems facing the nation. These include the three triple problems of indigence, joblessness and inequity facing the South African government and its citizens. In

addition to these three triple challenges, in 2020, we have seen the world and South Africa met with Covid-19 pandemic affecting young and old people. Younger generation leaving the South African foster care system are not immune from the above-mentioned main challenges. Social workers working under the DSD, NPOs and Private Sector take on a role in ensuring that young adults leaving the foster care system are adequately prepared to become productive citizens of the country and independent young adults. They can play a part in the country's economy.

Globally, children and youth are regarded as the most vulnerable population that requires special legislations and clear guidelines aimed at protecting their rights, advocating for their best interests and to promote social justice (United Nations, 1990). The United Nations (UN) Affirmation as regards to Welfare and Protection of children, declares that children have the right to good family care, which is supported, by the state (United Nations, 1986). South African legislation also recognises that children are the most exposed groups in society, and they need to be cared for and protected at all times. Section 28 of the South African Constitution emphasises the importance of protecting children in the country (Republic of South Africa, 1996). It further says that the welfare of the child is relevant in every proceeding referring to children (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Republic of South Africa, 2006). The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) also emphasises that children should always be provided with a secure family environment as part of the child's primary need. It against this backdrop that the Child Care Act 74 of 1983, Children's Act 38 of 2005 and the Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007 were developed.

It is projected that there are around 132 million orphaned children worldwide (Neitmetz, 2014). In the United States of America (USA), alone, it is estimated that more than 415, 129 children are placed in foster care (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). Among these youngsters it is estimated that between 20 000 and 30 000 of youth is leaving care every year (Samuels & Pryce, 2008; Henig, 2009; Goodkind, Schelbe & Shook, 2011; Stott, 2012; Geiger & Schelbe, 2014). It is reported that between 2008 and 2013, young people

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exiting the foster care system have increased from six to 10% (Rebbe, Nurius, Ahrens & Courtney, 2017). The rate of youth leaving care each year seems to be large and increasing in the USA.

Other international countries including Brazil, Russia, India and China has the following estimated numbers of orphaned or foster children; Brazil in 2014 had 36, 929; census conducted in Russia in 2008 indicated that there are more than 700, 000 foster children; India in 2014 had 35 million children attached to foster care, and China had in excess of 700, 000 in 2014 (Rudnicki, 2012; De Assis, Pinto, Liana & Joviana, 2014; Foster Care India Annual Report, 2014; Neimetz, 2014). Based on the statistics presented above, India seems to have the most significant number of orphaned children more than any country on earth, followed by China, Russia and lastly Brazil. In India, these children are reported to have been orphaned or abandoned due to various challenges, which includes destitution, inability, and parental abuse or neglect (Forber-Pratt, Loo, Price & Acharya, 2013).

In the African continent, there is also a high number of orphaned, abandoned, abused and neglected children due to poverty, substance abuse and HIV/Aids. For instance, in Ethiopia, the second-most popular state in Africa, which has inhabitants of about 94.1 million, is reported to have more than 5 million orphans who lost one parent or both, and those children from families that are unable to sustain them because of poverty and HIV/Aids (Pryce, Jones, Wildman, Thomas, Okrzesik & Kaufka-Walts, 2015:). These figures are evidence of the rising number of children who lost two guardians, are abandoned, abused and neglected in the world due to poverty, substance abuse and HIV/Aids. This also includes children whose parents cannot support them because of poverty or other social problems.

Freidus (2010) highlighted that in Africa, there are fewer researchers that examine the transition encounters of care leavers in or exiting institutionalised care and more especially in sub-Saharan Africa and their livelihood outcomes within the facility and out-of-home care. This calls for welfare organisations within the African continent to continue examining the

experiences and challenges of youth leaving care to promote independent living. Some of the papers on youth leaving care in the African continent written by a Ghanaian stressed that there is a growing concern in the child welfare sector on how preparation programmes for youth leaving care can be strengthened to more efficiently and effectively address the issues of youth inside and outside of the foster care home (Frimpong-Manso, 2012). Mhongera and Lombard (2016) in which they evaluate the effectiveness of transitioning programmes for teenage girls who leave institutional care in Zimbabwe to promote sustainable livelihoods wrote another paper. In Zimbabwe, adolescents who turn 18 are reported that they lack adequate preparation, and they are faced with a surge risk of destitution and segregation in new surroundings (Mhongera, 2016). They recommended that an all-inclusive safety net system should be developed to warrant that youth leaving care are appropriately prepared for independent living (Mhongera & Lombard, 2016).

In South Africa, the total amount of people, who are recipients of social grants has drastically increased from 2 million in the year 1994 to approximately 16 million in the year 2014 (SASSA Annual Performance Plan, 2015). It is crucial to note that out of the 16 million beneficiaries of the social grants, 11 million of these beneficiaries are children. In the 2018/2019 fiscal year, South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) planned to increase the total number of social grants recipients, including Social Relief of Distress grant from the estimated 17.5 million in 2017/18 to 17.7 million at the end of March 2019 (SASSA Annual Performance Plan, 2018). Therefore, the estimated yearly allocation for social security grants for the 2018/2019 financial year was standing at R163 billion, and this budget showed an eight per cent increase in contrast to the 2017/18 budget of R151 billion (SASSA Annual Performance Plan, 2018). In April 2020, the South African President also announced that from May to October 2020, there would be an increase in the social grants due to Covid-19. We have also seen the introduction of the R350 Social Relief Grant (SRG) for unemployed individuals over the age of 18 who have lost the ability to earn an income because of the lockdown. This

grant will be paid for a period of six months to help meet the essential and financial requirements of the unemployed individuals who are also not beneficiaries of any state grant.

The SASSA Fact sheet (2018) for February also indicates that there are 46, 448 recipients of Foster Child Grant (FCG) in the Gauteng Province alone and 401, 644 countrywide. In South Africa, the whole number of youth leaving care for the period 2004 to 2005 was at 14078 (Chiroro, Seedat & Woolnough, 2009). At the end of the 2006 to 2007 period, the number of youth leaving care increased significantly to 26 079, which is an increase of about 85, 25% (Chiroro et al., 2009). Due to this large number of youth leaving care, it was estimated that between 2004 and 2007, a total of about 58 919 youth leave foster care in South Africa (Chiroro, et al., 2009). The facts presented above indicate that in the country, there is also a high quantity and expanding number of orphaned individuals who are beneficiaries of FCG and those leaving the foster care system every year.

The DSD as the leading Department in rendering welfare services has been provided with the mandate of monitoring social security obligations as indicated in the National Development Plan (NDP) (2012) by facilitating Outcome 14 which is about an all-inclusive and reactive welfare system (e.g. to carry out the crucial challenges of privation, unemployment and inequity). This is also emphasised in the DSD Strategic Plan, which covers the period from 2015 to 2020 (2015). The Strategic Plan states that DSD should render social security services and expenditure through three interlinked initiatives, like:

- developmental social welfare programmes, which offer socio-psychosocial services to needy South Africans of care and protection;
- community development, which seeks to assist communities in marshalling themselves and developing the potential to engage in the South African economic activities as well as the public actively;

- and all-inclusive national assistance, which supplies South Africans from disadvantaged communities with a source of income, consequently helping to ensure improved health and education results (Republic of South Africa, 2012).

In South Africa, compared to Western Countries few authors examine the experiences of youth leaving care to prepare them to develop positive self-identity and building resilience (Chiroro, Seedat & Woolnough, 2009), Tanur (2012), Mmusi (2013 & 2017), Dickens (2016 & 2017), Bond (2017), Hlungwani (2017), and Van Breda (2015, 2016, 2017 & 2018). This emphasises the need to continue exploring the challenges and experiences of youth leaving care to promote independent living. The first qualitative study undertook by Chiroro et al. (2009) in South Africa, showed that care-leavers are not adequately prepared and as a result, this puts an enormous financial strain on their families. They found that social workers are not providing skills development to the youth transitioning out of foster care. In the South African circumstance, care-levers are also not immune to the biggest challenges of poverty and unemployment that face the whole country (Van Breda, 2016).

This study, therefore, attempts to explore the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system to prepare them for transitioning to young adulthood. There is a necessity to put in place a standardised model that will help social workers to deliver compelling services as they prepare youth leaving care to become economically active members of the South African society. Based on the above introduction, the statement of the research problem will be discussed below.

1.2 Statement of the research problem

Creswell (2016) refers to problem statement as the incorporation of the overall intention and aim of the study that should be clearly conveyed to the reader. It is about aligning the project on a specific track and defining the terrain to be explored (Fouché & De Vos, 2011). The research problem can be defined as step number one carried by the researcher during process of research and layout the direction in which the study will embark on (Monette, Sullivan & De Jong, 2011). Therefore, the statement of the research problem according to the researcher refers to the centre of focus that guides the discourse in the correct direction, and which ensures that the study does not deviate from its purpose.

The exact quantity of children in the South African foster care system is not easy to estimate, because not all the children assumed to require care and protection that are reported to the DSD (Du Toit, Van Der Westhuizen & Alpaslan, 2016). Although, SASSA Fact sheet (2018) for February indicates that, there are 46, 448 recipients of foster child grant in the Gauteng Province alone and 401, 644 countrywide. Therefore, it seems there is a huge number of orphaned children in South Africa. Previous studies indicate that social workers can enable youth leaving care to identify their strengths, explore possible future jobs and access the services they need while they are in foster care such as family members, friends, and community agencies that can serve as their resource (Scannapieco, Connell-Carrick & Painter, 2007). However, it is still not yet clear on how that can be done.

According to Dhludhlu (2015:5), "in alignment with a developmental approach when rendering foster care services, statutory social workers should not only focus on foster care services from a remedial perspective but should also include a socio-economic development focus". "Social development as a way to deal with social welfare programmes postulates a macro-policy framework for poverty alleviation that merges social and economic goals", and also depends on the investment of human and social capital to actively engage fully in the economy of the country (Midgley, 1995; White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997; Gray,

2006:p53; Integrated Service Delivery Model, 2006; Lombard, 2008, Dhludhlu, 2015). Social development and economic development is, therefore regarded as mutually dependent on each other.

However, the reality is that youth leaving care face various challenges including lack of education, stable jobs, and housing due to lack of thorough preparation from social workers working for Welfare Organisations and mounting demand of foster care services in South Africa (Wade & Dixon, 2006; Dixon, 2008; Goodkind, Schelbe & Shook, 2011, Statistics South Africa, 2017). According to Affronti, Rittner and Jones (2015), not much is understood about which facets of the youth leaving care experiences that may have assisted them as they transit to adulthood. Social workers require to have awareness of the types of backing, education, line of work and dwellings that can play a part to the welfare of young people leaving care (Geiger & Schelbe, 2014). This requires a change during rendering of statutory social work services to incorporate an evolutional perspective, which needs recommended initiatives and planning by statutory social workers to prepare youth leaving care. The current focal point of foster care programmes interrogates the impact of rendering of services to give satisfactory for youth leaving care as most of the time is spent into processing foster care applications, recruiting prospective foster parents and in their preparation. Furthermore, little attentiveness is paid to support foster care parents and youth leaving care living in adverse conditions as their health and well-being is regarded as the vital contributor to ensure their existence and to create conducive settings which empower children to meet their growth and developmental prospects (Berry, Biersterker, Dawes, Lake & Smith, 2013).

The state assumes that the youth is leaving care when they have hit the majority level and can be productive and self-reliant members of the community. However, the reality is that, upon leaving foster care, many youths find themselves without necessary knowledge, skills, expertise and experience that will enable them to be self-sustainable (Henig, 2009). Section 191(3)(e) of the Children's Amendment Act No 41 of 2007 states clearly that a CYCC must

provide programmes to assist youth leaving care once they reach the age of 18 (Republic of South Africa, 2007). However, this Act seems to be not specific to the type of programmes to be provided for the youth leaving care (Tanur, 2012). Therefore, the researcher considers that the insufficiency of a standardised guideline for youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa can pose a challenge to social workers and those working in the Welfare Sector.

The researcher is also of the view that if the DSD and NPOs rendering foster care services can interpret and implement the Children's Act in a proper way, youth leaving care can be offered programmes for preparing them before they leave care, as well at as aftercare programmes. This can also grant statutory social workers the opportunity to link these foster children or social grant beneficiaries with socio-economic programmes available in the community. Engelbrecht (2008) is of the view that South African's mainly question how to integrate social assistance services with developmental blueprints to encourage socio-economic development through jobs, and human-building social investment programmes potential to aid social and economic inclusion and alleviate poverty.

Looking at the fewer researchers on youth leaving care in Africa and more especially South Africa, it is clear that this is an emerging research area in the country and is under-researched. This lack of attention in examining the experiences, challenges, resilience and services rendered to youth leaving care in South Africa is inquisitive taking into consideration the high number of orphans and impoverished children who are beneficiaries of foster care services in the country (Van Breda, 2016). The Welfare Sector has a huge task to carry out to ensure that youth leaving care are adequately prepared to make successful transitioning to independent living (Van Breda, 2015). DSD reports to parliament concerning programmes and spending according to the requirements of the South African collective. Therefore, this qualitative study will explore the experiences, challenges, and resilience amongst youth leaving care to utilise the data to develop a model or guidelines for social workers to adequately prepare youth leaving care to promote independent living and sustainable livelihood.

In the South African foster care system, it is evident that leaving care programmes are lacking and this is a growing concern. Social workers are also encountered with the difficulties of inadequate resources from the state. Therefore, the research problem for this study is the absence of scientific information on the challenges, experiences and adequate services rendered to youth leaving care in South Africa, as noticed by the researcher while he was practising as a statutory social worker between the periods 2009 to 2015. The researcher holds the view that there are little support systems and no information from social workers about aftercare services rendered to youth leaving care. Below the researcher focuses on the motivation and noteworthiness of the study.

1.3 Rationale and significance of the study

Many researchers pursue research in certain areas to develop an overview of what is currently discussed about the subject, how the investigation might add to the existing knowledge, to fill a gap, add a new perspective, or endorsing existing ideas (Hardwick & Worsely, 2011; Rojon & Saunders, 2012). Although there are many studies on youth leaving care, more especially in the USA, UK and Australia, the researcher found little literature in the African continent as well as South African circumstances. Continuation on the investigation and exploring about the experiences, challenges and services rendered to youth leaving care could deepen the researchers understanding of these to provide an insight to child welfare practice, the role of social workers, and the other role players in developing guidelines for supporting the youth through transitioning to young adulthood (Samuels & Pryce, 2008).

As there is little attention that is designated for understanding the change experience and associated outcomes within a longer developmental period (Havlicek, 2011:1090). There is no full understanding of what youth leaving care seeks from their service providers and what are preparatory and aftercare programmes that are provided to these youth leaving care to promote independent living (Affronti, Rittner, & Jones, 2015). Further, very limited research has

investigated what foster children perceive what service providers can implement to enable them to get to be more useful in foster care, how foster care can be more beneficial to them and as they transit to young adulthood (McCoy, McMillen & Spitznagel, 2008; Wildeman & Emanuel, 2014; Affronti et al., 2015). It is less known how the youth leaving care fare in their mid to late twenties after they transition to young adulthood (Stewart, Kum, Barth & Duncan, 2013). Those who are working with youth leaving care also believe that there is little support that is provided to offset the deprivation and dependency that occurs because of living in foster care (Rudnicki, 2012).

Although there are several researches in the USA, UK and other west countries that examine how youth leaving care are equipped for transitioning to young adulthood, there is a gap in the African continent, as well as South Africa. According to Frimpong-Manso (2012) and Gwenzi (2018), most developed countries have put in place programmes for youth leaving care with a focus to equip and back them in out-of-home care for their transitioning to young adulthood. He further indicated that these programmes are absent in many African countries, including his own country Ghana (Frimpong-Manso, 2012). Gwenzi (2018) also states that in sub-Saharan Africa, youth leaving residential care into adulthood and independence have not been extensively researched, and therefore, there is little knowledge about their consequences of institutional care.

In South Africa, there is insufficient care-leaving studies that have been carried and even less of it has been published in accredited journals (Van Breda 2015; Van Breda, 2016; Van Breda & Dickens, 2016). Around Western Cape, for example, there are less than five programmes for preparing youth leaving care (Tanur, 2012). According to Tanur (2012), the Children's Act 38 of 2005 only references preparation and support for youth, leaving care but lacks precise specifications on the types of aftercare services that can support these youth through transitioning to young adulthood and independence. As the leading Department in rendering foster care services, the DSD formulated a framework in 2006 to direct social workers

on the delivery of co-ordinated developmental welfare programmes, which is well-known as "Integrated Service Delivery Model" (ISDM). This ISDM is aimed to reduce poverty and to ensure that community members are linked to community development programmes available in their communities (Patel, 2015).

Other policies that were developed to improve service delivery within the DSD are; The National Plan of Action for Children in South Africa (NPAC) (2013), which provides for integrating comprehensive structure for all policies, legislations and proposals drawn up by the state departments and civil society to advance the welfare of all children. The White Paper for Social Welfare was adopted in 1997 to promote the developmental social welfare model. It refers to social welfare, which includes foster care services, "to an integrated and comprehensive system of social services, facilities, programmes and social security to promote social development, social justice and the social functioning of people" (Republic of South Africa, 1997:p4).

The gap in the literature on the youth leaving care from various residential institutions and cluster foster care for preparing them to leave care seems to indicate a lack from the Welfare Sector in developing programmes, which are focused at enhancing the lives of youth leaving care. This gap stimulated the researcher to embark on this investigation to explore and interrogate the challenges and experiences of youth leaving care to promote independent leaving. This study also seeks to get the voices of service providers and youth leaving care who have not been afforded an opportunity to express their experiences on the services rendered to them as they leave care. Gwenzi (2018) alluded to the fact that very limited studies focused on social service professionals and caregiver's perspective on their outcomes of care leaving. This is also confirmed by Morantz and Heymann (2010) that the majority of studies on residential care focus on adult interviews and children's voices have been notably absent from the ongoing discussion.

The researcher believes that this research project would assist various role players and structures rendering social work services to youth, leaving the foster care system and that on its own served as the motive. The role players who are envisaged to benefit from this research study are social workers rendering services to youth leaving care since social work will be practised to suit their needs; and the DSD, since it is mandated to develop social welfare policies. Also, the researcher is of the opinion that social workers employed within various welfare sectors and who provide social work services to care-leavers would benefit from this research study, as it would identify gaps in the current form of preparatory programmes to youth leaving care with the intention to develop practice guidelines.

Therefore, this qualitative study will explore the challenges, experiences and resilience amongst youth leaving care to promote independent living and sustainable livelihoods. Understanding the challenges and experiences of service providers and care-leavers will assist child welfare organisations, social service professionals, and any other role players to offer appropriate support services, suitable to the requirements of the youth leaving care, and minimise any adverse events, which might be anticipated. Furthermore, to develop guidelines directed at social workers rendering foster care services. Lastly, to contribute to policy development and suggestions for the practice of social work. It is also crucial for social workers and all other social service practitioners to develop an understanding into their role to promote sustainable livelihoods.

1.4 Goal and objectives

The term goal is described by Fouché and De Vos (2011:p94) as "the broader, more abstract conception of something which you plan to do or achieve". A goal can be described as the object or aim towards which an endeavour is directed (Locke & Latham, 2013). It pinpoints the central thrust of the study, and it develops out of a research question (Klopper, 2008;

Fouché & Delport, 2011). In this study, the researcher views the term "research goal" as the road map that will guide the researcher to accomplish the aim of the study.

The main goal for this research study is set as follows:

- To explore the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa.

Specific objectives of the study

The objectives are the methods for attaining the goals of the study. Qualitative researchers need to identify research objectives to connect the intention of the study to the plan for data collection and analysis (Grove, Burns & Gray, 2013). Objectives are described as what the researcher intends to do or achieve or as the means by which the researcher aims to achieve the goals of the study (Fouché & De Vos, 2011; Carey, 2013). The objectives are more detailed and can be summarised in three or more separate sentences (Carey, 2013). They can also emanate from the research goals (Klopper, 2008).

The following objectives were set for this study:

- To examine the experiences of leaving care or transitioning out of the foster care system.

- To identify the challenges and opportunities of leaving the foster care system.

- To explore the experiences of the youth who have already transitioned out of the foster care system.

- To examine social support mechanisms available to youth leaving care.

- To identify barriers to successfully transitioning out of the foster care system.

- To examine the resilience of youth transitioning out of the foster care system.

- To address the challenges of youth leaving the foster care system.

1.5 Research questions

The researcher before he conducts or designs a research study, there should be a clear picture of study direction, and this can be refined in the form of a research question (White,

2009; Fouché & De Vos, 2011; Maxwell, 2013). Also before drafting a research proposal, the researcher needs to have identified a question for investigation which can then become the basis for developing a workable research plan, and that the questions that the researcher asks will be central to the research study (White, 2009; Hardwick & Worseley, 2011). Qualitative research aims to condense the purpose of several questions that will be addressed in the research study and include open-ended questions, emerging, and undirected (Creswell, 2013).

A research question is defined as a question that you look for in order to reply through the collection and analysis of first hand, collection of valuable information, verifiable and empirical data so that the most important problem in the field of investigation is clearly understood (Vogt, 2007; Engel & Schutt, 2010). It is viewed that a research question can emerge from various sources, and this can include the researcher's work in the field of practicum experiences (Hardwick & Worseley, 2011). It is much broader and general than the purpose as it frames the study in a more significant way (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013). It restates research intent in a more specific sense, and it usually begins with a term such as what or how instead of why, to explore the primary phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In this research study, the research question is mapped out as follows:

- What does it mean (to youth leaving care) to be a youth in foster care?

The solutions to this question will make the social workers to be acquainted with the services provided to youth leaving care to prepare them as they enter into young adulthood and become independent young adults.

The following are the sub-questions identified that will require investigation with the youth leaving care:

- What are the current services offered to them in order to be prepared while leaving care and becoming independent young adults?
- What are the factors that enable youth leaving care to rise above adversity while transitioning to young adulthood?

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- What are the preparatory programmes that they would like in order to ensure that they are adequately prepared to leave care?

- How would they want to be supported through the foster care system?

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

- What are the current services offered to youth leaving care in order to be prepared while leaving care and becoming independent young adults?

- What are the factors that enable youth leaving care to rise above adversity while transitioning to young adulthood?

- What are the preparatory programmes that they would recommend to ensure that youth leaving care are adequately prepared to leave care?

- How would social workers like to support youth leaving care through the foster care system?

1.6 Assumptions

The assumptions, which the researcher has for this research study, are that:

- There is no adequate support for young person, leaving the foster care system. According to Haggman-Laitila, Solakekkilla and Karki (2018), despite having the potential to lead better lives, the survival skills that young people have gained during after-care programmes seem to be minimal. Instead, care-leavers often felt a lack of social support from the social workers, family members, care-givers, institutional bodies and foster care parents (Haggman-Laitila et al., 2018; Rutman & Hubberstey, 2018).

- There are no standardised guidelines to prepare youth leaving care to promote autonomous living in South Africa. When children are placed in foster care, family involvement often stops, and there is a lack of rendering of family reunification services (Van Breda, 2018). In South Africa, policy development for care-leavers seems to be a

neglected topic. According to Van Breda (2018), this might be caused by the fact that care-leaving research is still in its infancy. In a comparative policy review conducted by Bond (2015), which included the USA, UK, Australia and South Africa, it was concluded that there is very little policy for care-leaving in South Africa`s Children`s Act 38 of 2005 and supporting documentation. Shaw, Steyn and Simeon (2020) also believe that there are no guidelines or programmes available to assist social workers in rendering after-care services to care-leavers.

- This research might provide an opportunity for youth leaving care to have a voice concerning how they should be prepared through transitioning to young adulthood. In a study conducted by Chambers, Crutchfield, Willis, Cuza, Otero, Harper and Carmichael (2018), the participants reported that they often felt left out of placement decision-making processes. They spoke about this in three ways: not being informed about the reasons for removal and placement, not knowing the anticipated expectations in the new arrangement and not allowed to provide their inputs about their placement.

- The youth leaving care can have a smooth transitioning to young adulthood if provided with excellent and proper support during the rendering of foster services. Transitioning into young adulthood is a crucial stage in life that occupies the minds of care-leavers who are about to leave the foster care system (Van Audenhove & Vander Laenen, 2017). Excellent and proper support is particularly vital for young care-leavers as they navigate their way into young adulthood (Ibrahim & Howe, 2011).

- The social workers can be guided appropriately to render aftercare services to youth leaving care. This can help to minimise the risks involved with leaving care and becoming young adults (Coler, 2018). Some of the risks involved with transitioning to young adulthood involve an unfinished secondary or tertiary education, substance abuse, unacceptable behaviours, early and unplanned pregnancies and stigmatisation (Van Audenhove & Vander Laenen, 2017; Albertson et al., 2018; Coler, 2018; Van Breda,

2018).

- The aftercare programmes rendered to youth leaving care can help to reduce poverty, unemployment and inequality facing the South African government. South Africa is reported to have the highest unemployment rate among youth globally (Bond & Van Breda, 2018). The unemployment rate has increased from 30, 8% in quarter 3 of 2020 to 32, 5% in quarter 4 of 2020; this is the highest unemployment rate recorded since the start of the QLFS in 2008 (StatsSA, 2020). This is caused by uncompleted secondary school education and being in low-skilled jobs (StatsSA, 2017).

1.7 Clarification of concepts

There are several concepts that the researcher considers central to this research topic. These concepts are explained below:

Alternative care. As maintained by the "Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2006:p78), children are placed in substitute care if they are recognised to need care and preservation in terms of Section 150". These children can be accommodated in foster care (Kinship foster care, or cluster foster care), and CYCC or temporary place of safety (Republic of South Africa, 2006). Such placement is meant to offer a family climate for the child as determined in the Constitution of the South African Republic. This placement can also provide parenting, protection, security and welfare of the child in question.

Foster parent. Boning and Ferreira (2013) describe a foster parent as a legally approved person by the magistrate of the children's court inquiry and who is not a birth parent or custodian of the child. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 refer to "a foster parent as an individual who accepts foster care of a child by court order of the children's court and comprises any effective member of an institution in operation of a cluster foster care scheme, and who has been allocated liability for child welfare" (Republic of South Africa, 2006). In addition, a foster parent can be considered as a carer because he/she can be any individual apart from a parent or

guardian, who minds for a youngster in question. A foster parent can, therefore, be described as an individual who has been ordered by the commissioner of the children's court to look after the child who is not her biological child. This placement can either be temporary or permanent depending on the children's court inquiry that was opened. Many foster children are raised with their grandparents in kinship care, maternal aunts, paternal aunts and any other relatives nearby (Hall, Woolard, Lake, & Smith, 2012) and nearly all of these foster care parents or caregivers often suffer in indigence, uneducated as well as without a paid job.

Social worker. A social worker points to a person who practices social work as "a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promote social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people" (International Federation of Social Workers, 2015). As stated by the Children's Act 38 of 2005, "a social worker refers to a person who is registered or deemed to be registered as a social worker in terms of the Social Service Professions Act, 1978 (Act 110 of 1978)" (Republic of South Africa, 2006:p20). Social workers role is to integrate services for children (involving those in foster care), to maintain supervision for the organisation's managers and courts as well accountability with other professionals (Fulcher & McGladdery, 2011). Fulcher and McGladdery (2011) warn social workers that they must ensure that they provide quality foster care that promotes positive outcomes for the foster child and promotes progressive learning and development opportunities for foster care parents. The most essential principles that social workers ought to adhere to at regularly are the social justice, values, dignity, rights of the people, integrity and for honouring diversity when working with service users.

Youth leaving care. Youth (young people) refers to everybody who is between the ages of 15 and 35 years (African Union Commission, 2006). Centred on the directive of the National Youth Commission Act (1996) and the policy structure for the National Youth Development (2002), National Youth Policy 2020 describes youth like the ones between the age of 14 and 35

years. According to these definitions, this means that young people or youth can be anyone within the age of 14 and 35 years.

In South Africa, children are required to be discharged from the provisions of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2006), at the end of their eighteenth year, thus at the end of the school calendar. The application can be made in terms of Section 176 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 for the child to remain under foster care up to age 21 (Republic of South Africa, 2006) if the young person continues with schooling or education, but this is uncommon. For the intention of this study, youth leaving care means those young individuals between the age of eighteen and 35 years who have been freed from the arrangements of Section 175 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

Cluster foster care. This type of care (Republic of South Africa, 2006:15), "means the reception of children in foster care in accordance with a cluster foster care scheme registered by the provincial head of social development". Section 185 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2006:94) requires that "not more than six children may be placed in foster care with a single person or two persons sharing a common household, except where the children are siblings or blood relation. In the case of siblings or children of blood relations, more than six children may be placed in foster care in terms of a registered cluster foster care". The foster parent of the child will get a foster child grant to be able to serve to the primary and financial needs of the child.

Residential care. In South Africa, a child can be placed at a residential facility if they are more than six children. A CYCC refers to "a facility for the provision of residential care for more than six children outside the child's family environment in accordance with the residential care suited for the children in the facility" (Republic of South Africa, 2006:p96). There are various programmes rendered to children, which includes amongst each other, substance abuse interventions, therapy (case and group work) and aftercare programmes which are also called transitioning services.

Social support. Social support refers to a multi-dimensional concept and is generally conceptualised from quantitative-structural perspectives of social networks, including numbers of persons and formal relationships with them or from a qualitative-functional point of view of social support, for example, the availability of relationships with the significant others (Jameel & Shah, 2017). This is the experience of being valued, respected, cared about and loved by others who are part of a person's life (Singh, 2018). Social support can be regarded as a form of social capital and is often described by the structural aspects of human relations (e.g. a number of connections, group associations, etc.) and clear functions (e.g. emotional, informational, instrumental assistance) they could serve (Drooggenbroeck, Spruyt & Keppers, 2018). According to the researcher's view, social support may refer to any emotional, informational, instrumental, appraisal and physical support provided by the significant others such as family, friends, teachers, social workers, welfare organisations, communities, etc.

Resilience. Resilience refers to factors that enable individuals to overcome adversity, even when others succumb (Van Breda, 2017). It is the ability of an individual to recuperate and adjust in the face of hardship (Wright, Masten & Narayan, 2013). According to Taormina (2015), resilience is the capacity to recover and to have the reflexivity to endure and to comeback from a most challenging situation. Based on the above definitions, this means that every individual possesses the ability to recover from any difficult situation. In this study of youth leaving the foster care system, these difficult situations can be the experiences of losing their biological parents because of death, abuse, HIV/Aids, neglect, abandonment and substance abuse.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis includes six (6) chapters. Chapter One is about the general introduction of the study, background and context, statement of the research problem, rationale

and significance of the study, goal and objectives, research questions, assumptions, clarification of key concepts and structure of the thesis.

The focus of Chapter Two is about the literature review. The chapter includes the history of foster care in South Africa, motivation of foster care, categories of non-relative family foster care (cluster foster care and residential foster care), policies and legislations guiding foster care services and the outcomes for youth leaving foster care system in South Africa. These outcomes, therefore centres on the challenges, barriers, experiences, and support mechanism for youth leaving care.

Chapter Three focuses on the theoretical frameworks adopted by the researcher. These theoretical frameworks include Ecological Systems Theory (EST), Social Support Theory (SST), Resilience Theory (RT) and Attachment Theory (AT).

The focus of Chapter Four is based on the research methodology. This chapter includes a presentation on the research design, population and sampling, data collection approach, data management and analysis, data verification/trustworthiness, ethical considerations, potential limitations of the study, reflexivity and time frame/budget.

Chapter Five focuses on the presentation of findings, while Chapter Six is concentrating on discussion of results and integration of the literature. Chapter Seven, which is the last Chapter, presents key findings of the study and the conclusions drawn from the findings. Finally, recommendations derived from the study are made.

Conclusion

Chapter one presented an introduction of this research study, followed by the background and context of the study. This has been succeeded by the discussion on the statement of the research problem, the rationale and significance of the study, goal and objectives, research questions, assumptions, clarification of key concepts and the structure of the thesis. The chapter that follows will provide literature relevant to the study. This will

include the history of foster care in South Africa, the motive of foster care, classifications of non-relative family foster care (cluster foster care and residential foster care), policies and legislations guiding foster care services. Finally, the discussion on the literature review will focus on the outcomes for youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa.

<center>**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**</center>

2.1 Introduction

This chapter considers some of the literature pertinent to the study. This research study's focal point is on youth leaving the foster care system, more specifically the residential and cluster foster care. It begins by providing a brief social welfare history of South African foster care. Followed by a concise discussion on the reason of foster care in South Africa and diverse kinds of foster care placements used within the South African context. It then looks at the policies and legislations guiding foster care services. Finally, the literature review related to the research questions is discussed. This includes a discussion about the outcomes of youth leaving care, including the experiences, challenges, barriers and support mechanisms available for the youth leaving care.

2.2 History of foster care in South Africa

In South African context, foster care arrangements are considered to be a preference in alternative care for youngsters who have been discovered to be needing safekeeping and supervision (DSD, 2013). It is reported that there are about 579 923 children in the foster care system who obtain services from social workers (DSD Strategic Plan, 2012/2015). The South African government initiated foster care as a response to psychological, physical, social and financial strains faced by orphans and vulnerable children and to enable DSD to answer to the social, economic and physical demands of all South African citizens, specifically from the formerly disadvantaged and poverty-stricken backgrounds (Hearle & Ruwanpura, 2009; Holscher, Kasiram & Sathiparsad, 2009). Throughout history, all the cultures and various communities had a way to address the problem of orphaned, abandoned and neglected children. Families were at the centre of providing foster care services, either informally (Kinship care) or formally. Thomas and Mabusela (1991) state that the apartheid government and the migrant

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labour resulted in poor South Africans leaving rural areas to seek jobs in the urban regions, e.g. Johannesburg, Pretoria, Rustenburg, Witbank, Kimberly, etc. Furthermore, men were kept inside hostels for more than 11 months without returning home. Men or migrant labours were also prohibited from taking their wives and children to the city; as a result, social problems of prostitution and alcohol abuse became rife to the extent that men could not return or send money back home (Thomas & Mabusela, 1991; Patel, 2015).

South Africans used to incorporate traditions within their families, and they created a culture of sharing parental roles whereby orphans were taken care of by the maternal aunt or grandmothers without expecting any foster child grant (Thomas & Mabusela, 1991). This relates to the concept of Ubuntu, which is about being human, open and available to others. In the early 1930s, the churches of South Africa such as the Dutch Reformed Church and Roman Catholic Church were the leading foundations taking control in the protection of orphaned, at-risk and destitute children, including their families (Van Rensburg, 2006). Throughout this period, the church shifted from its mandate, when new legislation has been put in place to ensure security for helpless persons and needy children in the country (Van Rensburg, 2006; Patel, 2015). The first government welfare department was formed in 1937, and this is where social work was professionalised (Patel, 2015). The career of social work facilitated the rendering of social protection services in South Africa and promised to target on managing poverty-related dependence and, on the other hand, on protecting and promoting the fundamental human rights of endangered and previously disadvantaged masses in society (Mazibuko & Gray, 2004).

The early two child welfare organisations were rooted in Cape Town in early 1900, followed by Johannesburg in 1909, respectively (Van Rensburg, 2006; Patel, 2015). According to Patel (2015), at this early stage, welfare policy was developed, and it focused on the principle of partnership combining the church, the state, and the private sector. The state offered to fund voluntary welfare organisations anticipated to facilitate the provision of services in a

coordinated fashion and elevate the professional standards of service delivery (Patel, 2015). In the course of 1930s, the focal point of the National Council for Child and Family Welfare focused on acting collaboratively alongside various formations towards putting in place qualities, develop plans, offer backup and respond to community calls for amenities provided to children in fragments of South Africa (Van Rensburg, 2006).

The delivery of social development programmes is the joint obligation of different stakeholders e.g., government, NPOs as well as the private sector (Green, 2008; Patel, Schmidt & Hochfeld, 2012). This type of delivering services is also practised in other international countries like the USA and some areas of the UK. Child Welfare South Africa was instituted in 1924 to coordinate social welfare services in specialised fields, in 1934 Die Ondersteuningsraad and the Christelike Maatskaplike Raad (CMR) in 1936. NPOs, "play a vital role presently in the facilitation and placements of children in the foster care system" (Van Rensburg, 2006:p19). Social workers within various NPOs provide social work assistance in different fields such as child welfare, family preservation, mental well-being, gender-based violence, special needs, chemical and drug misuse, crime avoidance, active ageing, reintegration and incurable sicknesses (Green, 2008). Rendering of social work duties in the process of foster care is the joint obligation of the DSD as well as NPOs. However, the DSD is the central department that monitors the NPOs and to address the three main challenges of development, which includes eradicating poverty, reducing unemployment and inequality.

2.2.1 Purpose of foster care in South Africa

To achieve the basic necessities of youth leaving the foster care system, it is crucial to comprehend the mission of foster care in South Africa. In South Africa, the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) clearly states that families should always be strengthened and provide a nurturing environment for its members. Therefore, foster care provides substitute care for families to children who have been identified as needing care and protection as set out in

Section 150(1) and (2) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. This will be following "Section 28(1)(b) of the South African Constitution, which states that all children have the right to family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from a family environment" (Republic of South Africa, 1996:p1255). Briefly, the purpose of foster care in South Africa is to promote the protection of children when they are separated from their families of blood or birth (Republic of South Africa, 1997; Republic of South Africa, 1996; Republic of South Africa, 2006).

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 clearly states that in any matter involving the child, his/her best interest is paramount (Republic of South Africa, 2006). According to Patel and Hochfeld (2012), social service professionals should not only render protection and therapeutic services but should also empower communities to grow and develop socially and economically. Furthermore, they should always take into consideration that these children have already suffered from losing their biological parents through death, abuse, neglect, abandonment, substance abuse, unemployment, HIV/Aids and family violence. Developing programmes for youths who are about to leave care in South Africa can help them to be self-sustainable and live independent lives. For the aim of this study, besides, with the view to make certain that children and youth are offered with a secure and nurturing climate, we must look at the following categories of formal foster care plans.

2.2.2 Different types of foster care placements in South Africa

In South Africa, we have various kinds of formal foster care placements, which include kinship foster care, residential foster care and cluster foster care. However, for this study, we will focus on the following non-related foster care placements, which includes residential foster care, and cluster foster care.

2.2.2.1 Residential foster care

Jamieson (2017) indicated that South Africa is a member to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). The constitutional rights contained in these Conventions had been set out in the Republic of South Africa Constitution (1996). The "Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996:p1255) highlights that it is every child`s fundamental right to have family and parental care". Also, to enjoy suitable substitute care when separated from his/her family habitat. This alludes that family care should always be promoted at all times, and the residential foster care should be the last resort.

Residential foster care involves placing a child in the CYCC that provides care and protection of the child (Republic of South Africa, 2006). This type of foster care placement deals with children who require care, accused, and convicted of crimes (Moses & Meintjies, 2010). However, for the goal of this research, we will base on residential foster care that is concerned with children who are established to require care and protection as set out in the Children's Act 38 of 2005. Residential foster care, therefore, refers to "any residence or home maintained for the reception, protection, care and bringing up of more than six children apart from their parents, but does not include any school of industries or reform school" (Moses & Meintjies, 2010; Republic of South Africa, 2006).

This type of residential care setting is also known as a CYCC. According to Rochat, Makomane and Mittchell (2016), residential care placement are common because of abuse, neglect, abandonment or orphaning. This sort of care is often used until the child is reunited together with his/her biological parents, is formally adopted or attains the degree of young maturity (Rochat et al., 2016). In South Africa, own family and kinship care are promoted each time possible and residential care needs to be regarded as a last recourse (Republic of South Africa, 2006). This implies that in South Africa, a child is put in residential foster care in the absence of any family member who is interested in providing kinship foster care.

2.2.2.2 Cluster foster care

In South Africa, the Ministry of DSD is obligated to providing a healthy and caring atmosphere for children for his/her upbringing (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Gallinetti and Sloth-Nielson (2010) argue that the relevance of the cluster foster care is found in Section 28(1)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa providing for the protection and promoting the right of the child to have family care, or to substitute care in the absence of a steady family environment. This is in accordance with the UNCRC, ACRWC and the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Gallinetti & Sloth-Nielson, 2010).

Cluster foster care is described as placement of a child in a cluster foster care scheme that is recorded by the Provincial Head of the DSD (Gallinetti & Sloth-Nielson, 2010; Republic of South Africa, 2006). This is a scheme providing for the acceptance of the child placed under foster care in agreement with a foster care programme managed by either a social, religious or non-profit organisation, or a group of people, delegated as caregivers of the children under the Provincial DSD or appointed Child Protection Organisation (Matthias & Zaal, 2009). In other words, cluster foster care can also refer to any scheme that is managed by the NPO and registered with the Provincial DSD. Cluster foster care schemes are recognised as a type of replacement care for children recognised to need care and protection in South Africa and community members within their communities established to protect and care for the children (Du Toit, Van Der Westhuizen & Alpaslan, 2016). The following discussion will focus on the policies and legislation guiding foster care services.

2.3 Policies guiding foster care services internationally, regionally and locally

This section will provide a discussion on the policies governing foster care services globally, regionally and in South Africa. These policies encompass the following:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the child (UNCRW) (1989)

- The African Youth Charter (AYC) (2006)

- World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) to the year 2000 and beyond

- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)

- The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997)

- The Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM) (2006)

- Framework for Social Welfare Services (2013)

- National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) (2012-2017)

- National Development Plan (NDP) (2012)

- White Paper on Families (2012)

- The National Youth Policy (NYP) (2015-2020).

2.3.1 United Nations Convention on Children's Rights 1989

The UNCRW was approved and available for registration, endorsed and admitted by the General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989 (United Nations, 1990). It came into operational on the 2nd of September 1990, in congruence with Article 49 (United Nations, 1990). According to the UN (1990:p3), all member states to the present Convention bore the following in mind:

- "That people of the United Nations have faith in fundamental human rights, dignity and worth of the human person; and be determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in immense freedom.

- Recognising that the United Nations has, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights, proclaimed and agreed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or another status.

- Recalling that, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that children are entitled to special care and assistance.

- Convinced that the family, as the critical group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and more especially children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibility within the community.

- Recognising that the child should grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

- Bearing in mind that, as indicated in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 'the child needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection before as well as after birth'.

- Taking due account of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of all people for the protection of the child, recognising the importance of international cooperation for improving the living conditions of children in every country, in particular in the developing countries".

All social workers involve with children must realise the role of the UN in child protection globally. The UNCRWC has 54 Articles in total. Article 1 to 42 centres on the rights and welfare of children, while Articles 43-54 focus on how adults and governments should collaborate to make certain that all children receive all their basic rights.

2.3.2 African Youth Charter (2006)

Youth (young people) refers to anyone aged between 15 and 35 years (African Union Commission, 2006). Built on the directive of the National Youth Commission Act (1996) and the National Youth Development Policy Framework (2002), National Youth Policy 2020 describes a young person as someone between the age of 14 and 35 years. According to these definitions, this means that young people or youth can be anyone within the age range of 14 and

35 years. The National Youth Policy (NYP) (2015) stressed that deprived youth must be emancipated through active institutions and policies to ensure that they defeat the conditions that disadvantaged them. This requires a multi-sectoral approach that involves all the participants in the public sector, private sector, civil society, and academic institutions working together with others to foster youth growth (National Youth Policy 2015).

In the first study on youth leaving care that was conducted by Chiroro, Seedat and Woolnough (2009) in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal, it is argued that foster care approach that is currently used in South Africa tend to be reactive rather than proactive. Therefore, there is a need for a consolidated and comprehensive approach to social welfare to attend to the plight of children who needs care and protection (Chiroro et al., 2009). The February 2017 Quarterly Labour Force Survey reported that youths between 15 and 34 years remain fragile with unemployment rate on the labour market standing at 37.1 percentage points above the national average, by 10.6 percentage points (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Youth has the fourth-most highest unemployment rate amongst the 175 countries globally (Van Breda, 2016). This stresses the need to make certain that youth are presented with the necessary support to promote sustainable livelihoods. Youth encounter various challenges, as they become young adults; hence, they need adequate help such as economic, social and emotional support to prepare for life in early adulthood.

The AYC was enacted in 2006 to provide states, youth, civil organisations and global players with a continental framework, which focuses on the rights, duties and freedoms of youths (African Youth Charter, 2006). It does not only promote the rights of the youth but also provides essential guidelines to the Member States to ensure that they empower youth in areas such as education and skills development, poverty alleviation, youth socio-economic inclusion, sustainable living conditions, youth jobs, health, peace and security and sustainable development. Article 15 (1) of the AYC (2006:p25-27) states that, "Every young person shall have a right to gainful employment" and (4)(f) stresses that, "State parties should ensure that

they promote youth entrepreneurship by including entrepreneurship training in school curricula, providing access to credit, business development skills training, mentorship opportunities and better information on market opportunities." It is not yet clear if this is done in South Africa, looking at the high rate of unemployed youth as indicated by Statistics South Africa in the February 2017 QLFS.

2.3.3 World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) to the year 2000 and beyond

The WPAY to the year 2000 and beyond was adopted in 1995 to encourage higher living standards for youth, employment and states of economic and social development (United Nations, 2010). According to the WPAY, there are ten priority areas recognised by the international community (United Nations, 2010) which include education, hunger and deprivation, safety, climate, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, recreation, teenage girls, and full youth involvement in society. South Africa, as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on WPAY to the year 2000 and beyond, is also expected to achieve the high priorities of promoting youth programmes aimed at empowering youth to be self-reliant and become independent young adults.

2.3.4 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1979)

The ACRWC acknowledges the supremacy of human rights and the ratification of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights; and accepts that all rights and freedoms recognised guaranteed therein, regardless of race, ethnicity, colour, sex, language, religion, political affiliation, national and social origin, birth or another status, are entitled to them. (African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1979). The Assembly of Heads of States has adopted the Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child and Government of the Organization of African Unity, in a session conducted in Monrovia, Liberia, on the 17 to 20 July 1979. According to the ACRWC (1979), most African children are affected

by various factors such as social, economic, cultural, customary and developmental circumstances, acts of nature, military conflicts, deception and famine. Therefore, it is critical that African children are raised in a family context characterised by an atmosphere of love, cheerfulness, warmth and understanding.

In order to confirm adherence to the propositions of children's rights and social justice found in the African Union (AU) Resolution, Conventions and other instruments and in the United Nations, in particular, the UNCRWC and the Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child of the OAU Heads of State and Government agreed on the 48 Articles. Chapter one of the ACRWC includes article 1 to 31. Chapter two covers Article 32 to 41, and focuses on the formation and organisation of the committee on the rights and welfare of the child. Chapter three focuses on the mandate and strategy of the committee. This chapter includes Article 42 to 45. The last chapter, Chapter four on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, is about different provisions; and it covers Article 46 to 48.

2.3.5 White Paper for Social Welfare (1997)

The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) followed the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and was introduced by the South African democratic government to provide social service practitioners with the view to improve the essence, realm, extent, and level of merged social welfare services within a developmental approach (Republic of South Africa, 1997). This was introduced as a national government policy mechanism for combating deprivation, inequity and inequality in accessing social services and meeting people's basic needs (Republic of South Africa, 1997; Holscher, Kasiram & Sathiparsad, 2009). Patel and Hochfeld (2012:p691) highlight that, "the White Paper for Social Welfare presents the national policy framework that focuses mainly on the two pillars of South African welfare, including social security and social health services, which comprises care services" (Republic of

South Africa, 1997). Therefore, all the services rendered to youth, leaving foster care services in South Africa should be guided by this policy document.

This "White Paper for Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa, 1997:p16) also outlines a social development approach to welfare services, which is an obstacle to statutory social workers who deliver foster care services by means of a remedial approach". Social development is defined by Midgley in Patel (2015) as "a process of planned change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development". The link between social and economic development talks to social development's commitment to empowerment, which is one of the principles of the approach (Patel, 2015). Foster care services should aim to better the well-being of youth leaving foster care services, including their economic development.

The "White Paper for Social Welfare which was adopted in 1997, to promote the developmental approach, it refers to social welfare, which includes foster care services, to an integrated and comprehensive system of social services, facilities, programmes and social security to promote social development, social justice and the social functioning of people" (Republic of South Africa, 1997:p04). This policy guided the transformation process brought by the adjustments in the social, economic and political situation in South Africa. The White Paper for Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa, 1997) was established to ensure that social welfare initiatives and offerings respond to the demands of the disadvantaged members of the community, the excluded and most susceptible class in society, such as children, the youth, women, people with disabilities, aged, and people afflicted and transmitted with HIV/AIDS (Department of Social Development, 2013).

As stated by, "the White Paper for Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa, 1997:p8-10), developmental social welfare policies and programmes should focus on the following guiding principles: securing fundamental welfare rights, equity, non-discrimination, democracy, improved quality of life, human rights, people-centred policies, investment in human capital,

sustainability, partnership, inter-sectoral collaboration, decentralisation of service delivery, quality services, transparency and accountability, accessibility, appropriateness and Ubuntu". These principles support the rendering of co-ordinated developmental social welfare programmes in South Africa and should be noticed and observed consistently (Department of Social Development 2013).

2.3.6 Integrated Service Delivery Model (2006)

As the leading department in rendering foster care services, the DSD formulated a framework in 2006 to guide social workers on the facilitation of interconnected developmental welfare services, which is known as Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM). According to Patel (2015), the ISDM aims are as follows:

- "To reduce poverty by ensuring that social protection is accompanied with developmental welfare services that intercede at different points in the process of the expansion of social problems.

- To ensure that once people have been helped by the social worker and the South African Social Security Official and then linked up with a community development intervention. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 helps to preserve children in ways that the early intervention and prevention programmes are advocated by the legislation, including community-based interventions, which includes outreach services, education, information sharing, promotion of well-being and skills development" (Patel, 2015:p206).

The ISDM was introduced, "to provide an integrated model national framework that sets out the nature, scope, extent and level of social services, and which forms the basis for the development of appropriate norms and standards for service delivery" (Integrated Service Delivery Model, 2006:p9). The model (2006) stresses that DSD programmes must be combined and allow service beneficiaries to deal successfully with all social ills, including poverty. The

developmental approach demands interrelated, intersectoral and integrated service delivery from different sectors including government, private industry and NPO (Integrated Service Delivery Model, 2006). Lastly, the model (2006) emphasises that in order to advance the aims of sustainable development to address the marginalisation of disadvantaged communities, the DSD has embraced the developmental approach to service delivery integrating social interventions with economic development. In this case, social interventions refer to the foster care programmes provided by statutory welfare workers. It is towards this context that the researcher wants to discover the experiences, challenges and resilience amongst youth leaving care to promote independent living.

2.3.7 Framework for Social Welfare Services (2013)

Foster care as the primary form of substitute care in South Africa provides vulnerable children with a chance to be raised in a family setting, which in most cases is the child's community of origin (Carter & van Breda, 2015). This form of child protection is seen as the primary mission of the child welfare system to prevent the disintegrated families and to protect the interests of the children (Schmid, 2010; Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013). The South African democratic government to offer social service practitioners, "with an opportunity to enhance the nature, scope, extent, and level of integrated social welfare services within a developmental approach (Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013:p5) also introduced the Framework for Social Welfare Services".

The Framework for Social Welfare Services was established in 2013 by the National DSD in partnership with the "institutions of higher education, non-profit organisations, Provincial Departments of Social Development, National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers, social workers, child and youth care workers and community development practitioners. It was introduced after the First National Indaba on Social Welfare Services that was held in 2010" (Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013:p4-5). The framework is

based on the challenges of implementing the ISDM, which was developed in 2006 (Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013).

The establishment of this framework (ISDM) provided an opportunity to improve the nature, scope, extent and level of combined social welfare services that social service practitioners are expected to render. The "Framework for Social Welfare Services (2013:p9) covers the developmental welfare approach that centres on the following:

- The promotion and strengthening of collaborative partnership.

- The practice context or environment.

- Developmental social welfare service integration.

- A description of the nature, level and scope of delivery of developmental social welfare services.

- An outline of the need to define and determine the delivery of quality services; the need for norms and standards and the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation".

2.3.8 National Plan of Action for Children (2012)

The National Plan of Action for Children in South Africa (NPAC) (2013) contributes for a universal structure for the incorporation of policies, legislations and strategies established by state departments and civil society to promote the welfare of children. In 2012, the NPAC in South Africa was introduced to direct the improvement on the execution of the UNCRC, with the following guiding principles; "all children should be entitled to fundamental rights without being discriminated, the interests of the children should be paramount during decision-making, and that children have the right to life, survival and development, and the views of children must be taken into consideration in matters affecting them" (Republic of South Africa, 2013:p13). The success of the NPAC lies in the dedication of all state departments at the national, provincial and local level to ascertain that they meet their commitments and work in

partnership in its execution (Republic of South Africa, 2013). Various countries of the world, as well as the African continent, have different models of addressing children issues and socio-economic programmes.

2.3.9 National Development Plan 2012

The NDP (Vision 2030) (2012) is the new national master plan for social and economic change in South Africa. The NDP aims, "to generate a comprehensive social security system that talks to all areas of weaknesses and which is conscious to the needs, dreams, conditions and livelihoods of those who are most at risk, and to provide the support that builds and utilise the abilities of individuals, households, communities and NPOs to promote self-reliance and sustainable development" (Republic of South Africa, 2012:p326). Some of the five tasks "of social protection emphases the significance of increasing consumption patterns of the poor, promoting local economic development and enabling destitute people to access financial and social possibilities" (Republic of South Africa, 2012:p355). The NDP social protection has given the DSD a role in focusing on the challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality facing the vulnerable groups, including youth leaving care. The mission of the DSD as indicated in the strategic plan (2015-2020) is "to transform our society by building conscious and capable citizens through the provision of comprehensive, integrated and sustainable social development services" (Republic of South Africa, 2015:p14).

2.3.10 White Paper on Families

The significance of families and the promotion, preservation and strengthening of family life is affirmed by Patel (2016). Families show new social trends in South Africa that include changes in family structures and a diversity of households. Challenges like poverty, HIV/AIDS and absent fathers are just a few social ills experienced by families. Women's rights are more prevalent these days, and the life status and functioning of women are focus areas throughout

the world. The White Paper on Families stresses the significance of families as a setting, which enables an individual to grow and develop socially. To improve the well-being of families, the South African administration developed a White Paper for Social Welfare in 1992 as the first universal social welfare policy under the post-apartheid government (White Paper on Families, 2012). This was followed by the draft National Policy Framework for Families in 2001 by the DSD. The last version of this White Paper was issued in 2005, and it was aimed at protecting and supporting families through compelling and effective service delivery, making of a conducive atmosphere that promote confidence of families and the advancement of cooperation with various role players (White Paper on Families, 2012).

In pursuit of finalising the draft on the White Paper on Families, the South African Cabinet endorsed the Green Paper on Families in 2011, which seeks to promote family life and ensuring that South African families are strengthened (White Paper on Families, 2012). The White Paper on Families (2012) emerged from this Green Paper. This White Paper on Families (2012:p8-10) seeks, "to promote the well-functioning of families, full of love, peace, safety, stability and economically self-sufficient. It is also based on the following principles; human rights, family differences, family resilience, community participation, promoting and strengthening marriages, promoting and strengthening responsible parenting and strategic partnerships". One of the significant challenges of defining the term "family" is that the nuclear family is commonly regarded as a healthy environment. This notion should be challenged because an international explanation for the family should be a family that has the ability to include families from various cultural and ancient backgrounds (Okon 2012; Patel 2015).

A family can be defined as a primary group whose members usually share the same residence, and each member assumes specific responsibilities in the family (Kirst-Ashman 2015). The Children's Act 38 of 2005 describes a family member as follows; "a parent of the child, any other person who has parental responsibilities and rights in respect of the child, a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or cousin of the child; or any other person with whom

the child has developed a significant relationship, based on the psychological or emotional attachment which resembles a family relationship" (Republic of South Africa, 2006:16). Based on the above definitions, a family refers to a class of people sharing the same residence or household.

The circle of relatives can be regarded as the significant component of human society and the backbone, aimed for the advancement of the child in a family structure (Okon 2012; Kunz 2013). There are no universally official accepted definitions for the term family, although family rights are widely recognised (Okon 2012). The term family is complicated and a challenge to define, because of the diversity of various family forms (Okon 2012; Patel 2015). Okon (2012) stated that the concept of family has changed over the centuries. In order to accommodate the shifting needs of societies, families have evolved over centuries. A range of diverse family types coexist in our communities; therefore, a definition that is inclusive and accurately accommodates the diversity of South African families is essential since these families are facing many challenges like poverty, unemployment, food insecurity and the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Patel 2015). Therefore, I can conclude that definitions of family vary from one household to another and from one culture to another.

2.3.11 National Youth Policy (2015-2020)

In 2015, the government of South Africa introduced the National Youth Policy (NYP) (2015-2020) which emanates from South Africa's first NYP and which covered the period from 2009 to 2014. The NYP is positioned to correct the wrongdoings of the past and to address the difficulties and requirements of the country's youth (2015). This strategy is enlightened by the South African Constitution (1996), The African Youth Charter (2005) and the recent National Development Plan, 2030 (NDP) (2012) which promotes social justice, social equality, human rights, empowerment, participation, democracy, non-sexist, non-racial and equal society.

However, it is not clear how these policies and legislation support youth leaving foster care process in South Africa.

The vision, goal and objectives of the NYP (2015:p5) are presented below:

"*Vision.* Integrated, holistic and sustainable youth development, conscious of the historical imbalances and current imbalances and current realities, to build a non-sexist, non-racist, democratic South Africa in which young people and their organisations not only enjoy and contribute to their full potential in the social, economic and political spheres of life but also recognise and develop their responsibilities to build a better life for all.

Goal. The goal of the NYP 2020 is to consolidate youth initiatives that enhance the capabilities of young people to transform the economy and society. This will be achieved by dealing with their needs; promoting positive outcomes, opportunities, choices and relationships; and providing the support necessary for developing all young people, particularly those outside the social, political and economic mainstream. This policy emphasises the need for various youth development efforts and interventions that holistically respond to all aspects or spheres of young people's lives.

Objectives. The objectives of the NYP 2020 are to:

- Consolidate and integrate youth development into the mainstream of government policies, programmes and the national budget.
- Strengthen the capacity of crucial youth development institutions and ensure integration and coordination in the delivery of youth services.
- Build the capacity of young people to enable them to take charge of their well-being by building their assets and realising their potential.
- Strengthen a culture of patriotic citizenship among young people and to help them become responsible adults who care for their families and communities.

- Foster a sense of national cohesion, while acknowledging the country's diversity, and teach a spirit of patriotism by encouraging visible and active participation in various youth initiatives, projects and nation-building activities".

2.4 Legislations guiding foster care services in South Africa

This section provides a discussion on the legislation governing foster care services in South Africa. These legislations are the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), Children's Act 38 of 2005, the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004 and the National Youth Development Agency Act 54 of 2008.

2.4.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)

Children should be raised in a protected and caring environment that ensures their livelihoods, growth, development and security. These rights are embedded in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (enacted in 1996), the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and the Framework for Social Welfare Services (2013). In general, the Constitution is positioned to preserve the basic person's rights of everyone in the sovereign state and declares the democratic principles of self-respect, fairness, social justice and liberty (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Constitution is rooted in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which was formed in 1948. Children need to be protected and nurtured through the provision of a safe, and a conducive environment with positive support, where their rights are protected, respected, and their welfare is ensured (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Republic of South Africa, 2006; Framework for Social Welfare Services 2013).

2.4.2 Children's Act 38 of 2005

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 also emphasises that children should be raised in a safe and nourishing environment that ensures their existence, growth, development and protection

(Republic of South Africa, 2006). This also in alignment with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The "Section 7(1) of the Children's Act No 38 of 2005 places the child's best interest at the forefront in all the matters regarding the child" (Republic of South Africa, 2006:p23).

Foster care can be described as the child protection service to protect and care for the well-being of children who require care and safeguard according to the Children's Act No 38 of 2005 Section 150-154. Factors/reasons that children may not be cared for by their families of origin range from abuse, neglect, abandonment and passing of their mothers and fathers. In this situation, children are then put in substitute/or foster care by means of a legal process that is executed by the statutory social worker and a presiding officer of the children's court inquiry. In terms of Section 4 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, "this Act must be implemented by organs of the state in the national, provincial and, where applicable, local spheres of government subject to any specific action of this Act and Regulations allocating roles and responsibilities, in an integrated, coordinated and uniform manner" (Republic of South Africa, 2006, p19).

Foster children who are viewed legally as adults at the age of 18 and, therefore, assumed capable of caring for themselves face a likelihood of losing most of their financial support [Children's Act No 38 of 2008 Section 175(1)]. The South African Social Service Agency (SASSA) cancels the foster child grant of the foster child when he/she completes Grade 12 and have reached the age of 18 or do not continue with their education. This happens irrespective of whether the child is in full-time employment or is unemployed. As a result, this makes foster care services to lack social and development goals, lacks sustainability as the ending of the foster child grant pushes care-leavers again into the pattern of dreadful privation and intimidates an enduring livelihood for the entire household.

In a budget vote of speech by the Minister of DSD in May (2016) it was indicated that the Department is currently in negotiations with the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to make sure that learners who have been the beneficiaries of the social grant are not

subjected to a means test to qualify for financial assistance to further their studies. This means that currently there is no link of services within the DSD, SASSA and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to ensure that youth who have been discharged from the provisions of the Children's Act No 38 of 2005 benefit from NSFAS to break the cycle of poverty through education. The Children's Act No 38 of 2005 makes provisions for childcare and protection against social harm, abandonment and neglect (Patel, 2015). Therefore the Children's Act No 38 of 2005 as the principal legislation that guides foster care services stresses the importance of the promotion and strengthening of collaborative partnership and integrated services within the DSD, nationally, provincially, as well local government to promote sustainable livelihoods. This also includes non-profit organisations, civilian communities, and the private enterprise.

The Children's Act No 38 of 2005 also give effect to the rights of children as contained in the UNCRWC, article 27, which states that each child has the privilege to a way of life sufficient for his or her growth, article 26 which guarantees every child to benefit from social security and the ACRWC, article 18, which regard families as a natural unit and basis for society, as well as article 25, which states that children who are detached from their biological parents ought to get uncommon assurance and ought to be furnished with elective family care, in this case, foster care.

2.4.3 Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004

Since Section 27 of the South African Constitution declares that every citizen has the option to approach social assistance, taking into consideration if an individual is unfit to provide for himself/herself and their significant others (Republic of South Africa, 1996). It further affirms that the state should give proper held and to take logical legislative and other means, inside its accessible assets, to attain the acknowledgement of each of the basic rights of its citizens. Hence, in 2004 the Parliament and President of the country signed the Social

Assistance Act 13 of 2004 intending to help in securing the welfare of the people of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 2004).

The Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004 make arrangements of the social grants by the Minister of Social Development, in consensus with the Minister of Finance, out of the finances appropriated by Parliament for that purpose (Republic of South Africa, 2004). The different kinds of social grants provided by the South African government are as follows; child support grant, care dependency grant, foster child grant, disability grant, older person's grant, war veteran's grant, and a grant-in-aid. The Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004 was therefore amended to administer social assistance programmes and payment of social grants with the intention of poverty alleviation (Republic of South Africa, 2004; Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017). Social welfare services focus more on the foster care system with an intention to ensure that children regarded as in need of care and protection are raised in a healthy family. Though, the reality is that the DSD does not have a clear guideline on how to prepare and render aftercare services to youth leaving care in South Africa. Termination of foster child grant engulfs care-leavers back into the pattern of terrible deprivation and places them in danger of being unable to maintain a sustainable livelihood (Dhludhlu, 2017).

2.4.4 National Youth Development Agency Act 54 of 2008

The most important legislation to support youth programmes in the country is the National Youth Development Agency Act 54 of 2008 (NYDA) which covered the periods 2009 to 2014. The NYDA Act is positioned to create and encourage harmonisation in youth development activities to design, evaluate, and monitor all programmes that are intended to ensure that the youth actively engage in the economy of the country (Republic of South Africa, 2008). This Act is regarded as a Section 75 Bill. This implies that it does not affect provinces; and as a result, this limits the ability of various organisations and departments to effectively

lobby and coordinate youth development programmes at a provincial level (Republic of South Africa, 2015). According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Section 75 is an ordinary Bill that does not affect provinces, "when the National Assembly passes a Bill other than a Bill to which the procedure set out in section 74 or 76 applies, the Bill must be referred to the National Council of Provinces and dealt with in accordance with the following methods; the Council must pass the Bill subject to amendments proposed by it, or reject the Bill" (Republic of South Africa, 2015:p4). As a result, this has played a significant role in limiting the implementation of policies. In 2009, the promulgation of the National Youth Development Agency Act of 2008 led to the establishment of the National Youth Development Agency through a merger of the National Youth Commission and the Umsobomvu Youth Fund.

According to The National Youth Development Act of 2008, the agency (Republic of South Africa, 2015:p4-5) seeks to:

- "Initiate, design, coordinate, evaluate and monitor all the programmes working towards integrating youths into the economy and society in general;

- promote a uniform approach by all organs of state, private sector and NGOs to youth development;

- establish annual national priority programmes for youth development;

- promote the interest of the youth, particularly young people with disabilities; and

- guide efforts and facilitate economic participation and empowerment; and the achievement of excellence in education and training".

2.5 Outcomes of youth leaving care in South Africa

There is a remarkable growth in literature, which investigated the causes of orphaned children, which has been caused by biological mothers giving up their children in maternity homes because of material troubles where fathers abandoned their children (Kozlova, 2013). Other children in foster care, as a result of domestic violence at home, death of a parent,

parental drug or alcohol abuse, parental abandonment, neglected, abused, inadequate housing, and being forgotten by drunken parents and found on the streets (Rudnicki, 2012; Wildeman & Emanuel, 2014). In India, children are reported to have been orphaned or abandoned due to various challenges, which includes destitution, handicap, and parental maltreatment or disregard (Forber-Pratt, Loo, Price & Acharya, 2013). These are some of the causes of orphaned hood or reasons to open and finalise children's court inquiries, which leads to most children to be placed in the foster care system.

International research indicates that leaving foster care system can put huge pressure on care-leavers who are mostly unsafe and as a result, they are likely to face adverse outcomes such as school failure, low college attendance, high school dropout, incarceration, economic problems, lack of housing, homelessness and early parenting (Collins, Paris & Ward, 2008; Samuels & Pryce, 2008; Collins & Curtis, 2011; Berlin, Vinnerljung & Hjern, 2011; Kirk & Day, 2011; Williams, 2011; Schmidt, Cunningham, Dalton, Powers, Geenen & Orozco, 2013; Geiger & Schelbe, 2014). Youth leaving care are reported to often experience a difficult transition to adulthood, including accessing and maintaining affordable housing (Curry & Abrams, 2015). According to Stott (2012), youth leaving care have lower rates of graduating from secondary school than their associates, and they are much less probable to graduate from college than their peers.

Previous research conducted in the U.S.A. and other Western countries indicates that youth leaving care face various challenges including lack of access to housing, education, lower rates of work and lower earnings contrasted with their friends from families earning a low income who are not placed in foster care, and acquiring basic living skills (Scannapieco et al., 2007; Havlicek, 2011). According to Rudnicki (2012), the other problems experienced by youth leaving care include high levels of unemployment (22-55%), incarceration (18-26%). While youth leaving care face a high risk of adverse outcomes in adulthood, they also experience chances for positive changes and building stability into young adulthood (Lee & Berrick, 2014).

Leaving care and transitioning between childhood and youth is also regarded as bringing physical, social, passionate and intellectual changes in a person as they establish a new home, search for employment and financial support (Scannapieco et al., 2007; Stepanova & Hackett, 2014). Other studies indicate that youth leaving care after overcoming childhood ill-treatment, being removed from primary caregivers, flimsy and numerous living arrangements, face the critical assignment of entering youthful adulthood with an undermined establishment on which to build (Lee & Berrick, 2014). Studies further emphasises the importance of family members as a key to an easy transitioning when the youth is taken out from their close family (Hong, Algood, Chiu & Lee, 2011). In terms of statistics, these youth are less likely than their friends to be employed, and when they do get employment, they tend to earn little and to rely on the state for assistance (Henig, 2009). These are portion of the difficulties that these children are faced with after transitioning from the foster care system.

Literature indicates that youth leaving care are reported to have a little chance of getting stable jobs and excellent training on the grounds that the educational system of the poorest people is weak due to inadequate resources, which include shortages of staff and stationery. When these children are out of educational system, the slow command for the unqualified employee means that scanty might secure permanent employment and those who successfully find jobs will not be in well-remunerated employment (Report to the South African Human Rights Commission, 2014). In South Africa, many foster care youth transit out of care as directed by the Children's Act no 38 of 2005. It`s estimated that 44% of all foster care beneficiaries are children aged 15 and over (McEwen & Woolards, 2012). These youth leaving care are viewed legally as adults at the age of 18 and, therefore, believed to be capable of looking after themselves (Tanur, 2012; Republic of South Africa, 2006). As a result, they face a likelihood of losing the majority of the monetary, social, and emotional help that was provided by their foster care parents and social workers when they were in foster care (Tanur, 2012; Republic of South Africa, 2006).

More than 11 million South African children live in income poverty and are in danger of being caught into a vicious cycle of poverty (Patel, 2015; Report to the South African Human Rights Commission, 2014). According to a Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) which was conducted by the StatsSA from January to March 2016 (Q1:2016) indicates that since 2010 the first quarter of each year consistently recorded increases in unemployment levels. The number of unemployed people (between the ages of 15-64 years) had increased by more than half a million in both the first quarter of 2015 and 2016 (526 000 and 521 000 respectively), and this is regarded as the most substantial increase in unemployment since 2010 (Statistics South Africa, 2016). Youth leaving the foster care system is not invulnerable from these difficulties of unemployment, and they are regarded as the most vulnerable members of the community.

The outcomes mentioned above of youth leaving foster care in South Africa seemed to be negative. However, these have not gone unnoticed. This is evident in the few studies conducted in South Africa on independent living programmes. Although most studies only focus on children and youth, before leaving the foster care system. Therefore, the researcher identified an opportunity to focus on those who have been out of the foster care system or care-leavers. Hoping that in future, new knowledge will be developed in order to prepare youth leaving the foster care system and to render aftercare services to those already outside of the foster care system to promote independent living. The next chapter will, therefore discuss theories that the researcher will adopt for this study.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, relevant macro and micro theories were discussed. The theoretical framework is fundamental as it provides a lens to the researcher to see and make sense of what he is planning to conduct the study about. The theory is a potent means of organising thinking of the researcher on how to complete the research study (Patel, 2015). It offers the researcher with a meaning, focus, direction and consistency on how to perform the research (Carey, 2013). The following theories will be used to explore the experiences and challenges of youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa. The researcher's study is premised on the Ecological Systems Theory (EST), Social Support Theory (SST), Resilience Theory (RT) and Attachment Theory (AT), because it is motivated by challenges and experiences of youth leaving foster care in South Africa. The researcher is hoping that these theoretical frameworks will provide him with multiple perspectives of working with the youth who are regarded as the most vulnerable populations or members of the South African society.

Below the researcher explains the Ecological Systems Theory, Social Support Theory, Resilience Theory and Attachment Theory concerning the study.

3.1 Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological systems theory (EST) refers to Urie Bronfenbrenner's model of development within a sequence of contexts (Munhall & Fitzsimons, 2001). Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined EST as the process of studying multiple interconnected environmental systems that influence individual development, in this study youth leaving care. Urie Bronfenbrenner is the theorist who proposed the EST and views development as a process of transactions between an ever-changing person and an ever-changing environment (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010). EST suggested that individuals exist within various settings, which includes family, school, work and community (Duerden & Witt, 2010). Based on the definitions above, it is imperative that the

researcher should not only explore or understand the experiences and challenges of youth leaving care but also focus on various environments that influence youth as they transition into young adulthood.

Working with any individual or group of people is regarded as a very complicated process that requires an understanding of that person holistically. Shaffer and Kipp (2010) state that the complexity of family life and its influence on the development of people is best described by the systems model, developed by Bronfenbrenner's EST and acknowledging the intertwined effects of all levels of the environment on everyone in the system. Bronfenbrenner (1986) stated that it is crucial to understand a person, not in isolation, but together with the environment in which a person lives in, namely, home, school, ethnic group, culture and community. Beyond time spent in the school premises, many youths, face challenges to make decisions about how to spend their free time (Duerden & Witt, 2010). This means that to understand care leavers in South Africa, it is significant that the researcher also understands the environments in which the youth lives in. Furthermore, this means that the researcher cannot separate the person from the background, or an environment from the person. Therefore adopting an EST will help the researcher to view youth leaving care not only on their experiences but also on the challenges that they face during transitioning to young adulthood.

Literature reveals that there are four systems of the ecological systems model, namely, micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro systems (Duerden & Witt, 2010). Neal and Neal (2013) presented a Settled Model of Ecological Systems that was initially proposed by Bronfenbrenner in 1979 as follows:
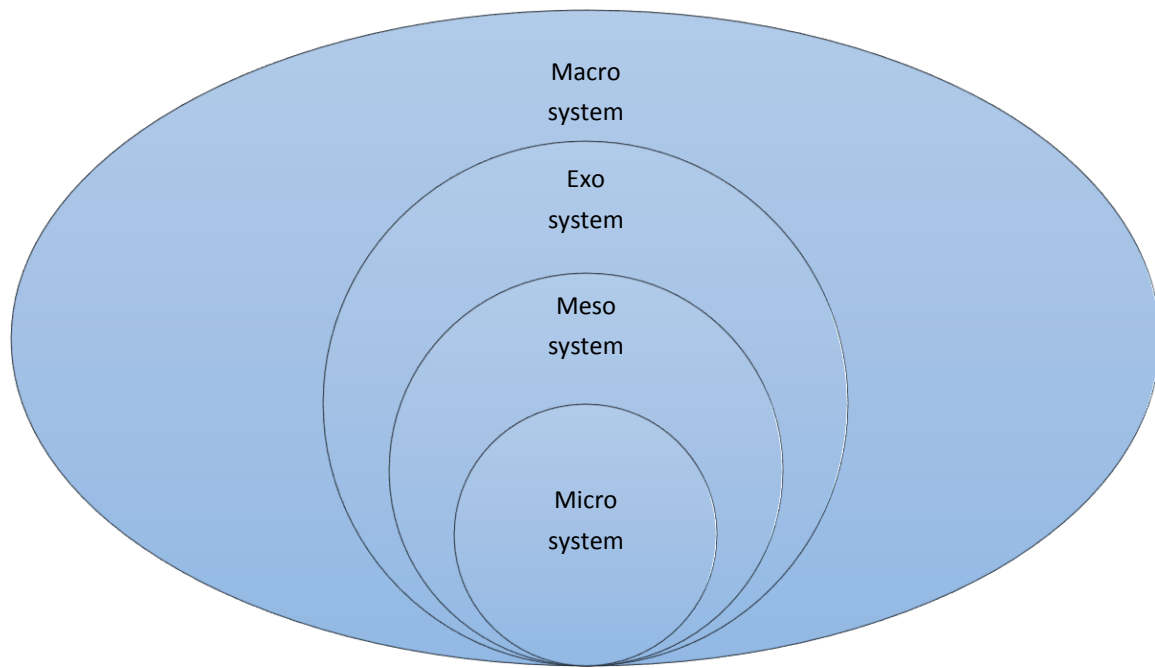
Figure 1: Settled Model of Ecological Systems Originally Proposed by

Bronfenbrenner (1979)

These multiple systems are discussed as follows:

3.1.1 Microsystem

Based on the researcher's proposed study, at the lower level of nested hierarchy, is the microsystem, which includes the foster family. The family is expected to provide youth leaving care with an opportunity to be a daughter or son, to eat meals and to have shelter. These can also be referred to as the basic needs of the child or youth leaving care. Duerden and Witt (2010) emphasised that to promote the goodness of fitness and positive development within programs, social service practitioners must think about all microsystems program elements, including an individual, inter-individual, and program characteristics.

3.1.2 Mesosystem

In the second level, it is a mesosystem. This could include the foster parent and social worker. It is crucial that these two systems interact in order to enable youth leaving care to be able to effectively grow and develop as young adults. Youth move through a variety of contexts that influences their lives. This can include home, school, work, youth programs and any setting that make up their mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Duerden & Witt, 2010).

3.1.3 Exosystem

In the third level, it is the exosystem. This a system which includes a setting that influences youth leaving care, but in which the youth does not directly participate. This can consist of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, and any other legislation that emphasis on protecting and caring for children and/or youths. Exosystem in the light of this study can include foster parent's direct involvement in the programs to develop youth (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Duerden & Witt, 2010). This can also include other role players such as the class teacher, pastor at church, mentor and the case manager or social worker responsible for the supervision of youth leaving care.

3.1.4 Macrosystem

Lastly, a macrosystem plays a significant role in ensuring that children or youth leaving care are protected and cared for by the State and the Non-profit Organisations. The macrosystem can consist of the broader cultural world surrounding youth, such as the public perception of youth and the current youth policy climate (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Duerden & Witt, 2010). Diversity sensitivity is also regarded as one of the examples of the system influencing macrosystem, in that a network that advances attention to decent variety is bound to deliver programmes that are in a superior situation to address the issues of youth.

3.2 Social Support Theory

Social support is a concept that is extensively used in psychology and sociology (Hajli, Shanmugam, Hajli, Khani & Wang, 2015). Social support theory (SST) can be defined as an exchange of resources or support between two people (Hajli et al., 2015). In this research study, these two people can be referred to as the service provider (social workers) and service users (youth leaving foster care). Furthermore, social support applies to information that leads a person to think he/she is cared for, respected, appreciated and valued (Cobb, 1976). Social support can be any assistance or help from, e.g. informal community, network individuals, companions as well as any other person providing support to an individual, and it encourages a feeling of trust from friends, family as well as social institutions (Zavala & Kurtz, 2016).

This support is aimed to ease the burden on the shoulders of service users (Hajli et al., 2015). It is used to measure how an individual experiences the feeling of taken care of and responded to by practitioners in their social groups (Hajli et al., 2015). Social support can be delivered at various organisational levels through both formal and informal means, and it ranges from family members, friends, and co-workers (Antonaccio, Tittle, Brauer, & Islam, 2015). In this proposed research study, social support can be any form of support provided by social workers, foster parents, social service professionals and social service organisations.

There are five facets of social support, as discussed by Cutrona and Russel (1990), namely; emotional, esteem, informational, instrumental, and network support. These dimensions are defined as follows:

3.2.1 Emotional support

Emotional support is when a person receives care and concern from other people and feels a sense of comfort and security during times of difficulties or stress (Cutrona & Russel, 1990; Guan & So, 2016; Clarke & Taket, 2021). Youth leaving care also need emotional support from social workers, foster parents, Welfare Organisations, Private Sector and any

person who is willing provide that support in order for the youth to feel a sense of comfort and security during times of leaving the foster care system and transitioning to young adulthood.

3.2.2 Esteem support

Esteem support can be described as support that an individual receives in the form of feedback, which indicates his/her competence and capabilities of accomplishing specific tasks (Cutrona & Russel, 1990; Guan & So, 2016; Clarke & Taket, 2021). The researcher`s perspective is that youth vacating the foster care system in South Africa lack esteem support, taking a glance fewer studies that have been previously conducted by care-leaving researchers.

3.2.3 Informational support

This refers to a situation whereby a person receives advice, guidance or suggestions in respect of a possible solution to that problem (Cutrona & Russel, 1990; Guan & So, 2016; Clarke & Taket, 2021). Youth leaving foster care in South Africa still need to be guided on how to tackle the most three triple challenges of destitution, joblessness and inequality facing all South Africans.

3.2.4 Instrumental support

Instrumental support refers to whereby a person receives any tangible assistance, financial aid or material resources (Cutrona & Russel, 1990; Guan & So, 2016; Clarke & Taket, 2021). Section 175 of the "Children's Act 38 of 2005 requires that youngsters having turned 18 or 21 years and not attending any formal education be discharged from the provisions of the Act" (Republic of South Africa, 2006:p90). This means that as soon as they leave the foster care system, they might face any prospect of losing financial support and any other material resources that were previously offered by the state. They might also end up into the cycle of poverty facing any other South African and the government.

3.2.5 Network support

This refers to when a person feels a sense of inclusion, and affiliation with other members of the group who share a common need, interest or goal (Cutrona & Russel, 1990; Guan & So, 2016; Clarke & Taket, 2021). Previous studies on care leaving in South Africa do not show the kind of network support provided to youth leaving care.

3.3 Resilience Theory

Developmental psychologists arranged in North America during the 1970s to 1980s first researched the term resilience theory (RT) and in the 1990s, and it was brought into related fields including social work (Winkler, 2014). Most of the social work writing on resilience centres on the notion of building individual's resilience as opposed to testing accepted practices and structural problems (Winkler, 2014:466). The concept resilience originates from the Latin "resilire" which implies, "to recoil" (Taormina, 2015). This theory will assist the researcher to always believe in the participant's (youth leaving care) ability to cope with any adverse situation affecting their lives.

According to Van Breda (2017), RT refers to the factors that enable individuals to rise above adversity, even when others succumb. It means the ability that an individual possesses to rebound, spring up, and have strength, elasticity or recoverability, to endure and to recover from a problematic situation (Greene, 2014; Taormina, 2015). From an ecological systems perspective, Masten (2016:298) refers to resilience as "the capacity for successful adaptation to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development". Furthermore, Masten (2016) highlighted that the most potential dangers to human endurance, growth, moreover, advancement include various frameworks, including neediness, unemployment, inequality, family conflicts, calamity, disease epidemics, climate change, domestic violence, and political conflicts. In this research, resilience refers to youth leaving care capacity to explore to assets, and the network's ability to give these assets in manners that are significant to the youth, and

their investment in the monetary action affecting their lives, families or systems (Liborio & Ungard, 2010). Therefore, resilience means that youth leaving care have the ability and capacity to bounce back or rise above adversity brought about the challenges that they experienced prior their placement to foster care, during foster care placement and after leaving care.

Youth leaving care have confronted a lot of affliction, which places them in danger in their endeavours to conform to independent living and this misfortune incorporates the injury of misuse, neglect and abandonment in the group of the beginning, death of parents, expulsion from the home, and the experience of numerous living plans while in foster care (Jones, 2014). Part of leaving care involves re-unifying youth to these families, some who have been considered ill-suited or unfit to think about them. Demonstrating resilience after leaving care appears as getting work, autonomous living, higher education, relationship-building and support networks, parenting, child-rearing and becoming productive members of the broader community (Jones, 2014). Resilience theory focuses on the apprehension of the contextual factors that lead to the development of youth leaving care into healthy adults despite the risks and adversity that they have gone through in their lives (Strolin-Goltzman, Woodhouse, Suter & Werrbach, 2016).

Taormina (2015) states that resilience is based on the individual's assurance and capacity to suffer, adjust, and recover from misfortune. These four dimensions are explained below:

- **Determination-** Determination is characterised as the self-discipline and immovability of direction that an individual has and the choice to drive forward or to succeed.

- **Endurance-** Endurance refers to the individual quality and grit that a person possesses to withstand upsetting or troublesome circumstances without surrendering.

- **Adaptability-** Adaptability is characterised as the potential to be adaptable and creative and to adapt to challenging environments and alter oneself to fit into evolving conditions.

- **Recuperability-** Recuperability is portrayed as the capacity to recuperate, truly and intellectually, from different kinds of mischief, mishaps, or troubles so as to come back to and re-establish one's typical condition.

Like any other human being, youth leaving foster care system in South have the determination, endurance, adaptability and recuperability to recover from any adverse situation prior their placement in foster care, during placement as well, and after they have been released against the prescripts of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 based on Section 175. Greene (2014) mentioned central unifying themes in the resilience literature and adopted in the resilience ecological stress model (RESM), which refers to the extent of the connection between people and the environment, namely;

- Resilience can be reviewed as a complicated interplay between specific characteristics of individuals and their more comprehensive environments.
- Resilience consists of a combination of stress and coping skills.
- Risk factors resulting from multiple stressful life events and protective factors, which boost or decrease the negative risk impact, contribute to resilience.
- Fluid resilience- depends on the sense of life.
- Development adaptive.
- Successfulness enhances a person's capacity.
- Resilience is most vital in times of life transitions.

The resilience theory is also related to the ecological systems theory (EST). The ecological systems theory was proposed initially by Bronfenbrenner between the 1970s and 1980s and has been broadly received by developmental psychologists and social service professionals interested in understanding individuals in their context (Neal & Neal, 2013).

3.4 Attachment Theory

John Bowlby created attachment theory (AT) in 1969, and it gave an approach to comprehend the idea of the relationship between the child and mother or caregiver (Colmer, Rutherford & Murphy, 2011). It was developed for multi-disciplines, including psychiatry, psychology, developmental biology and social work and emphasised the importance of ties between the caregiver and child (Bowlby, 1988; Polat, 2017). John Bowlby, in his book written in the late 1970s, he noted that his inclinations had been fixated on the commitment that individual's condition makes to his mental turn of events (Bowlby, 1979). In 1982, he credited social work specialist James Robertson and other psychiatric social worker partners, which he worked with from the get-go in his profession as contributors to his comprehension of the impacts of the connection between the child and the parental figure as essential in the development of that child (Whelan, 2003).

Attachment theory refers to a developmental approach which focuses on the child's necessary drive to build up a connection related to a critical guardian for insurance (Whelan, 2003). It can be portrayed to the baby's or small children's passionate association with a grown-up guardian (Zeanah, Berlin & Boris, 2011). They further state that attachments increase proximity when a child needs comfort, support, nurturance or protection from the caregiver, mother or father (Zeanah et al., 2011). Based on these definitions of AT, it is evident that youth leaving care develop attachments with their foster care parents or caregivers while they are placed in foster care. This calls for social workers to always include foster care parents and givers when rendering aftercare services to support youth through transitioning to young adulthood.

Attachment theory views closeness as an essential part of human instinct, which is present in germinal structure from the outset ahead (Snyder, Shapiro & Treleaven, 2012). According to AT, human babies are conceived without being connected to a specific guardian, and they develop attachments when they are 2-3 months old enough, 7-9 months old enough,

18-20 months old enough and less significantly, at a year old enough (Zeanah, Berlin & Boris, 2011). This means that every human being develops an attachment to any person who was present in the child's upbringing.

Attachment theory states that children need to build up a protected relationship with a parental figure in their initial carries on with for fruitful advancement throughout the remainder of their lives and that division that children experience can obstruct their ideal development (Bowlby, 1988). He further states that the development of the youngsters' protected connection with a guardian is basic for their effective event for the remainder of their lives. According to Ontai and Thompson (2008), "secure attachments facilitate children's formation of coherent and organised mental representations of the relationship that they can use effectively to predict attachment figures` behavior".

Attachment is the capacity of a person to frame and maintain lasting associations with others (Colmer et al., 2011). It asserts that children develop inner working models, in which they disguise their connections also, the receptiveness they get from their guardians, driving them to build mental self-portrait through the eyes of the guardian (Chesmore, Weiler, Trump, Landers & Taussig, 2017). Primary caregiving is a term that is usually used to portray the methods by which secure connections are created in youth settings (Colmer et al., 2011).

Attachment theory can also be linked to Ecological Systems Theory that views a person in interaction with his or her environment and social work as a profession has traditionally been considering both the individual and the individual's condition as potential points of intervention (Whelan, 2003). It is crucial that social workers understand several aspects of attachments relationships as guidelines toward developmentally and culturally sensitive practice (Haight, Kagle & Black, 2003). According to Haight et al. (2003), these widespread parts of attachment relationships include the development of a compelling connection among youngsters and their essential guardians. Children always have many caregivers. This include the one with the

biological parent(s) and one with a substitute caregiver(s) who are mostly non-relatives (Chesmore et al., 2017).

Attachment theory is essential in understanding the reactions of foster children, their responses to unique division, and the symptomatology they create after they are reunited with their original families after a long period in foster care (Gauther, Fortin & Jeliu, 2004). The micro and macro theories discussed above were explicitly picked out to guide the researcher to comprehend the experiences and challenges of youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research methodology is the most crucial aspect of any research as it provides a theoretical framework that the researcher used during the study. Even if the researcher is not aware of the conceptual framework to be used in the research study, there is always a fundamental orientation that influences how to approach a particular research project or study (Van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). Delport, Fouché and Schurink (2011) indicate that the first aspect that a researcher needs to describe is the paradigm that supports the thesis-the perspective of the researcher, or the frame of reference to look at life or understand reality.

Carey (2013:p28) defines a methodology as a "general principle of any research which includes its philosophy or theoretic input". It refers to the wholeness of how the researcher is planning to undertake the research study (Whittaker, 2012). Methods are apparatus that the researcher utilises to gather data or information related to the topic that is researched (Carey, 2013). The above definitions of research methodology emphasises the importance of the researcher to have a framework that will provide a guide to executing the research project.

A research methodology should be able to combine the researcher's ideas, rules, techniques, approaches, and methods used (Babbie & Mouton, 2009; Grinnell & Unrau, 2011; Carey, 2013). According to Carey (2013), a methodology can utilise research techniques that are viable to investigate a specific topic, such as interviews or focus group research, which aims to capture the attitudes of participants regarding their roles. Whittaker (2012) suggests that the methodology section should address the overall research paradigm, approach, methods, sampling, analysis, moral issues, and impediments of the investigation. The research paradigm, approach and design proposed for this research study will be given beneath.

4.1 Constructivist/interpretivist paradigm

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research requires an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This implies that qualitative researchers study things within their natural settings, trying to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people present to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2013). This view emanates from inductive reasoning and is also known as the bottom-up approach to knowledge (Farghaly, 2018). This means that knowledge is sought from people experiencing the problem or is concerned with understanding social phenomena from the view of those involved (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The researcher adopted the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm because it is focused on lived experiences, namely, the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa.

4.2 The research approach

For this study, the researcher embraced the qualitative approach, to deepen his comprehension of the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa from their point of view. Qualitative approach refers to a method for investigating and understanding the implications people or gatherings attribute to a social issue (Creswell, 2014). It can be described as a culture of research that focuses on the meaning and understanding rather than a search for truth or generalisation (Carey, 2013). In this approach, the data is presented primarily in the form of words, diagrams, or drawings (Dudley, 2011; Grinnell & Unrau 2011; Van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011; Whittaker, 2012). Qualitative research endeavours to investigate topics, for example, mentalities, conduct and encounters of individuals or groups that are investigated (Carey, 2013).

A qualitative study has been used as it is regarded as a powerful intervention tool that promotes and empowers participants to actively participate in the production of knowledge (Fortune, Reid & Miller, 2013). Creswell (2013) highlighted that qualitative research includes

an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. In other words, this implies that researchers study things in their common settings, and attempt to make sense of phenomena regarding the meanings participants bring to them. Qualitative researchers regularly gather information in the field at the location where the participants experience the problem under investigation and have a face-to-face interaction with them (Creswell, 2013).

In this qualitative research study, the researcher kept the spotlight on learning the implying that the participants hold about the issue, not the meaning that the researcher brought to the research (Creswell, 2013). The researcher, therefore, concentrated on understanding the impression that the participants have about the problems and experiences of young people leaving the South African foster care system in their quest for independent living (Fouché & Delport, 2011). Therefore, the occurrence that the investigator proposed to comprehend was the challenges and experiences of leaving care in order to promote developmental social welfare, sustainable livelihoods and independent living.

Creswell (2013) highlights the following as the main attributes of a qualitative research study:

- **Natural setting**

Qualitative researchers spend most of the time on the field collecting information at the location where the participants are experiencing the issue under examination. They assemble data by talking straightforwardly to and seeing people behave and act within their setting. According to Thyer (2010), the researcher is in and becomes a functioning aspect of the occasion that he is investigating.

- **Researcher as a key instrument**

They gather information by talking straightforwardly to participants and seeing them act and act within their setting. They often design open-ended questions as an instrument to collect data, and they do not use surveys or instruments designed by other researchers. Researchers

generally build up their own designs as come, utilising at least one of the accessible instruments as a guide or rule (Fouché & Schurink, 2011).

- **Multiple methods**

Qualitative researchers gather numerous types of data, e.g., gatherings, perceptions and archives, as opposed to relying on one source of information, and at that point audit and make sense of all the data collected, organising them into classifications or subjects that all information sources.

- **Complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic**

Qualitative researchers in the inductive process will work to and from between themes and information bases until a thorough arrangement of issues has been identified. In deductive thinking, the qualitative researcher builds themes that are regularly being checked against the information. The deductive-inductive thinking means that the qualitative researcher utilises complex thinking aptitudes all through the cycle of research.

- **Participant's meanings**

In the qualitative research process, researchers continue to concentrate on understanding the meaning that participants feel about the problem or issue, not the implying that researchers bring to the research or compose from the writing. Qualitative researchers start their projects seeking to find what individuals think and how and why they act in some social setting (Engel & Schutt, 2010).

- **Emergent design**

A new design implies that the underlying research plan cannot be strictly recommended and that all periods of the cycle may keep changing after the researcher set his/her foot in the field and starts to gather data. This means that the questions, types of information assortment, the individuals studied, and destinations visited may change during the way toward leading the investigation. Dudley (2011) emphasises that qualitative research is not as focused as the

quantitative research, and it has the adaptability that permits the researcher to accumulate information on themes not at first recognised.

- **Reflexivity**

Researchers (e.g. in a method section, in an introduction, or elsewhere in a study) convey their experience (e.g. work experience, cultural experience, history), how they inform their translation of the data in a study, and what they need to pick up from the study.

- **Holistic account**

Qualitative researchers are trying to build up an intricate image of the difficulty or matter under investigation. This includes detailing diverse perspectives, recognising the numerous components associated with the circumstance and, in general, drawing up a larger picture that emerges.

4.2.1 The rationale for qualitative research approach

In this study, the researcher adopted the qualitative approach as it was utilised to address inquiries concerning the study "complex nature of phenomena, to describe and understand the phenomena from the participant's point of view" (Fouché & Delport, 2011). Qualitative research looks to clarify the importance of social phenomena by exploring the manners by which people or groups comprehend their social universes (Whittaker, 2012). In qualitative research, the researcher's goal is to build up an inside and out comprehension of the reality of participants involved in the phenomenon of interest (Van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). It might likewise try to explore a social issue or set of moral issues identifying with the social work practice (Carey, 2013). The phenomena that the researcher intended to comprehend is the youth leaving care views on the preparatory and aftercare programmes that are required to ensure that they are adequately prepared for transitioning to becoming productive young adults, and to promote developmental social welfare, sustainable livelihoods and independent living.

Qualitative research produces rich content or thick engaging information in a person's own verbally expressed words and observable behaviour (Thyer, 2010). Furthermore, in this qualitative research, the researcher wished to explore a topic or phenomenon of which little is known and to understand their lived experiences from the participant's perspective and create meaning from it (Engel & Schutt, 2010; Thyer, 2010). The researcher, therefore, aimed to explore the participant's views on the challenges and experiences of leaving care to promote independent living.

The last rationale for choosing qualitative research is that it is flexible. Dudley (2011) stresses that qualitative research has a flexibility that permits the researcher to accumulate information on themes not at first distinguished. It also means that even though a data collection method has been developed and information incompletely gathered, researchers may find some new inquiries they need to pose (Dudley, 2011). Qualitative research reflects various perspectives of participants in their settings (Engel & Schutt, 2010). Qualitative research is not as focused as the quantitative research, and it has the adaptability that permits the researcher to collect data on the topics that were not at first distinguished.

4.3 Research design

A research design is an arrangement that portrays how the investigation is to be carried out (Dudley, 2011; Creswell, 2013). Babbie in "Fouché, Delport and De Vos (2011:p142) defined research design by stating that it involves a set of decisions regarding what topic is to be studied among what population with what research methods for what purpose". It is a plan that is used to carry out or accomplish the goals of the research study (Maxwell, 2013). Primarily based on the definitions supplied about the concept "research design" the researcher utilised the explorative, descriptive and contextual research design. Adopting these designs warranted the researcher to gain a good understanding of the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the

foster care system in South Africa. The participants were provided with a chance to explore and describe their challenges and experiences of leaving care within their context.

4.3.1 Explorative research design

Explorative research design is conducted to obtain an idea into a circumstance, phenomenon, network or person (Fouché & De Vos, 2011). This research design is most useful when the research topic area is new, at the point when we do not think a lot about the exploration theme and when we want to learn more about that topic (Dudley, 2011; Grinnell & Unrau, 2011; Van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). The study on youth leaving care is new in South Africa if we look at the number of studies conducted in this field in the past few years. This research design might be the primary stage in a succession of studies and includes a primary research goal (Fouché & De Vos, 2013). In this research, the goal is about to examine the challenges and experiences of youth leaving care to promote independent living and to initiate guidelines (from a social work perspective) directed at social workers rendering foster care programmes.

In explorative research, the researcher begins a research study looking for not to try-out hypotheses but to unearth what individuals think and how and why they behave in some social setting (Engel & Schutt, 2010). In this research, the researcher considered to discover what the youth leaving the foster care system and social workers think about the foster care system and preparatory programmes used by social workers to prepare youth leaving care. Furthermore, to fight and come to grips with the triple challenges of destitution, joblessness and inequity.

4.3.2 Descriptive research design

Descriptive research design can be described as a more intensive examination of a phenomenon and its deeper meaning (Polit & Hungler, 2004). During a descriptive research design, a thoroughly description of a specific individual's problem is emphasised (Welman,

Kruger & Mitchell, 2006). A descriptive research design, therefore, assisted the researcher to gather information by allowing the participants an opportunity to have enough time to describe their challenges and experiences of leaving care. The researcher examined the challenges and experiences of youth leaving care and becoming independent young adults during the interview sessions that were conducted. This has been achieved by allowing the participants to describe their challenges and experiences. The researcher was allowed to understand the phenomenon with a detailed account of the specific circumstance and activities as the phenomenon occurred in the context of the participant's descriptions.

4.3.3 Contextual research design

In qualitative research, the researcher must take into consideration the context in which the study takes place. Kayrooz and Trevitt (2005) define "contextual research design as a means to collect proof of the participant's perceptions about the context in which they occur" p.10. This study sought to understand the challenges and experiences of youth leaving care and the preparatory programmes that were offered to them as they transit to young adulthood and independent living. The interview with the participants took place in their places to understand their context.

The meaning and context are seen as the imperative components installed within qualitative research (Daly in Carey, 2013). According to Carey (2013), the meaning is achieved not only by seeing specific highlights of numerous examples of a phenomenon to determine their interrelatedness and establish how they come together to form a whole as something cannot be separated from its context. In its context, a phenomenon is studied in the view that it cannot be understood apart from it (Carey, 2013).

4.4 RESEARCH METHODS

Carey (2013) refers to research methods as tools in which data or information relating to the topic is collected. It can also be described as the practical ways that the researcher uses to collect his data (Whittaker, 2012). The research method refers to various thoughts, rules, procedures, and approaches that the research community use (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011). Therefore, this section aims to provide an outline of how the research methods were followed, focusing on the population, sampling, sampling techniques, data collection, preparing for data collection, method of data collection, methods of data analysis and data verification.

4.4.1 Population

The term population is defined as a broad group of people, entities, or occurrence, which a researcher wishes to study (Thyer, 2010). Dudley (2011) describes a population as all the people that the researcher is curious in to conduct the study. Carey (2009) added that the population is represented by the total number of people who are members of your area of interest. What seems to be common in the above definitions of the population is that the study always focuses on the people that the researcher is concerned about. Therefore, the population for this study will include participants with qualities that the researcher is keen on (Strydom & Venter, 2002), in particular, social workers and care-leavers, in the Gauteng Province (Tshwane District Municipality). During the research study, the researcher cannot be able to include the entire members of the population because of time and budget limitations, hence the researcher is planning to extract a sample from a larger population (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011).

4.4.2 Sampling

Sampling refers to the process of choosing the participants to be part of the research study (Whittaker, 2012). According to Carey (2013:p46), a sample "is a small group of research participants or subset drawn from a wider population and from which a degree of generalisation

can be made". A sample also refers to a subgroup of the population the researcher chooses or which he is interested in studying (Engel & Schutt, 2010; Dudley 2011). For example, the sample for this study will be all the social workers and care-leavers selected for study and who meet the criteria. In contrast, the population is all the social workers and care-leavers, in the Gauteng Province (Tshwane District Municipality). In a qualitative research study, the non-probability of sampling is utilised more or less without objection.

4.4.2.1 Sampling techniques

In this study, the researcher utilised the non-probability sampling technique for sampling. Non-probability sampling refers to sampling, in which the researcher does not know whether each individual in the populace has an equivalent possibility of being chosen (Carey, 2009; Dudley, 2011). Strydom and Delport (2011) state that in a non-probability sampling the chances of choosing a specific person are unknown since the researcher does not have the foggiest idea about the populace size or the individuals from the populace. In a non-probability sampling qualitative researchers search out people, gatherings, and surroundings "where the particular processes being studied are generally to happen (Strydom & Delport, 2011:p391), which is, in the case of the study, care-leavers, specifically those who were placed in residential foster care and cluster foster care".

Purposive sampling is described as "a type of non-probability sampling in which the units to be observed chosen based on the researcher's opinion as to which units will be the most valuable or representative of the study population that is also likely to yield useful information" (Babbie, 2011:p179; Whittaker, 2012). This implies that the researcher chooses people and sites for the study because they can advise the research problem and the central phenomenon of the study in a purposeful manner (Creswell, 2013). In purposive sampling, each sample element is selected on account of the interesting situation of the sample elements (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011).

According to Creswell (2013), sampling criteria work well when all the people considered speaking to individuals who have encountered the phenomenon. In this research study, social workers and youth leaving care are people who have experienced the phenomenon (Foster care services).

Care-leavers who meet the following criterion were added in the sample:

- Will to engage in the study.

- Between the ages of 19 years and 35 years.

- A minimum of two years being in the foster care system.

- Previously placed at a residential institution and cluster foster care.

- Diversity with regard to gender and race.

Social workers who meet the following criterion were added in the sample:

- Will to engage in the study.

- A minimum of two years being a social worker rendering foster care services.

- Previously being employed or currently employed in a CYCCs.

- Previously and or currently, supervising and cluster foster care scheme.

- Diversity with regard to gender and race.

The researcher attempted to reach to his participants to follow the above criteria. The researcher started by identifying the selected CYCCs and DSD service points under Tshwane District Municipality and identified the gatekeepers to negotiate entry to the centres. After the approval of the request for access by the gatekeepers, the researcher requested volunteers who meet the criteria set and who may be interested. Following the agreement with the interested participants, they were then prepared for the main study.

Greef (2011) states that some of the researchers argue that the number of samples to be selected should not be established ahead of the study. Therefore, the size of the sample for this study was not chosen at the onset of the study; however, the researcher has been guided by the criterion called "saturation" of information. According to Van de Sande and Schwartz (2011), if

after interviewing new participants, the meaning units fit easily into existing categories and no new categories emerge, it is time to stop. Saturation of data is described as a point in the study where a researcher starts to hear a similar data consistently, or the moment when new meetings appear to yield minimal extra information and they no longer learn or gain any further information (Engel & Schutt, 2010; Fortune, Reid & Miller, 2013). In terms of saturation, the researcher gain certainty that he is grasping little that is new from the interviews (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011). After the researcher has observed this trend and confirmed by the supervisor, the process of purposefully recruiting participants was terminated or stopped.

4.5 Data collection

The researcher needs to decide on how the data for social workers and youth leaving care will be collected (Dudley, 2011). It is vital for the researcher to have an idea of the kind of data to be collected, and the procedures to be used for gathering such information. Data collection includes getting authorisation, managing a suitable sampling strategy, developing a method for documenting data, storing data and anticipating any unethical challenges that might arise (Creswell, 2013).

4.5.1 Preparation for data collection

During the recruitment of the care-leavers and preparing them for data collection, the researcher used the following steps from Creswell (2013); gaining entry and building relationships, purposefully sampling, gathering data, recording collected data, addressing field problems, and keeping data safe.

- **Gaining access and making rapport**

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research involves a research site study and ensuring that the researcher gain permission to study the site to enable the accessible collection of data. In other words, the researcher should obtain approval or clearance from the university

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and research site (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the researcher sought authorisation and ethical consent from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Discipline of Social Work's Research and Ethics Committee and permission from the Head of Department (HOD) of the Gauteng DSD. Creswell (2013) emphasises that authorizations should be looked for from a human subjects review board in order for them to determine the harmful impact and risk to participants.

Qualitative research also requires that the participants put their signatures to the consent form to give consent for their participation. In addition, the researcher read the consent form to the participants. The elements comprised in the consent form are as follows; the rights of participant to voluntary pull back from the study whenever, the motivation behind the study and the strategies to be utilised in information assortment, the assurance of the secrecy of the participants, the realised dangers related with cooperation in the study, the normal advantages to accumulate to the participants in the study; and the signature of the participants as well as the researcher (Creswell, 2013). The researcher then moved to the process of purposive sampling.

- **Purposeful sampling strategy**

The purposeful sampling approach involves three considerations, the choice of which participants to select for the analysis, the type of sampling technique and the sample size to be investigated (Creswell, 2013). For the purpose of sampling, each example component is chosen for the purpose due to the unique position of the sample elements (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011). Creswell (2013) stressed that all the participants must have the experience and knowledge of the phenomenon being studied. The researcher used the criteria mentioned above to guarantee that all the members chose to meet the requirement. The researcher also needed to decide about the following; who should be included in the sample, the form the sample will take, and how many people or sites needs to be sampled. The researcher included participants who met the above-mentioned criterion, and the site involved the Tshwane District Municipality.

The researcher needed to settle on the size of the sample to be considered; however, in a study, the sample size was decided by the saturation of information. When the researcher heard

the same information, which was repeatedly provided and no longer learned or gained any new information, then sampling was terminated.

- **Forms of data**

Creswell (2013) reference is made to the following forms of data; observations, interviews, documents and audio-visual material. The researcher used in-depth interviews with as many participants as he can. Interviewing is seen as an endeavour to understand the participants from their frame of reference, to understand the essence they give to their experiences and to discover their world before scientific explanations (Greef, 2011). The researcher strived to understand the perspectives of social workers and care-leavers on the challenges and experiences of leaving the foster care system to promote independent living.

- **Recording information**

According to Creswell (2013), the interview protocol allows a person to take notes on the answers of the interviewee during the interview. However, Engel and Schutt (2010) warn researchers that constant note-taking during an interview can also be disruptive. The researcher can also use a voice or audio recorder to record the participant's responses (Engel & Schutt, 2010). According to Edwards and Holland (2013), recording of an interview means that the qualitative interviewer can focus on listening attentively to the interviewee, applying the skill of probing and making a follow-up, as well as keeping eye contact with their interviewee. In this study, the researcher used both the taking of notes and audio recorder to record information. The researcher guaranteed that the audio recorder never hindered the conversation and received consent from the respective participants to take notes and use the voice recorder.

- **Resolving field issues**

The researcher will always face issues on the field during data collection. Therefore, the researcher needs to anticipate the type of issues that may emerge during the process of collecting data e.g. entry and access, the type of information collected, convincing individuals to participate, building trust and the ethical issues (Creswell, 2013). The researcher was aware

that conducting interviews is taxing especially for an inexperienced researcher; however, the literature provided issues that can be anticipated and how to address them. The researcher used the following actual data collection method.

4.6 Data collection approach

In a qualitative approach, there are two types of interviews that are mostly used, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. In the present study, the researcher utilised semi-structured interviews, which are also known as in-depth interviews as a tool to collect data. Edwards and Holland (2013) and Dudley (2011) describes semi-structured interviews as interviews, which uses the flexible format, interview schedule is already drawn-up, but they can be asked in a different manner, additional questions can also be used to probe or make a follow-up on unclear responses. Carey (2009) adds that semi-structured interviews includes both pre-planned and unplanned questions, as this allows the interviewer an opportunity to create new items in response to the participant's responses. Semi-structured interviews always use open-ended questions, and they allow for the introduction of unanticipated answers from the participants (Dudley, 2011, Grinnell & Unrau, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews sought to probe the participant's deepest feelings and experiences and they uncovered emotions, attitudes, and beliefs that they were not aware of before the commencement of the interview (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011). Strydom (2011) is of the view that researchers are using semi-structured interviews to find an idea of the participant's understanding about, their views or the accounts of a specific topic. There is also flexibility in such a way that the researcher may change the request for questions if the participants present a theme sooner than foreseen (Whittaker, 2012). In this study, the researcher was keen on the views and perceptions of the participants on the challenges and experiences of youth leaving care and as they transition to young adulthood and become independent young adults. The researcher had a set of foreordained questions on the schedule of interviews; however, the

interview was guided rather than dictated by the schedule (Strydom, 2011). In this study, the researcher utilised open-ended questions and always ensured that he is non-judgemental by applying professional values of individualisation and respect.

During data collection, the researcher confirmed the following with the care-leavers and social workers as according to (Strydom, 2011); the general motivation of the research, the role of the interview in the study, the approximate time required, the confidentiality of the information. The researcher also explained how the data would be recorded and obtain permission for voice recording, made the participants conscious that they have the freedom to pull out from the interview at any point and finalised the signing of the voluntary assent forms (Strydom, 2011). The following are the communication skills that the researcher used during the interview:

- **Attending**

Attending is described as the way the facilitator orients himself physically and psychologically towards the participants so that they will feel comfortable to share their experiences (Grobler, Schenck & Mbedzi, 2013). The researcher applied the skill of attending to enable participants to feel free to express themselves at their own pace and to know that the researcher attended them.

- **Clarification**

Clarification has been utilised to get clarity on the unclear statements made by the participants (Greef, 2011). For example, the researcher was using accounts like; "Could you tell me more about …" or you seem to be saying ….."

- **Listening**

In order to understand the participant's experiential world, perceptions and realities, the researcher should listen to their experiences and how they are experiencing them. Listening is closely related to the skill of attending. It is defined as the process of watching, observing and listening to both verbal and non-verbal communication (Grobler et al., 2013). The skill of

listening involves being tuned, alert, and attentive to what the interviewee has to say, or even to what he has to say, or even to what he/she is not telling you (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The researcher used the following elements of listening; hearing, understanding, remembering, listening to and understanding non-verbal behaviour, body language and the face.

- **Probing**

The reason of the investigation is to develop the answer to a question, to increase the wealth of the attained information and to provide the participants with information on the level of response they want (Greef, 2011). Probing is when a qualitative interviewer tries to get an interviewee to open up, give more data, expound and develop the information they have provided (Edwards & Holland, 2013). It enabled the researcher to pinpoint appropriate responses that he wanted further information on without directing the participant's responses (Whittaker, 2012). Probing inspired the care-leavers and social workers to share more of their perceptions, experiences, perceptions, views and ideas.

4.7 Data management and analysis

According to (Whittaker, 2012:20), the researcher should ask himself the following questions before conducting a research study:

- How will the data collected be anonymised, and who will have access?
- How will the collected data be stored?
- How will the reasonable steps be taken to protect participants from their data being lost?

Researchers are always urged to protect the participant's written and electronic records and other information (Fortune et al., 2013). Carey (2009) warns researchers that due to ethical considerations, the safety and security of data collected during the study remain imperative and preplanning are necessary. Hardwick and Worsley (2011) add that it is vital for the researchers to respect the secrecy of the information and do not disclose to an unauthorised persons. They further advise that information should be kept in a protected and locked area or on a personal

computer (PC) that is password protected. The researcher should always stick to ethical considerations including privacy, confidentiality and anonymity at all times. The information should not be accessible to anyone to such an extent that the integrity or dignity of the researcher is compromised by breaching privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. In this study, the researcher ensured that all data (notes and audio tapes) is stored in a lockable cabinet in his private house and the typed data has been stored in a PC that is password protected. The researcher also assured that the information that went to the research promoter does not include names that can link him to the participants or identify participants.

The most crucial part of data analysis in qualitative research is that the data that is analysed is in the form of a text rather than numbers, which is the case for quantitative research (Engel & Schutt, 2010). The analysis of the qualitative research notes starts in the field at the hour of observation, interviewing, or both. At the same time, the researcher identifies problems and ideas that show up prone to help in understanding the circumstance (Engel & Schutt, 2010). This involves skills that we use in our social work practice, where we meet service users, seek to understand their unique situation, and start to see patterns in what they tell us (Whittaker, 2012).

Qualitative data analysis is described as the non-numeric assessment and translation of observations for the discovery of the fundamental implications and examples of connections (Babbie, 2011; Whittaker, 2012). According to Creswell (2013), data analysis in qualitative research involves preparing and organising information, reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and lastly representing the data in figures, tables or discussion. Creswell (2013) further highlighted that to analyse qualitative data, the investigator takes part during the time spent getting in systematic rounds, instead of utilising a rooted straight methodology. Theme analysis usually takes more time, covers more data, and is more intellectually demanding (Dudley, 2011).

In this research study, the researcher planned to bring order, sense to the data by looking at patterns of resemblance, contrasts between cases, and bring into being their variety (Neuman, 2003). The researcher also "listened attentively to the words and phrases in the participants` vocabulary, which captured the meaning of what they said and identified different themes" (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:p402). The textual data was described in ways that captured the setting or people who produced this text in their terms (Engel & Schutt, 2010). In other words, this means that qualitative data analysis tends to be more inductive- drawing from their data, researchers or analysts identify the most critical categories in the data, patterns and relationships through a process of discovery (Engel & Schutt, 2010; Grinnell & Unrau, 2011).

For this study, the researcher employed the following Tesch's eight steps of data analysis (in Creswell, 2009):

- The researcher began by transcribing the interviews, read them to make sense of the gathered information. During this process, the researcher wrote down ideas that sprang to mind.

- The researcher then chose one conversation for reading. While reading the interview, the researcher was asking himself, "What is it all about"? "What is the meaning of what was shared"? Through this process, ideas were generated and noted on the margins.

- A list of topics or themes were grouped according to their similarities. The major topics were written as themes, followed by sub-themes.

- This process has been followed by choosing a suitable abbreviation that has been attached to each theme identified. The abbreviated codes were then written in the margins, next to the segments that matched a particular code. During this process, new codes also emerged.

- In this stage, the researcher grouped themes that were similar to each other in order to reduce a list of categories.

- The researcher then made a final decision on the abbreviations for each theme and wrote alphabets on these themes.

- The researcher then continued with data analysis by combining the data material belonging to each theme in one place and conducted the preliminary analysis.

- Where necessary, the data has been recorded; hereafter, the researcher commenced the process of reporting the research findings.

The data analysis process used in this research study has been explained and illustrated above. The next stage of the research process, which is data verification, will be outlined below.

4.8 Data verification/trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which steps were taken to ensure that the researcher lessens the effects of being biased and subjective (Van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). This means that findings need to be genuine "enough to allow participants to act upon them with confidence" (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011:p497). The researcher considered Guba's model (1981) to ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative research study. This model outlines four aspects of trustworthiness applied to qualitative research, namely; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

The "trustworthiness of this qualitative study, has been guaranteed through an audit trail that has been kept throughout the data analysis process and importantly broke down all choices and activities taken during the whole process of research" (Schurink et al., 2011:p422). The researcher also stored audio recordings, field notes and diaries for appointments during the interviews. The "audit trail indicated the communication between the researcher and the participants in such a way that the research is understood not only in terms of what was detected but also in terms of how it was found" (Schurink et al., 2011:p422). The researcher made sure that the participants are educated about the situation to be taken compared to the study. This

includes the research design and data collection decisions and the steps to be taken to manage, analyse and report data.

Schurink et al. (2011) stressed that to evaluate the classiness of qualitative research; the researcher should maintain the criteria for credibility. This is because a qualitative study depends so much on the human judgment and discipline of the researcher; there, it is necessary to indicate why the researcher should be believed. Credibility refers to how believable the findings are, or the extent to which the researcher is careful to not let bias influence the results (Van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). Credibility also focuses on sincerity and accuracy (Whittaker, 2012). It solutions the question of whether or not the findings ought to be regarded as sincere (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011).

The goal of credibility is, "to show that the investigation is conducted in such a manner to ensure that the subject has been accurately identified and described" (Schurink et al., 2011:p419-420). The researcher gave a simple sketch of the qualification criteria for participants to participate in the study. The researcher guaranteed that, "peer debriefing and member checks were carried out to increase the credibility of this qualitative research study" (Schurink et al., 2011:p420). Peer debriefing provided an external check of the research through a peer debriefer. This is "an individual who kept the researcher honest, asked hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations and provided a researcher with the opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher's feelings" (Creswell, 2013:p251). The researcher with associates who held a just or unbiased view of the study carried out this peer debriefing. After reviewing the transcripts, the colleagues provided feedback to assure the credibility of the research.

The researcher also did member checking as this is considered as the most crucial technique for establishing credibility (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011). Member checking involves taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants for them to judge the accuracy and credibility of the account (Creswell, 2013). During member checks, the

investigator summed up data and afterwards scrutinised the participants to ascertain their authenticity.

Transferability can be defined as the degree to which can transfer the study results to other settings with various participants (Bitsch, 2015; Tobin & Begley; 2016). It is not different from generalisability for quantitative research. Bitsch (2015) highlights that one can ensure transferability by carrying out purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of members of a population who can answer research questions (Teddlie & Yu, 2013). It helps the researcher focus on the participants who possess the needed knowledge regarding the investigated topic (Schutt, 2016). For this study purpose, only those care-leavers placed in residential and cluster foster care were included in the research, and social workers rendered foster care services to these care-leavers. Therefore, the researcher chose purposive sampling to understand the care-leavers and social workers` but not generalise the findings.

Dependability can be defined as the extent to which the study findings are stable over time (Bitsch, 2015). In addition, this criterion can also refer to the ability to observe the same finding under the same circumstances (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The process of ensuring dependability involves having the participants evaluate the research results, the subsequent interpretations made, and the recommendations thereof to ensure that all these processes reflect the information received from the study participants (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2016). The common strategies implemented to establish dependability include an audit trail, stepwise replication, peer examination and a code-recode plan (Krefting, 2014).

Peer examination has been done to ensure dependability. Peer examination is the same as member checking and is utilised to enhance the study's credibility (Bitsch, 2015; Krefting, 2014). Member checks were also done for the research study to make the results more dependable. Concerning peer examination, the researcher discussed the research findings with colleagues currently doing their Doctoral studies or having a similar experience in conducting qualitative research. As acclaimed by Krefting (2014), having peers examining a research study

helps them enrich the overall analysis of the findings and enhances researcher honesty in reporting the findings. The peers can help identify and remove categories that are not part of the research question parameters which the researcher may have neglected.

Confirmability refers to the extent to which a research study's findings can be confirmed by fellow researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 2017; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It seeks to ensure that the researcher's biases are minimised and eliminated from contaminating the results analysed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). According to research, a qualitative study confirmability can be attained through a reflexive journal, triangulation or an audit trail (Bowen, 2017; Koch, 2016). For this study, triangulation will not be utilised as the study is not anticipated to employ various methods to collect data. Apart from an audit trail, confirmability will also be achieved through a reflexive journal.

A reflexive journal is one of the ways of achieving confirmability (Koch, 2016). According to the explanation given by Wallendorf and Belk (2015), a reflexive journal involves a series of documents safely kept by an investigator to reflect on the interpretations and data collection plan. Researcher reflexivity is discussed in the section below (4.11).

4.9 Ethical considerations

During the process of organising and creating a research study or project, researchers are required to think about ethical issues that would have arises during the study and to plan how to address those issues (Creswell, 2013; Fortune, Reid & Miller, 2013). Dudley (2011) warned that research studies could be conducted in a manner that they pose severe challenges to the research participants and these challenges often occur as a result that the researcher has not given enough forethought to possible negative consequences. Addressing ethical issues and following research governance is regarded as one of the critical parts of planning the research project (Whittaker, 2012). Therefore, the researcher needed to take into consideration the ethical issues that would have surfaced during the research study to protect the rights of participants.

The term ethics alludes to "a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, is subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the correct conduct towards participants and/or respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students" (Strydom, 2011:p114). It comes from the Greek word called, "ethos", which is defined as the moral custom and is generally used to identify a set of principles around what is right or wrong (Van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011). According to (Carey, 2013), research ethics refer to rules of morally ethical conduct which is believed to be grounded in moral beliefs of what is good or bad behaviour from the researcher. Certain principles guide researchers in conducting their research based on their university, institution or organisation that they are from.

The research ethics aims to ensure that any study conducted in the organisation meets professional standards, a researcher advocates for service user's protection and privacy and to promote research that is beneficial to the service user's well-being (Dudley, 2011). The researcher sought permission for research with the participants from the DSD and the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The ethical considerations that were relevant to the study are as follows:

4.9.1 Informed consent

It is critical to safeguard the participant's right to be free to take part or not to take part in a research study (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011). According to Dudley (2011:p44), "informed consent means that the participants are fully informed about the study before they are expected to consent to participate". It includes guaranteeing that the potential research participants are informed about the aspects of the investigation and any issues that may influence their choice to take part in the study (Hardwick & Worsley, 2011). In other words, the researcher is required to provide written information to the potential participants to empower them to make an informed decision whether to participate in the research study or not (Whittaker, 2012).

Informed consent should contain information such as; the nature, extent, duration of participation requested, disclosure of the risks involved, as well as the benefits of participating in the research (Fortune et al., 2013). Participants must give their written informed consent to participate in the research study, if they are capable and if not, then assent must be obtained from an appropriate proxy (Engel & Schutt, 2010). Dudley (2011) and Grinell and Unrau (2011) highlighted some of the information that should be incorporated in the informed consent form:

- The general purpose of the study.

- The qualifications and organisational affiliation of the researcher.

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

- An assurance of confidentiality.

- Identification of any possible adverse effects the study might have on the participants.

- Identification of any potential benefits resulting from participation.

- A reminder that participants can stop participating at any time without loss penalty or loss of benefits to which the participants is otherwise entitled.

- The name of someone who can be contacted if participants have any queries or uneasiness.

Taking part in the research study should always be a voluntary decision, and no participant should be compelled to be part of a research study. Carey (2013) emphasises that participation should be voluntary, and participants should be able to stop or withdraw from the research project at any point. Participants should also be informed of their right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty (Engel & Schutt, 2010). The researcher disclosed the goal and objectives of the study and individuals were allowed to give written consent to take part in the study out of their free will or not to participate.

4.9.2 Avoidance of harm

The participants must be protected from harm. Social work research should at no time injure participants in any research study, even if they volunteered to participate (Strydom, 2011). The researcher ensured that he did not reveal information that might have endangered the lives, friends, relationships, jobs, living conditions of participants, and so forth. The researcher also ensured that he is empathetic and sensitive in all the questions asked. The participants were educated that there would be no mischief or distress in the form of physical, passionate, social and/or lawful harm during participation in interview sessions.

Psychological harm cannot be predicted in most cases, and sometimes it remains subtle. However, in addressing such, the researcher ensured that he asked the participants how they felt after participating in the study. The participants were well-informed that they should not respond to any question when they felt that such a question is violating their right to confidentiality and that they can withdraw their participation in the research study whenever they think that they can no longer continue.

4.9.3 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

Dudley (2011) warns researchers that a study that invades the participant's privacy without providing enough information about the study beforehand is considered unethical. Privacy means to hold on to ones self that which is not aimed for others to see or scrutinize (Strydom, 2011). It involves ensuring that participants are provided an opportunity to control if, when, and under what conditions they reveal or grant access to personal information on their beliefs (Hardwick & Worsley, 2011).

Social work research is believed to have the possibility of causing unintentional harm to the participants (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011). According to Hardwick and Worsely (2011), some of the traditional ways of protecting a participant's privacy include confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality means consensus between person's that restricts other's personal information

(Rubin & Babbie, 2011; Strydom, 2011). It includes ensuring that data that are presented cannot identify any participants (Dudley, 2011).

On the other hand, anonymity means that none including the researcher should be able to recognise any participant afterwards (Strydom, 2011). According to Grinnell and Unrau (2011), when data is collected anonymously, there is no way that the researcher can associate any piece of data in a study to any given individual who participated in the study. The researcher assured that he keeps the ethics of privacy, non-disclosure and anonymity in all the steps of the investigation, by giving confidence to participants that their identity or names would not be revealed to someone else. Moreover, the research findings would not be connected to any participant individually. The participants consented to secrecy by signalling the informed consent form.

4.9.4 Beneficence

De Vos et al. (2011:p116) describe beneficence, "as an obligation to maximise possible benefits and minimise possible harm". A researcher must take into consideration all potential results of the research and offset the dangers with proportionate advantage. The researcher was honest in telling the participants about non-remuneration for participating in the study. To abstain from betraying the participants, reality has been told by the researcher that the study was directed for scholarly purposes since double-dealing includes retaining data or giving in wrong data to guarantee the investment of subjects when they would somehow or another have will not. Ethics in research help to maintain a strategic distance from potential issues. No information has been withheld, and no incorrect information has been offered regarding this study as a way to reassure the participation of the participants.

4.10 Limitations of the study

Several limitations were anticipated during this research study:

- The researcher is the former social worker or employee at the Gauteng DSD, and he resigned in 2015. Since he worked for the DSD, there was a possibility that some of the participants know him. This might influence the participant's decision to be part of the study.

- Lack of documented prior research studies on the topic, more especially in the Tshwane District Municipality. However, this has been addressed since the researcher used exploratory research design to enable him to identify new gaps in the literature and to identify the need for further research.

- A qualitative research study mostly utilises open-ended questions, and this meant that participants had more control over the content of the collected data. Therefore, the researcher might not have been able to verify the results objectively concerning the experiences of the chosen participants.

- Qualitative research study requires that the researcher be engaged in thoughtful planning to ensure that he gets accurate information or results, in view that this kind of research is centred on the opinion and intuition of participants rather than the results. However, it is also good to note that all the qualitative studies are unique and not easy to replicate.

- The qualitative research mostly relies on the individual researcher. Since the researcher designed the types of questions, he asked and possibly, he could have influenced the results due to his personal experiences and beliefs. However, the fact that the researcher was flexible and under the guidance of an experienced supervisor, he avoided this limitation of the research study.

4.11 Reflexivity of the study

During the investigation, the investigator should be responsible on the norms of knowing and telling individuals what he has studied (Creswell, 2013). As a researcher, it is imperative to begin thinking about yourself, which this way requires mindfulness as a functioning specialist all the while. The researcher has to be aware on his feelings; thinking, imagination, and what's going on in his psyche and body (King & Horricks, 2010). This implies the researcher ought to know about his/her internal identity before tuning in to the participants. In other words, the researcher needs to be reflexive. Reflexivity refers to an approach of writing qualitative research in which the researcher is aware of the unfairness, principles, and experiences that he carries to the research study (Creswell, 2013).

Carey (2009) describes reflexivity as an approach in research in which the researcher critically perceives and stands up to their own life story, qualities and convictions, including the likely close to home biases, and earlier close to home direct. It is crucial to note that both the researcher and the participant can carry with them ideas, thoughts, speculations, qualities, encounters and recognitions that can have an impact in research association in the qualitative interview (Edwards & Holland, 2013).

In this investigation, the researcher guaranteed that he adhered to reflexivity, which was about to "invite the researcher to look inwards and outwards, exploring the intersecting relationships between existing knowledge, experience, research roles and the world around him" (King & Horricks, 2010:p125). In the words of Wise in Carey (2009), reflexivity involves a process of searching internally, and considering how our background or noteworthy occasions may have affected upon our deduction, or on the exploration or appraisal measure. King and Horricks (2010) he also stressed that social research is a functioning and intuitive process involving individual people, with emotions, theoretical and political commitments. Reflexivity refers to the practice whereby researchers are aware of their own convictions, worthiness, aspirations, perceptions and point of view (Whittaker, 2012).

The researcher was reflective in using the values of individuality, positive regard and autonomy (King & Horricks, 2010). Etherington (2004) calls attention to that, to be reflexive, the researcher should know about his/her reactions and have the option to settle on decisions regarding how to utilise them. The researcher has been informed of his reactions and guaranteed that he clung to the estimations of individuality, regard and self-assurance to settle on decisions of how to utilise them.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The researcher utilizes tables and figures to present themes from the data collected from the participants (care-leavers and social workers), to make sense of that data and provide an understanding thereof. This is ensued by the presentations of the themes and sub-themes that emerged during data collection. The direct responses of the participants support the findings.

5.2 Socio-demographic profile of participants.

In this section, the researcher provides a profile of the 36 participants, namely, 18 care-leavers who were placed in the DSD and CYCCs, followed by the 18 social workers working at the DSD and CYCCs in the Gauteng Province (Tshwane District Municipality). As shown in Table 5.1, of the 18 participants who took part in this research study, eight were males; nine were females, and one of the participants did not want to disclose their gender. The findings signify that more than half of the participants were females.

The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 35 years. Of the 18 participants, nine were between the ages of 19 and 21 years; seven were between the ages of 22 and 25 years, and two were between the ages of 26 and 30 years. Not one of the participants was between the ages of 31 and 35 years. The findings point that the greater number of youth leave foster care system between the ages of 19 and 21 years. This means that most of them are discharged from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 after turning 18 years. This might be as the results that they do not further their studies after the age of 18 years. Section 176 (1) (2) (a) and (b) of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 clearly states that a foster child or youth leaving care can remain in alternative care beyond the age of 18 years if;

- "the current alternative care-giver is willing and able to care for that person; and

- the continued stay in that care is important to enable the youth to complete his or her education and training (Republic of South Africa, 2006:p90)".

Of the 18 participants, six were placed in foster care under the age of seven, another six were also placed in foster care between the age of eight and 12 years, and the last six were placed in foster care above the age of 13 years. The findings indicate that most of the youth leaving care were placed in foster care while between the ages of zero months and 18 years, respectively. This means that most of the youth leaving the foster care system was able to develop an attachment with both their biological parents and care-givers.

The findings point to that; almost all the participants have been placed in foster care for more than five years. This implies that they will be able to share their lived experiences of being in the foster care system since they have been placed in foster care for a longer period. Of the 18 participants; three have been placed in foster care between zero and five years; seven have been placed in foster care between six and ten years and eight have been put in foster care above the age of 11 years.

Table 5.1: Socio-demographic profile of the care-leavers

	DSD Placement	CYCC Placement
Male	4	4
Female	6	3
Other	0	1
Age range of care-leavers at a time of interview (years)		
18-21	4	5
22-25	4	3
26 and above	2	0
Age at which they were placed in foster care (years)		
0-7	2	4
8-12	4	2
13 and above	4	2
Duration of foster care placement (years)		
0-5	2	1
6-10	4	3
11 and above	4	4

The following socio-demographic information (Table 5.2, 5.3 & 5.4) includes participants` place of employment, years of experience practising as a social worker and years of experience practising as a social worker and delivering foster care services respectively. Of the 18 participants (social workers), 10 were employed within DSD and eight were employed within various CYCCs in the Gauteng Province (Tshwane District Municipality). The majority of the participants interviewed were employed within the DSD.

Table 5.2: Place of employment

DSD	CYCC
10	8

The findings expressed that the majority of the participants have been practising as social workers for less than five years. This implies they ought to have a superior comprehension of the preparatory programmes and aftercare programmes that are suitable for youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa as social work programmes in all the universities institutions should have taught them about statutory services with regard to minimum requirements. Of the 18 participants, nine had between zero to five years of experience practising as a social worker; eight had between six to 10 years, and one had 21+ years of experience practising as a social worker.

Table 5.3: Years of experience practicing as a social worker (Generalist social work practice)

	DSD	CYCC
0-5 years of experience practising as a social worker	3	6
6-10 years of experience practising as a social worker	7	1
More than ten years of experience practising as a social worker	0	1

Of the 18 participants, 10 were involved in rendering foster care services between zero to five years; seven between six and 10 years and one between 21 years and above was involved in rendering foster care services. The findings indicates that most of the social workers have

been involved in rendering foster care services for not more than five years. This means that most of the social workers interviewed started rendering foster care services during their first year of employment.

Table 5.4: Years of experience practicing as a social worker and rendering foster care services

	DSD	CYCC
0-5 years of experience rendering foster care services	4	6
6-10 years of experience rendering foster care services	6	1
More than 10 years of experience rendering foster care services	0	1

5. 3 Key themes

In this section, the main themes and sub-themes that emerged from data collection are presented. The findings are supported by the direct responses of the participants.

The table below displays a summary of the identified themes and sub-themes that emerged from data collection.

Table 5.5: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Experiences of leaving care or transitioning out of foster care system	- Abandoned or orphaned - Abused and deliberately neglected - Biological parents abusing substances - Deceased biological mother and father`s whereabouts unknown - Biological parents infected with HIV/Aids
Theme 2: Challenges and barriers of youth leaving foster care system	- Unemployment and lack of housing post foster care - Change of foster care homes - Lack of communication between foster parents and foster children - Lack of support from social workers and no re-unification services - Abuse by the foster parents or care-givers and lack of cooperation from parents or care-givers - Teenage pregnancy and school dropouts - Sexual abuse and prostitution - Abuse of foster child grant - No involvement of the foster child in the draft of IDP - Lack or resources - Delay of payments of stipends from DSD - Burnout and shortage of social workers in the CYCC - Lack of preparatory programmes for youth leaving care - Lack of communication between a case manager and social worker in the CYCC - Poor supervision services - Lack of guidelines for preparing youth leaving the foster care system, including gaps in the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 - Single and children born out of wedlock
Theme 3: Opportunities of leaving foster care system	- Provision of basic needs - Strengthening of relationships with members of society

	• Provision of family environment and shelter
	• Promotion of independency
	• Opportunities for recreational or extra-mural activities
	• Poverty alleviation
	• Provision for therapy or counselling services
	• Provision for care and protection
	• Provision for educational opportunities
Theme 4: Social support mechanisms available to youth leaving care	• Lack of social support services
	• Mentorship programmes
	• Case and group work sessions
	• Social support services
Theme 5: Resilience in transitioning out of the foster care system	• School and educational system
	• Religion or church affiliation
	• Peers, siblings and fiancé
	• Social workers, caregivers and CYCC manager foster resilience
	• Further Education and Training
	• Employment
	• Substance abuse and teenage pregnancy
	• Importance of acquiring a driver`s licence before leaving the foster care system
Theme 6: Recommendations for addressing the challenges of youth leaving the foster care system	• Mandatory for foster parents and CYCCs to save money for foster children
	• Continued contact with biological parents of foster children and panel between case manager and the social worker employed at the CYCC
	• Promoting confidentiality and considering the views of foster children or youth leaving care
	• Linking youth leaving care with available resources and integration of services between government and the private sector
	• Placing foster children with suitable foster parents
	• Rendering preparatory programmes for youth leaving care from the age of 15
	• Provision of therapy or counselling

	· Housing allocation of youth leaving care and establishment of the shelter for youth leaving the foster care system
	· Supporting youth leaving care to complete grade 12
	· Extending foster care placement beyond the age of 21
	· Supervision post foster care placement
	· Implementation of the IDP
	· Working together with private companies
	· Integration of services with Institutions of Higher Learning
	· Working in partnership with local government

The following sections include the challenges and experiences of care-leavers who have been discharged from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 and social workers` perspectives on the challenges and experiences of youth leaving foster care system in South Africa. The main themes and sub-themes that emerged from data collection are presented below.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Experiences of leaving care or transitioning out of foster care system

A number of interviews conducted with care-leavers gave a comprehension of the experiences that youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa were faced with prior the foster care placement, during foster care placement and after foster care placement. The participants provided different views on their experiences of leaving the foster care system in South Africa. Considering their different opinions which are presented in the sub-themes below, it is safe to assume that the social workers are directed by the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 and Section 150 which defines a child who is in need of care and protection. The participant`s views on their experiences prior to foster care placement, during foster care placement and after foster care placement are reflected in the following responses:

Abandoned or orphaned. The participants highlighted different views on their experiences of foster care placement and experiences of leaving the foster care system. Some of them shared that they were placed in foster care because of abandonment, and others shared that they are orphans. The following are quotations obtained during the interviews conducted with care-leavers and highlights their experiences of foster care placement.

One of the care-leavers shared that his biological mother just disappeared and left him with the foster parents:

> What I remember when I grew up was that my mother just disappeared, and when I asked my foster parents, they used to tell me to stop asking them about her. -------. With regard to my father, I do not have any information about him. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

A 26-year-old care-leaver shared that his biological mother left him and his younger sister under the care of the older sister. He then decided to go and stay at the friend`s place. The community members reported the matter to the social workers, and as a result, they were removed to a place of safety:

> Therefore, -------, we were removed to a place of safety in -------. When the social workers came to investigate our case, they found that we were not staying in the same house with my younger sister and I was staying at my friend`s place. ------. Therefore, that is when the social workers decided to remove us to the place of safety. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

Another 23 year old care-leaver reported that she does not know her mother`s whereabouts:

I ended up in foster care since my mother was not looking after me, and she used to abandon me. So currently, I do not know where my mother is. -------. She was staying with us during the week, but during weekends, she used to leave us without anyone to look after us. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 23 years old).*

According to the below 22-year-old care-leaver, she lost her biological mother and was left under the care of the maternal uncle who repeatedly abused them before they were removed to the CYCC:

Therefore, what happened is that at home, our house was burnt and my mother passed away. We then moved to my maternal grandmother's place, and we used to stay with my maternal uncle. My uncle used to fight or abuse us. Therefore, one day my sister was able to explain to my friend's mother that the maternal uncle is beating us, and that is when we were removed to a place of safety. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 22 years old).*

The following care-leaver shared that his mother passed on and the biological father is in jail:

I was staying with my maternal aunt in -------, and they moved me to -------, ------- CYCC because the conditions were not conducive with my maternal aunt. -------. My mother is deceased. Therefore, I would say that I did not know both my mother and father since my mother passed on 2006, and my biological father was in prison. My maternal aunt told me that

my father is in prison since 2007, and since then, I never

visited him. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 19 years old).*

The following 25-year-old care-leaver shared that she was involved in a car accident

with her both parents at the age 12 and she was the only survivor of that accident that took the

lives of her parents:

At the point when I was 12 years of age, both my folks passed

on in a vehicle accident next to ------ College. I was also in

that car, and I was the only survivor. ------. Fortunately, when

I reached the age of 18, I was able to claim my inheritance

from my father's Government Employee Provident Fund

(GEPF) so that I can be able to survive. My brother is now 35

years old. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 25 years old).*

The interviews held with the social workers under the DSD and CYCCs gave

meaningful intuition into the experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in the country.

The social workers' responses on the experiences of youth leaving the foster care system were

corroborative. Social workers views on the experiences of youth, leaving the foster care system

are echoed in the following response from one of the participants.

All I can say is that we place all the children regarded as in

need of care and protection according to section 150 of the

Children's Act 38 of 2005. *(Social worker, CYCC, four years*

of practice experience as a social worker).

According to these findings, youth leaving the foster care system were placed in foster

care either because their biological parents abandoned them or because their parents are both

deceased.

Abused and deliberately neglected. Many of the participants are victims of child abuse

or deliberate neglect by their biological parents. They have seen their parents fighting in front of

them; other parents decided not to look after their children. Moreover, some of the youths know these parents. The participants also know their whereabouts; hence, this is regarded as deliberate neglect. The views of the participants are supported by the following quotes from two 21-year-olds care-leavers who shared that both their biological fathers are still alive, but are deliberately neglecting them. One of the participants shared that he does not visit his father because he is not taking care of him:

> Yeah, my father is still alive, but my mother is deceased. I do not visit my father since he is useless. Currently, he is staying in ------- and not looking after me. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years old).*

Another 21-year-old participant shared that the last he interacted with his father was four years ago:

> I cannot remember why I was placed in foster care. What I remember is that my mother passed away when I was still a child. My father is still alive and is staying somewhere in Mpumalanga Province. I think he is at -------. He only visited here in the CYCC once in 2015, and I visited him once. Therefore, since then, he never visited me. -------. Nevertheless, I know where he is staying, and I can even go and visit him if I want to. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

The following 21-year-old shared that she is struggling to apply for the identity document because the Department of Home Affairs wants her biological mother to come and sign as an informant. As a result, she is also struggling to apply for her child`s birth certificate.

> My biological mother is staying in -------, and now I am struggling to get an Identity Document since they need my mother to sign for me. I do have the certificate of birth, but

the Department of Home Affairs wants my mother to come as a witness to sign for me or to use her fingerprints. My child does not have a birth certificate because I do not have an identity document. ------------. My sister gave her money to come and assist me in applying for the identity document, but my mother did not come to ------- instead, she just went straight to -------. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years old).*

Another care-leaver shared that her biological father abused her. The biological father is also reported to have been beating the care-leavers` biological mother:

At home, I am the firstborn from my mother, and there is a second born. Therefore, what happened is that my mother separated from my father because my father was abusive to my mother and to us. Consequently, we did not have a place to sleep, and we used to sleep in the bushes. My mother decided to leave our abusive father, and we had to live on the streets. We used to sleep using plastics. ------. Therefore, after those people took pictures for my family, they were able to communicate with the newspaper and shared our story. ------. They also used to visit us on Sunday for a church service. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 23 years old).*

Social workers employed in DSD and CYCCs also indicated that children end up in foster care because of abuse. Their views in this regard are presented as follows:

Then we have that category of those children who have been exposed to harmful circumstances, we talk about those abused sexually, physically and all of those exposures and then we do the assessments as well, and we decide that they

must be placed in foster care. *(Social worker, DSD, seven years of practice experience as a social worker)*

They are placed here because they have been abused and mostly sexually abused. *(Social worker, CYCC, two years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another two social workers claimed that children are placed in foster care because of deliberate neglect. The following statement supports the view of the social worker who has been in practice as a social worker for more than 40 years:

Most children are placed in this CYCC because of neglect and physical abuse from their parents. -------. I also have three students who came from the street. So most children here are from abused families or neglect. *(Social worker, CYCC, 41 years of practice experience as a social worker).*

A social worker employed by DSD shared that victims of child neglect are usually placed within the CYCC:

Usually, for negligence, we do not finalise foster care placement for the child in question, but we refer the child into a CYCC, and the CYCC will receive a stipend from the DSD. *(Social worker, DSD, seven years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The findings reveal that children or youth have been placed in foster care because of abuse or deliberate neglect from biological parents. In addition, those participants who were deliberately neglected by their biological parents know those parents as well as their whereabouts. The views of the participants show that the cases of child ill-treatment in South

Africa are high, more especially sexual abuse. In addition, some of the parents deliberately neglected their biological children.

Biological parents abusing substances. Some of the participants communicated that their parents were abusing alcohol. When they were drunk, they used to fight in front of them. The statements below support the views shared by the two participants. One of the participants shared that substance abuse resulted in him not knowing his origin:

> Yes, I know why I ended up in foster care. What happened is that my mother disappeared and left me unattended. I also heard that my mother was abusing substances. -------. With regard to my father, I do not know him nor seen him. -------. I do not know whether the surname that I am registered on is my biological mother's surname or my father surname. *(Care-leavers, DSD, 22 years old).*

Another participant shared that she witnessed her biological father physically abusing her mother when he was under the influence of alcohol:

> I never understood the grounds for my referral to the foster care system, but as I grew up, I then had to remember through the flashbacks that my father was an alcoholic. He used to beat my mother in front of my siblings and me. Because of the abuse in the house, my mother spoke to the social workers to place us in a CYCC. We were called into the social worker`s office together with my parents, and after the meeting, it was decided that we need to be placed at the CYCC. *(Care-leavers, CYCC, 21 years old).*

Many social workers were like wise worried about the challenge of substance abuse by the biological parents of the children and youths recognised to be needing care and protection.

One social worker who has been employed in the DSD for eight years was concerned that some of the parents in Tshwane District Municipality are abusing a substance called Nyaope (Heroine) and as a result, children are left unattended:

> The other reasons for foster care placement are that the
> parents are smoking Nyaope (Heroine) and leaving children
> alone and as the results, the grandparents are unable to take
> care of the baby, and they will come to social workers to say,
> please assist me in taking care of the child, and then we place
> those children in foster care. *(Social worker, DSD, eight years*
> *of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another social worker from DSD, who has been employed as a social worker for five years, also concurred with his colleague by sharing the following quote:

> Usually in ------, there is this Nyaope or substance abuse.
> Therefore, they just leave the children there, and at some
> point, they stay with the child, and you find that the parents
> are always high and therefore we had to place the children in
> foster care. *(Social worker, DSD, five years of practice*
> *experience as a social worker).*

That is also the case with the mother and father of the children or teens located in the CYCC. One social worker who has been employed in the CYCC for the past 41 years was also concerned about the high rate of substance abuse in Tshwane District Municipality:

> Other children are cases from families that abuse substances,
> and this year we have three of them. *(Social worker, CYCC,*
> *41 years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The findings convey that substance abuse which includes alcohol and drugs is a challenge in the communities where the study was conducted. As a result, children and youth

leaving the foster care system felt that they were not loved and cared for by their biological parents. This calls for the Welfare Sector to strengthen the awareness and prevention programmes on the abuse of substances. These awareness and prevention programmes can take place at any public place such as schools, clinics, churches and communities.

*Deceased biological mother and father`s whereabouts unknown*. The findings indicate that in the Gauteng Province, children and youth are placed in foster care if the mother is dead, and the father`s whereabouts are unknown. This leaves children or youth in a situation where they do not know their maternal or paternal extended families. The view of the participants in this regard is captured in the response of one of the participants:

> When I asked my foster parent, she told me that my mother
>
> died when I was still a baby. I do not know the where my
>
> biological father is. In addition to that, I do not even know my
>
> mother's family. So as I speak to you, I don't have information
>
> of any relatives from my maternal side. The only person that
>
> I regard as my family is my foster parent. I also do not know
>
> of any siblings from my maternal side or my paternal side.
>
> *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

Some of the social workers were also worried about the challenge of the biological father`s whereabouts unknown by the prospective foster parents in this Province. Some of the social worker`s concerns are presented as follows:

> In most cases, children end up in foster care because their
>
> mothers are deceased, and fathers are unknown. Those are the
>
> prominent cases that I have. If you ask them about the child`s
>
> father, you will be told that the father`s whereabouts are
>
> unknown. *(Social worker, DSD, eight years of practice*
>
> *experience as a social worker).*

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Another social worker employed within the CYCC also shared the same sentiment:

Most of the children are placed in the CYCC because their

mother is departed and the father is the one unidentified, and

we usually do not know the whereabouts of the father of the

child in question. *(Social worker, CYCC, five years of*

practice experience as a social worker).

The findings bring up that the vast majority of the prospective foster parents are lying about the locations of the biological fathers of the prospective foster children, to benefit from the foster care system. These father`s whereabouts are discovered if social workers conduct thorough investigations. Most social workers were concerned that this had become a norm in this Province. Therefore, it is vital to warn social workers that they need to conduct thorough investigations when dealing with cases of unknown fathers. The firm views of the participants further indicate that social workers might find it challenging to be able to render family reunification services for such cases.

Biological parents infected with HIV/Aids. In addition to the above experiences of children and youth in foster care, one of the participants was also concerned about the biological parents of the children and youth being infected with HIV/Aids. As a result, children or youth are left with no one to look after them. The view of one of the participants in this regard is presented as follows:

We have those children who are placed here because of their

parents being HIV positive, and you find that those parents

cannot be able to look after those children. *(Social worker,*

CYCC, four years of practice experience as a social worker).

The other participant was concerned about the challenge of non-disclosure of HIV/Aids infection from the biological parents of the children and youths. In her view, she indicated that the death certificate only shows that the biological parents of the children died of natural causes,

instead of being specific on the cause of death. The participants` view in this regard is presented below:

> If the biological parents of the child concerned died of HIV/Aids, it is not easy to know since the death certificate is only written that they died due to natural causes. *(Social worker, DSD, four years of practice experience as a social worker).*

HIV/Aids is still one of the significant difficulties experienced by South Africans. In addition, those infected by this pandemic find it challenging to disclose since they are afraid of the stigma attached to this disease.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Challenges and barriers of youth leaving foster care system

The findings indicate that there are many challenges and barriers faced by youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa. One of the participants lamented as follows:

> The first thing that I do not like about foster care is that you had to be placed with the people that you do not know. You have to get to know them, and it is difficult sometimes to get used to them. -------. In addition, sometimes, it is complicated to create a healthy relationship with the person that you know is not your biological mother. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

The other challenges and barriers of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa are contained in the sub-themes below:

Unemployment and lack of housing post foster care. Many of the participants shared that they are currently unemployed and do not have anyone looking after them. Moreover, one of the participants who was previously employed on a temporary basis lamented as follows:

> After I turned 21, I was discharged from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005, and I had to search for a job. Fortunately, I found a job at Ackermans in 2014, and my contract was terminated in 2015. I was working there on a part-time basis. In 2015 after my contract ended, they never said anything except to inform me that my contract is terminated. ------. After the termination of my contract in 2015, I then got a job at a local Early Childhood Development Centre (ECD). ------. I only worked in the ECD for few months. Currently, I do not have any means of income. I only depend on the foster parent. ------. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

Another care-leaver shared that she was previously involved in a learnership programme earning a stipend:

> So currently, I am unemployed. I was involved in a learnership programme for construction under ------- for 12 months, and they were able to pay us a stipend. Although now I am doing nothing. Therefore, what I do now is to volunteer at Tshwane Traffic Department in ------. --------. The learnership programme was about construction, but we were placed in the Traffic Department. In other words, we did not learn what we were supposed to know, but instead, we learned about Traffic Laws. What I can say is that we were misplaced. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 23 years old).*

Another 22-year-old care-leaver is volunteering at an Old-Age Home:

Since I have been out of foster care, I had to fend for myself

in order to make sure that I survive and to look after my

siblings, child and partner. Currently, I do not have anyone

looking after me. So now, I am volunteering at the Old-Age

Home, and they are paying me a stipend of R1500, 00 per

month. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

Other care-leavers are unemployed and depend on temporary jobs. One of the care-leavers complained that she had to rely on her older sister in order to make ends meet:

Currently, things are not going well for me, so I am just

staying here at home and doing nothing. What I do is to look

for temporary jobs within the community. Therefore, the

person who is supporting us is my older sister, who is also

from foster care. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

Another care-leaver shared that he is still relying on his foster father, although he has been kicked out from the amenities of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005:

I try every day to look for a job, but there is nothing that I get.

Therefore, I always depend on my foster father in order to

survive. Sometimes when I am lucky, I do find temporal jobs.

Last month, I got a temporal job at a nearby Tavern since

there was a big function organised by the owner. -------.

Sometimes if my foster father realises that, I do not have

money, he gives me pocket money as well as buying food in

the house. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

In addition to the challenges of unemployment, some of the participants indicated that they lack housing or shelter. In addition, those who manage to get houses, those houses are not

registered in their names. The strong views or concerns of the participants are expressed in the below quote from one of the participants:

> The place we are staying at I am the owner of it since I got it when I was discharged from the foster care system. Therefore, this place was given to me when I completed my Grade 12. In addition, the foster parent did not want to look after me; hence, she donated this place to me. However, the sad part of it is that this place is not registered on my name, and it is registered under the name of the foster parent`s child who is deceased. ------. I applied for an RDP house, but I am still on the waiting list. The Ward Counsellor told me that, this year they would make sure that they build us an RDP house.
>
> *(Care-leaver, DSD, 23 years old).*

The findings indicate that unemployment and lack of housing post foster care is one of the challenges of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa.

Change of foster care homes. The findings from the participants show that many of the youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa have been moving from one foster care home to the other. This is by all accounts the case for both children and youths placed in the DSD or CYCCs. Some of the participant`s complaints in this regard are captured in the following response from one of the participants:

> In the beginning, we were placed with one of the foster parents and later removed to another foster parent. The social worker indicated that there is a foster parent who needs more children. I was placed in foster care since December 2010, and my brother followed me in that year. My other siblings

were then placed in August the following year. *(Care-leaver,*

CYCC, 21 years old).

The following care-leaver was also complaining about moving from one foster care

home to another:

Then at the age of 17, I was removed to another foster parent

in Bronkhorstspruit. However, I could not stay with that foster

parent for too long. I was then removed before the end of the

year to ------- CYCC. At the CYCC in -------, they decided to

discharge me from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of

2005 at the age of 18. Therefore, I can say that I have been in

foster care for five years. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years old).*

The following care-leaver also supported the above two participants on the challenge of

moving from one foster care home to another:

Therefore, I was placed in foster care until the age of 18 years.

During those years, I used to come in and out of the foster

care system. Therefore, this means that I was placed in foster

care for three years. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 22 years old).*

According to the above findings from the participants, many of the youths leaving the

foster system were not placed in one foster care home or their foster care homes were not stable.

Lack of communication between foster parents and foster children. On the report of the

participants, there seems to be a communication barrier between foster parents and children.

Foster parents are reported to be struggling to communicate with foster children in a good way.

The following two statements capturers the concerns of the participants. The first participant

lamented as follows:

Sometimes it is not easy to stay with people you do not know,

people that are not your biological parents, because they will

only love you when it suits them. Therefore, we stayed there, and everything was nice until I went to high school. Therefore, the problem began when social workers brought three more children in that particular household and then we ended up being five foster children.-------. Therefore, I had to be a father to all the foster children that were placed in that household. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

The concern shared by the above participant is supported by the following 21-year-old care-leaver:

I will say that I liked to be in foster care. However, with the foster parent in ------, I really did not enjoy my stay there because she was not treating me well. I stayed in -------, then move to ------- and later moved to a CYCC in -------. I was removed because the foster parent that I stayed with at ------- was reported that she is abusing other children under her foster care placement. The previous foster parent from ------- was not communicating in a good way with me. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years old).*

The findings from the participants show that most foster parents lack communication skills with foster children. This might be caused by a lack of thorough preparation for prospective foster parents on how to look after foster children.

Lack of support from social workers and no reunification services. Some of the participants shared that social workers did not offer the necessary support to foster children or youth when rendering supervision services. In addition, youth leaving the foster care system could not be re-unified with their biological parents or families. One of the participants complained as follows:

Currently, it is hard for me to be able to look for my mother

because I am not sure whether she is alive or not. Therefore,

what I do is to keep asking myself a lot of questions and

without anyone to give me answers. Therefore, I do not even

know whether my mother is bothering to look for me, so I do

not know anything. I am not sure, whether she is bothering

whether I am alive, eating or if I am taken good care of. -----

-. These are all the questions that come to my mind. I even

tell myself that my mother did not love me. *(Care-leaver,*

CYCC, 22 years old).

The findings from the participants show that social workers are lacking in rendering supervision services as well as reunification services. Furthermore, a portion of the youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa end up without knowing their parent`s or relative`s whereabouts.

Abuse by the foster parents or caregivers and lack of cooperation from parents or caregivers. Some of the participants were concerned about the incidences of abuse they have been experiencing from the foster parents or caregivers. They shared that foster parents or caregivers sometimes talk vulgar language or use derogatory statements to them. One of the participants lamented as follows:

The foster parent used to talk vulgar language to the other

foster children and me. I had to rise up in the early hours of

the morning to prepare breakfast for everyone, including the

foster parent. However, I did not care about it because I was

not doing it for them, but I was just doing it for myself and

the other children. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

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Another participant supported the above participant by sharing how the foster parent abused her:

> In foster care, we were taught about the importance of going to school, but for us, it was not that important because we were abused emotionally in the foster care placement by the foster parent. For example, you find that we will be woken up early in the morning; you know to be able to do the house chores before we go to school. ------. Therefore, this thing was happening for too long until one of the social workers from ------- came to investigate, and they found out that the foster parent is abusing us. ------. Their intervention only benefited those foster children who were below the age of eighteen when they concluded their investigation. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 23 years old).*

Some of the findings indicate that parents or caregivers are not cooperating with the case managers. The caregivers always make time if they want to make an application for foster care placement, but once they are approved, they always complain that their employers do not allow them to take a day off in order to allow the social workers to render supervision services. As a result, social workers are faced with lapsed cases or foster care court orders. In addition, foster parents are always no longer interested in taking care of the youth, leaving care once they are discharged from the arrangements of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. On the other hand, the biological parents of the youth leaving care are also not willing to be re-unified with their children.

The following is a complaint from one of the social workers from DSD:

> On the court date, you have to call them repeatedly to remind them of the date. The court orders are extended at court, and

the challenges that we face is when you have to come with the foster parents. They always complain that they do not have time and I always tell them that the way they run to the Banks to collect the foster child grant, should be the same way they should run to the social worker`s office for the court order extension. *(Social worker, DSD, eight years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another social worker from the CYCC also complained as follows:

The families of the children or youth placed in the CYCC; they do not play any role in terms of assisting us in raising these children. As I am speaking with you, I have children that I do not know their biological parents, and I also do not have the case manager for those particular children. *(Social worker, CYCC, two years of practice experience as a social worker).*

In addition to the above-mentioned challenges, one social worker was concerned that foster parents have a tendency of losing interest in caring for care-leavers once they are discharged from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005:

The other challenge that we have is that other foster parents are no more interested in the fostering of the foster children once they have been released from the foster care system. In addition, this becomes a problem for us since the youth cannot be transferred or taken to a CYCC once they turned 18. ------ ------ Moreover, this also contributes to cohabitation and more children being born out of that cohabitation. *(Social*

worker, DSD, eight years of practice experience as a social

worker).

The biological parents of the care-leavers were also reported to be reluctant to be re-unified with the care-leavers once they are discharged from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005:

I think the challenges that we face in this CYCC is with regard

to the lack of cooperation from the biological parents of the

children. Others who have been found that they cannot take

care of that child at the point of removal and sometimes the

circumstances they improve, they always do not want to take

their children back. Therefore, for me, that is the challenge

that we face in this CYCC. *(Social worker, CYCC, five years*

of practice experience as a social worker).

The findings reflect that foster parent always rush to the social workers to apply for foster care placement, but once the placement has been finalised, they are not cooperating. This calls for social workers to prepare prospective foster parents for foster care thoroughly. In addition, the findings also demonstrate that some of the foster children experience a cycle of abuse from their biological parents and foster parents. This is in contradiction with the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 that oversees the laws identifying with care and protection of children.

Teenage pregnancy and school dropouts. Some of the participants shared that they got pregnant during the adolescence stage, and as a result, they leave school before finishing matric. Most of them they drop out at grade 11. One of the participants shared her concerns through the following verbatim quote:

In 2013, I got pregnant while staying at the CYCC. One of

the boys who was also staying in the Centre impregnated me.

After I got pregnant, I was chased out of the CYCC. I then

went back to my previous family out of the Centre. However,

I did not tell them that I was pregnant until they found out

themselves. I told them that I was afraid to tell them about my

pregnancy; however, after the confrontation, I had to tell them

everything. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 23 years old).*

Another 21-year-old care-leaver supported the above participant as follows:

After dropping out of Grade 11, the foster parent told me that

now I am on my own and have to raise my child. I told her

that the family of the child are volunteering to assist me in

looking after the child, and again she did not allow that. As a

result, I decided to move out of the foster family and stayed

at my boyfriend`s place. -------. Unfortunately, I separated

with my boyfriend and decided to go back to my foster parent.

I was then involved with the new boyfriend. With that new

boyfriend, we also engaged in unprotected sex, and as a result,

I got pregnant again. Therefore, the foster parent chased me

out of her house again, and I moved in with my second

boyfriend. My second boyfriend was staying at a place called

------. Life was also difficult with my second boyfriend since

he was unemployed. He used to work on a temporary basis.

In the end, I separated with him. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years*

old).

According to the above views of the participants, it can be reported that most of the

youth leaving care get pregnant at an adolescence stage. In addition, they drop out of school in

grade 11. Lastly, most of the youth leaving the foster care system are not able to further their

studies at the Institutions of Higher Learning because of the challenges they have faced while in the foster care system.

Sexual abuse and prostitution. According to the participants, some of them are victims of sexual abuse, including their siblings. These acts of sexual abuse are committed by the relatives or the foster parent`s child. The following quote captures the essence of the above-mentioned concerns from the care-leavers:

> What I also did not like with foster care is that the foster parent`s son used to abuse me sexually. He would always attempt to try to have sex with my younger sister or me. This started when I was 15 years old. You will find him coming to my room, and I would miss or lose my underwear. -------. We could not report this case to the social worker because we were afraid that once we report it, we might be removed from the foster care system or family or they might do something bad to us. So hence, we never shared anything with the social workers. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years old).*

Furthermore, one of the participants shared that she was involved in prostitution in order to make ends meet. The view of the participant is supported by the following quote:

> After leaving the foster care system, I used to communicate with people through social media like WhatsApp and Facebook. In addition, I used to communicate with males. After communicating with them, I would arrange to meet with them, and I would engage in sexual activities with them in exchange for cash. Briefly, I would say that I was involved in prostitution in order to make ends meet. I used to have regular

customers who would always contact me if they need my

services. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 23 years old).*

The responses of the participants strongly indicate that some of the youth leaving the

foster care system are victims of sexual abuse by the foster parent`s child. Furthermore, the

findings suggest that there are some of the youth leaving the foster care system who have been

involved in prostitution in order to meet their financial needs.

Abuse of foster child grant. Portions of the participants were anxious that the foster child

grant is not utilised for the intended purposes. The 22-year-old care-leavers` concern is

presented below:

> What I have realised is that foster parents only want to receive
>
> the foster child grant, and they do not care about foster
>
> children. Moreover, to me, the protection and care of foster
>
> children should always be important. What is important for
>
> both social workers and foster parents is that the foster
>
> children receive the foster child grant and remain in the foster
>
> care system. When social workers conduct their supervision
>
> sessions, their intention is to renew the court order and the
>
> foster child grant. They do not ask the foster children if they
>
> are taken good care of or still happy in the foster care family.
>
> *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

Another 21-year-old participant concurred as follows:

> I think most of the foster parents are only keen in getting the
>
> foster child grant of the children in question, rather than
>
> taking care of foster children. I am saying this because I do
>
> not remember getting money from my foster parents. The
>
> only time I benefitted from my foster child grant was through

food and when the foster parent bought clothes for Christmas Holidays. Most of my foster child grant was utilised to buy the grocery in the foster home. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years old).*

Social workers were also in support of the concern that foster parents are not making use of the foster child grant for the intended purpose. According to the participants, foster parents are applying for the foster child grant to benefit themselves instead of benefitting foster children. The concerns of the social workers are supported by the following quote from a social worker who has been working as a social worker for four years:

However, for those children whose foster parents are motivated by greed, they do not benefit from foster care because they are using the foster child grant for their own interest. I am unsure if this is only happening in --------------- because most of them join social clubs and use, foster child grants to make monthly contributions. Moreover, sometimes they use the foster child grant to build their own houses, and at the end of the day, it does not benefit the foster child grant beneficiary. *(Social worker, DSD, four years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another social worker who has been employed as a social worker for the past eight years raised the same concern:

The other challenge that we have is of those foster parents who are misusing the foster child grant. They will claim that they have the best interest of the child, but if you sit down and check after some time or during supervision, you find that this money is not used as expected.---------. The cases that we

supposed to focus on are the new cases. When you have told

yourself that you are done, and then you must go back to the

old cases. *(Social worker, DSD, eight years of practice*

experience as a social worker).

The findings specify that some of the foster parents are motivated by greed; hence, they

apply for foster care. The foster child grant is not always used for the sake of the foster child.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that social workers are only concerned with the processing of

the foster care application, foster child grant and the extension of the court orders. Social

workers, therefore, need to ensure that they do thorough monitoring of how the foster child

grant is utilised by the foster parents.

No involvement of the foster child in the draft of IDP. One of the participants shared that

foster children are not engaged in the application process of foster care placement. The social

worker always put more focus on the foster parents. One of the participants lamented as

follows:

The problems that we face in foster care always involves the

foster parent and social worker. They do not plan what is

going to happen to us (foster children) once we complete

Grade 12 or leave the foster care system. *(Care-leaver, DSD,*

22 years old).

These findings call for social workers always to ensure that they listen to the voices of

the foster children in all the matters involving the child. In other words, foster children should

be part of the implementation of the IDP.

Lack of resources. Most of the participants complained about the absence of resources

as they render foster care services. The participants employed by the DSD indicated that they

have few vehicles, non-functional printing machines, few cellular phones used to conduct home

visits and lack of funds for advertisements to look for the children`s biological fathers whose whereabouts are reported to be unknown.

A 35-year-old social worker raised a concern that two service offices are expected to utilise two vehicles:

> In terms of transport, that is a very big challenge. Just imagine two offices sharing three government vehicles. --------------- Nevertheless, sometimes we do negotiate with the social worker who has to attend to the emergency case, to drop me at a certain family, and then she can continue with her case. *(Social worker, DSD, ten years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another 30-year-old social worker was concerned about non-functional printing machines in the office:

> The challenges that we face in the DSD is lack of resources, and sometimes this makes our job to be difficult to render social work services. For instance, now we do not have printers, and when a client comes here, our printers do not have cartridges, both of them. So when we have to print reports, make copies for the client`s documents, we have to make a plan. *(Social worker, DSD, eight years of practice experience as a social worker).*

A 30-year-old social worker complained that he sometimes uses his cellular phone to take photos as evidence for the work done:

> You have to compromise about everything, e.g. you sometimes end up using your own car to deliver effective services to our service beneficiaries. Because we are the ones

who are facing the service users if they have, problems and the DSD do not care. We are the ones who have to account at all times. Like now, we use our cell phones to take pictures so that we can go somewhere and print, whereas it is not my personal things and it is work-related. Therefore, the DDS is failing us when it comes to resources. *(Social worker, DSD, eight years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Lastly, the 35-year-old social worker who has been practising for the past ten years was concerned with the lack of funds for advertisements, where they have to look for the children`s biological father whose whereabouts are reported to be unknown:

The challenges that we face as social workers are when we have to apply for an advertisement to look for the father of the children in question. We send the application for an advertisement to the DSD, and we wait forever. For example, I sent an application for an advertisement in December 2018 and now is July, and I have not received any feedback. ------- ------- Therefore, this is a challenge because the client always expects you to come back to her since she is expecting the foster child grant of R1000, 00. *(Social worker, DSD, ten years of practice experience as a social worker).*

There were also two participants employed within the CYCCs who highlighted the challenges that there are not enough clothes for foster children and youth and recreational facilities. One of the social workers` complaints is presented below:

The other challenge is that in this CYCC we do not possess enough clothes for the children. *(Social worker, CYCC, four years of practice experience as a social worker).*

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The following social worker who also complained as follows supported her:

> In terms of the resources, you know I can say that I do not
> have challenges, the only problem that we have is with regard
> to recreational facilities. We do not have poles for soccer and
> netball. We are also short of balls for both netball and soccer.
> *(Social worker, CYCC, four years of practice experience as a*
> *social worker).*

The strong views of the participants show that social workers work under poor conditions. The employers do not always ensure that they provide enough resources for social workers to render social work services.

Delay of payments of stipends from the DSD. Some of the participants from various CYCCs were concerned about the delay of payments in respect of the stipends from the DSD, which usually happens between May and July of every year. As a result of this, they sometimes end up without salaries and funds to pay for the foster children`s psychological services since they are expensive. The concerns of the participants are captured in the response below:

> The challenges that we face, as a CYCC is that the DSD
> always take time to be able to pay the funding more,
> especially between May, June and July. You find that we even
> go without salaries for about three months. It is not only us
> here, but other organisations also face these challenges, and
> this thing has been going on since I have started working as a
> social worker in this CYCC. *(Social worker, CYCC, four*
> *years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The following participant who also complained about the delay in the payment of stipends from DSD supported this concern:

So most of the challenges that we face with regard to funding
always happen during May, June and July while we are
waiting for the DSD to be able to pay or to provide funding.
Therefore, during those three months, we are not earning any
monthly salaries as social workers. *(Social worker, CYCC,
four years of practice experience as a social worker).*

In addition to the challenge of the delay of payments in respect of the stipends from the
DSD, the participants raised concerns that this makes it difficult for them to refer foster children
for psychological services since they are expensive. According to the participants, they rely on
private psychologists if they require psychological services for foster children. Some of the
participants` concerns in this regard are captured by the two quotes below. The first social
worker complained that it is very expensive to refer foster children to private psychologists:

What I do not like about placing children in the CYCC is that
sometimes we face challenges with therapeutic sessions since
we do not have enough staff members. It is also very
expensive to refer these children to private Psychologists. ---
------. In addition, some of the experiences of these children
are not easy to accept since you know that social workers are
also human beings at the end of the day. *(Social worker,
CYCC, four years of practice experience as a social worker).*

According to the following social worker, her organisation is spending more R10,
000.00 for each foster child per year:

We face challenges from children who need psychological
needs, and we cannot refer them to the psychologists because
we have limited services. So when we send our children for a
special service, for example like to a psychologist, it costs a

lot of money, for example, it is more than R10, 000.00 per year. Last year we spent more than 65 000.00 for the whole year to be able to send our children to these psychologists. *(Social worker, CYCC, five years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The DSD always delay the payments of stipends for children and youth placed within the CYCCs. This usually takes place at the beginning of the financial year (April and June), and as a result, this hinders social workers from being able to render effective services to children and youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa. Furthermore, social workers are facing challenges to refer foster children for psychological services. Moreover, this calls for the DSD to make funds available specifically for psychological services for foster children.

Burnout and shortage of social workers in the CYCCs. In addition to the delay of payments in relation to the stipends from the DSD, social workers from the CYCCs also raised a concern about the shortage of social workers, which results in burnout. They are also forced to work from January to December without taking any leave days. A particular social worker advised that the DSD should provide additional funding for them to hire at least a social auxiliary worker to assist them with other duties or in case they are absent from work:

I am just working alone here, and I do not have any social auxiliary worker to assist me. Therefore, I have applied to the DSD to give me one or to fund a post for a social auxiliary worker. So I am still waiting for them, and now I am just alone here as a social worker. ------- Therefore, because I do not have any social auxiliary worker assisting me, I am forced to be here all the time from January to December without taking leave. ------- I am not doing only work for the CYCC. *(Social*

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worker, CYCC, two years of practice experience as a social

worker).

The findings call for the DSD to fund additional posts for social workers and social auxiliary workers in the CYCC. This will help to lessen the workload of the social workers who are currently doing everything without assistance.

A notable number of participants emphasises the importance of social workers to ensure that they render effective programmes to prepare youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa as well as foster care supervision services. Findings from most participants indicate that the DSD and CYCCs lack preparatory programmes for youth leaving the foster system. In addition, the participants raised concerns in respect to poor rendering of supervision services, poor communication between the case manager and the social worker employed in the CYCC and lack guidelines for preparing youth leaving the foster care system, including gaps in the Children`s Act 38 of 2005. The participants` responses in this regard are presented in the sub-themes below:

Lack of preparatory programmes for youth leaving care. The greater number of the participants concurred that social workers never rendered preparatory programmes to youth, leaving the foster care system. Instead, they are only informed that their foster care placements and foster child grants will be suspended, without preparing them for life after foster care system. One of the participants who was placed within DSD shared his concerns as follows:

Social workers did not prepare me to leave the foster care

system. They only told me during my last year that my foster

child grant will be stopped at the end of the current year. So

that`s when I decided to apply for a learner`s licence. *(Care-*

leaver, DSD, 26 years old).

He was supported by the following care-leaver who also complained about lack of preparatory programmes for preparing youths to exit the foster care system in South Africa:

I knew that my foster child grant is going to be stopped at the age of 21. Although I was not prepared to live life after foster care, they informed me that once I turn 21 years, I would no longer receive the foster child grant. Therefore, when it was stopped, I just remembered that time has arrived. The social worker invited me into her office, and she informed me that my grant is going to be stopped. -------. I do not stress about anything, as long as I am alive and happy. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

Another participant who was placed within the CYCC shared his concerns as follows:

I can say that I was not prepared well to leave the foster care system. When I turned 18, I was made aware that I would be out of the Centre at the end of the year if I were not attending school. In fact, I also wanted to leave since we were sharing a room, and it did not have privacy. I think I used to share one room with about ten children. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 19 years old).*

The following care-leaver also shared the same sentiment:

I can say that I was never prepared to leave the foster care system, and I only left the Centre because I was 18 years old and no longer attending school. I think the social worker was now focusing on the other children, and as a result, she did not have time for me. Briefly, I would say that based on my experience, youth leaving care are not prepared to leave the foster care system. Maybe it is because the Centre no longer see a future in us. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 19 years old).*

The findings indicate that there is an absence of exit master plan for youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa; instead, they are left to fend for themselves. Social workers only inform them on the eve of the end of their foster care placements and foster child grants.

Lack of communication between a case manager and social worker in the CYCC. In addition to lack of preparatory programmes for youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa, social workers were concerned that there is no communication between the social workers working in the DSD with those employed in the CYCCs. The social workers employed in the CYCC felt that case managers just dump the foster children with them in the Centre. As a result, they face challenges to render reunification services or trace the families of the foster children or youth, leaving the foster care system.

The complaint from one of the participants is as follows:

> Therefore, the case manager that I used to work with from Christelike-Maatskaplike Raad (CMR), she indicated that these children are not from her jurisdiction or area. Therefore, I have been trying to get hold of the case manager as well as other social workers who brought these children here, and I have taken this case to the Regional Department of Social Development in Pretoria for their intervention. -------. It was only later that I found that the mother was in prison. *(Social worker, CYCC, two years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another participant concurred with the above participant as follows:

> The other thing that makes our job more difficult is that the social workers once they bring the child in the CYCC, they are always not concerned in the activity of the child. Because once they have referred the youngster into foster care, they

need to continue working with the biological parents of the children and make sure that they work together with us. Working together to ensure that a child is re-unified with his or her family that has improved their living conditions. (*Social worker, CYCC, five years of practice experience as a social worker*).

The findings display that there is no working relationship between the social workers working at the DSD and in the CYCC. This calls for social workers to ensure that they build strong relationships amongst each other for the benefit of the foster children or youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa.

Poor supervision services. Some of the participants shared that social workers are lacking in rendering supervision services to foster children. The participants suggested that these supervision services should also include the foster child. The sentiments of the participants are echoed in the statements below:

One of the participants was concerned about poor planning between the case manager and foster parent:

Therefore, what I can say is that there is no proper planning between social workers and foster parents. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

Another participant was concerned about poor monitoring or supervision of foster care placements:

They must also make sure that they are able to do proper supervision services in terms of checking what is it that the foster parents are buying for us like for example the school uniform, clothes and all the basic needs that we need. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 23 years old).*

Another participant recommended that social workers should render foster care supervisions regularly:

> Social workers should also make sure that they do a follow up with us to find out where we are and what they can help us with. If they can do that, the DSD can be able to be successful in rendering aftercare services. Therefore, it is very important for them to be able to focus on the second step of our lives.
>
> *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

The findings demonstrate that social workers offer poor supervision services, and they do not include foster children and youth during those supervision sessions.

Lack of guidelines for preparing youth leaving the foster care system, including gaps in the Children`s Act 38 of 2005. The majority of the social workers agreed that there are no guidelines for preparing youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa. Instead, social workers use their own understanding or guidelines for preparing youth leaving care. What they normally do is to inform the foster children and parents that their foster child grants will be terminated once they reach the age of 18. If they are still attending school, their foster child grants will be extended until the age of 21.

The following participant shared that, for the past eight years of his employment, he has never seen a programme for preparing youth leaving care:

> Mm, what I have seen up to now since I have been working here, I have never come across with a programme that prepares youth for independent living in our Department. Not one that I know of. What we do, we prepare them if they have dreams to go to the universities. ------- In terms of preparing them for independent living, we do not have that you know, it is just that when they turn 21 or 18, they just fall into the

cracks and they disappear, and we do not know what is happening to them. *(Social worker, DSD, seven years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The following social worker also affirmed this:

There are no guidelines that compel us as social workers to prepare youth leaving care. Even in our performance agreements, we do not have a section where we are required to render aftercare services. *(Social worker, DSD, eight years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another social worker also agreed with the above participant as follows:

We do not have programmes that are specifically designed for youth leaving care. What we always do is to remind them that foster care services and foster child grant will be cut once they reach the age of 21. Therefore, other youth leaving care, sometimes we visit them during school holidays to check them about their school progress, except for dropouts. For the dropouts, we just remove them from foster care placement since you cannot render aftercare services to them once they have been discharged from the system. We do this because they will tell you that they are now out of the system, so what do you want from them. *(Social worker, DSD, six years of practice experience as a social worker).*

One of the participants felt that the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 is having some gaps when it comes to how the youth leaving the foster care system should be prepared. The participant`s concern in this regard is presented in the quote below:

The Children`s Act 38 of 2005 do not guide us on how to do aftercare services. We sometimes tell them to wait for learnership programmes that usually come out (advertised) towards the end of the year. In addition, those learnerships prioritise children from child-headed households and foster children. There is only one foster child that I know benefitted from those learnerships, although that child was not from my caseload. *(Social worker, DSD, eight years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The findings show that there are no standardised guidelines for preparing youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa. The social worker`s performance contracts or agreements also do not include a section where they are assessed on with regard to preparing youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa. Therefore, this calls for the DSD to develop a guideline for preparing youth leaving care, review the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 and ensuring that social workers are assessed on how they prepared youth leaving care.

Findings also demonstrate that youth leaving the foster care system differ with regard to their involvement in intimate relationships. There are those who are not involved in intimate relationships, and those who do have partners. What I found common is that most of them never married and they have children born outside of marriage. The responses of the participants in respect of their intimate and marital relationship status are presented in the theme below:

Single and children born out of wedlock. Some of the participants shared that they are involved in intimate relationships and have children born out of wedlock. One of the participants shared about her status with regard to an intimate and marital relationship as follows:

Currently, I am not married, and I have two children. My first-born child is four years old, and the second born is 17 months

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old. I conceived my first child at the age of 16, then second

born at the age of 18. So now, I am currently staying with my

brother and his partner. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years old).*

Another participant shared the following:

I am currently single, but I have someone in my life. I have

two children. My first-born child is six years old, and the

second born is two years old. The six-year-old is a girl and

the two-year-old is a boy. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

The findings attest that youth leaving the foster care system are involved in intimate

relationships and have children of their own. The only difference is that they never married and

as results, their children are born out of wedlock.

5.3.3 Theme3: Opportunities of foster care placement

In spite of the challenges of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa, the

findings also indicate that there are also opportunities for foster care placement. According to

the participants, foster care services offer many opportunities for children and youth who have

been found to be in need of care and protection as pointed out in Section 150 of the Children`s

Act 38 of 2005. The findings demonstrate that foster care placement provides the child and

youth with the basic needs, family atmosphere and shelter, opportunities for recreational

activities, the relationship with the society is strengthened, promotes dependency, helps to

alleviate poverty, provision of therapy, educational opportunities and care and protection. The

responses of the participants in respect of the opportunities for foster care placement are

supported by the following sub-themes:

Provision of basic needs. Participants highlighted that foster care placement provided

them with basic needs, including food and clothes. In fact, they were able to get everything they

wanted as children. The 23-year-old care-leaver shared that foster care placement was able to provide her with basic needs:

> What I like about foster care is that in the foster care system, they were able to take care of us. I do not think I would be where I am presently if it was not for foster care. The social workers were able to find a placement for us. In addition to that, they bought clothes for us, provided food and sent us to school. Briefly, foster care was able to provide me with all the basic needs for my child and siblings. When I was in foster care, I used to get everything I want as a child. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 23 years old).*

The other 21-year-old care-leaver also concurred that foster care placement, provided them with all the basic needs:

> What I like about foster care is that I was placed in a family environment. In addition to the family and a place to stay, I was also provided with an opportunity to attend school. All I can say is that foster care was able to provide me with all the basic needs. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years old).*

He was supported by the following 26-year-old care-leaver:

> Foster care was able to assist me in being able to finish Grade 12 without having a child. In addition, I was also able to get food as well as a shelter through foster care. I would say foster care was able to provide me with basic needs. I liked everything about foster care, so I do not think there is anything that I did not like about foster care. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

The findings indicate that foster care placement does offer not only basic needs for foster children but also the basic needs of foster children`s babies and siblings. It must be noted that there are foster children who are victims of teenage pregnancy and foster care services cater for every child who has been declared to be in need of care and protection.

Strengthening of relationships with members of society. Some of the participants highlighted that they enjoy a healthy relationship with the community members. As a result, they continue staying in the very same community where they were placed in foster care.

This was evidenced in the following response:

> When it comes to society, I can share that I did not encounter any problems with them. The community of ------- is a very good community, and they were able to accept us as normal children, and that`s why I decided to stay here even after I have been ejected from the regulations of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

The following response is also in support of the above statement:

> Therefore, I can say that the community of ------- are good people and I can`t complain about them. The only bad treatment that I got was from the foster parent. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 23 years old).*

The participants seemed to have enjoyed a very good relationship with the community as compared with the foster parents. This is in accord with the ecological systems theory, which states that that individual exist within various settings, which includes family, school, work and community.

Provision of family environment and shelter. Many participants were of the notion that foster care placement offered them an opportunity for a warm family environment or to have a

shelter. They used to have a place that they would call home. The participant`s views are reflected in the following statements:

> Then when we were removed to ------- to stay with a particular family, I was able to find a warm place that I used to call home. I felt like now I am at home and I was very happy to stay with my new family. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

This was also echoed by the following 21-year-old care-leaver:

> I can say that a CYCC was the best option at the time due to my family circumstances. In addition, I really appreciate everything that the social workers did for my sibling and me. If I was not placed at the CYCC, I do not think that my life would have turned out the way it is. -------. When it was time for me to leave care, I felt bad since I was attached to the children and the staff members in the Centre. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

Followed by the other 22-year-old care-leaver:

> What I like about foster care is that I used to have a place to stay; it provided me with a shelter as well as educational needs. Foster care afforded me an opportunity to have a home and a family to look after me. Therefore, that is what I can say I liked about the foster care system. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

Another 25-year-old care-leaver also echoed the same sentiment:

> What I liked about foster care is that we were a big family that supported each other. Sometimes I would even forget that I

was placed in a CYCC because I used to play with other children. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 25 years old).*

Most of the social workers also shared the same sentiments with the above care-leavers.

One social of the workers employed within DSD shared the following:

From my side, you remember every child need to belong to a family, and I think for foster care it provides that to a child so that is what I like the most. It brings back that spirit of Ubuntu that says somebody`s child is my child ------------- The child must belong to a family as like everybody else and grow up in a loving and warm environment. That is what is important, and I like about foster care. *(Social worker, DSD, seven years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The following social worker supported him:

In addition, they have a structure, and that is very important because we place them there, and we continue to monitor and supervise them properly on how they are being raised. Whether they are being raised properly, are they going to school, are their medical needs being attended to, do they have shelter, you understand. That I think brings structurer, and if it is still there, that is what I like about foster care to see those children being well cared for and growing in a safe environment. *(Social worker, DSD, five years of practice experience as a social worker).*

One of the social workers employed within the CYCC also shared the following:

Foster care affords children an opportunity to have a family. Therefore, in this CYCC, we have ten houses, and each house

has a mother. If we remove a child from his /her biological

mother because of neglect and you find that the child has a

brother, we ensure that these children stay in one household

within the Centre. -------------------- If the child or youth wants

to attend a church service, we allow them to access those

churches outside the Centre. *(Social worker, CYCC, five*

years of practice experience as a social worker).

Provision of family environment and shelter for children and youths placed in foster care

seemed to be very important for them since previously, they used to come from families that

had a low-income family environment. In addition, a family environment is one of the

fundamental rights of every human as outlined in the Constitution of the Republic of South

Africa.

Promotion of independency. Some of the participants were of the view that foster care

placement taught them to be able to stand on their own. It prepared them for life after the foster

care system. The following quote captures the strong views of the care-leavers from the DSD:

What makes me be strong in life is that being in foster care

made me stronger. You know the way I was treated by the

foster parent it made me be a strong person that I am.

Although it was not easy during my placement. --------. Look

at me now. I am glad that I still have life. Because of them,

and I am able to look after my child. Although the foster

parent was abusing us, but she was also able to teach us to be

strong. -------. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 23 years old).*

Supported by the following quote from the care-leaver who was placed within the

CYCC:

I just told myself that I am from low-income family background, but I did not let my background to determine my future. In fact, I wanted to change the situation of my family. Sometimes I do wish my mother was still alive, but you know I have to be strong. I used to ask myself why did God take my mother away from me, but I did not get any answers. What I just told myself was to live on my own. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

The findings indicate that being in the foster care system prepares youth to live independent lives once they are discharged from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005.

Opportunities for recreational or extra-mural activities. The findings also indicate that children or youth placed in foster care; they were able to be involved in recreational or extra-mural activities. These activities made them feel that they are part of a larger society. One of the care-leavers shared his views as follows:

In Grade 10, I was involved in soccer and because of playing soccer; I had an opportunity to take part in the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup hosted in South Africa and Africa for the first time. I was performing during the opening ceremony with the likes of Robert Kelly and Shakira in one stage. ------. Therefore, they told me where my sister is staying, and I was happy to be reunited with my sister. Yeah so now, I know where my sister is, and you know we even shared contacts, and I always communicate with her. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

Another care-leavers from the CYCC supported the above view as follows:

It was nice to be placed in the CYCC, and we used to go out

and visit different places as well as playing soccer. Briefly, I

can say that kind of life was really amazing and wonderful

with the other children who had the same experiences as

mine. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

Three social workers employed within the CYCC and DSD were in support of the above care leavers. A social worker who has been practising as a social for the past two years within the CYCC confirmed that they offer youths with recreational activities:

We offer a program like a recreational sport, although I do not

like sport. We watch them playing soccer as well as netball,

although I am not a sportsperson. *(Social worker, CYCC, two*

years of practice experience as a social worker).

Another social worker who has been employed as a social worker for the past four years also shared that youths placed within the CYCC are provided with recreational activities:

In terms of the recreational activities, it is about playing with

them through any kind of sport or taking them out to a park

or taking them to movies or going out for lunch. --------------

- In addition, we teach them about life skills programs for

example hygiene, the importance of communication, human

trafficking, teenage pregnancy and the consequences of

teenage pregnancy, the importance of taking medication for

those who are HIV positive and those with other chronic

illnesses. *(Social worker, CYCC, four years of practice*

experience as a social worker).

Followed by a social worker who has been in practise for the past five years. She shared that one of the recreational activities offered to youths leaving care is the foster care camp:

In the DSD, we have foster care camps that are usually designed to actually equip these children with life skills. ------------I think each office they normally take according to the size of the office. For example, in ---------, they normally take ten since we have a bigger office. *(Social worker, CYCC, five years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The above findings show that recreational or extra-mural activities come with many opportunities, more especially for networking purposes.

Poverty alleviation. The findings from the participants show that foster care placement contributes to poverty alleviation. Foster care families, children and youth were able to have a source of income through the foster care system and foster child grant. One of the participants shared that he dropped out of school after the termination of his foster child grant, but once it was reviewed, he was able to go back to school:

Therefore, from 2009 to 2012, I did not attend school because I was not receiving any grant, and my family was without any source of income. My foster mother used to blame me for going to the initiation school, and as a result; the family put a lot of pressure to me. Moreover, those were the most difficult years of my life. It was very difficult for me because I had to work during weekends to make ends meet. In 2012, fortunately, I met the new social worker called Bridgett, and she was able to assist me in processing my foster care placement and the renewal of the grant again. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

Social workers also supported the above care-leaver by sharing that foster care services are playing a big in reducing indigence. Furthermore, foster care families and foster children are

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given some means of income to sustain themselves and their families. The views of the social

workers on how foster care services impart to poverty alleviation are presented in the two

responses below:

> I would say that with foster care, you would see when they
> come to apply for foster care placement and during the
> investigation that this family really need assistance. In
> addition, most foster care placements that we have, really the
> foster child grants helps the family to alleviate poverty. For
> some families, you find that this is the only source of income
> that they have, no one is working, and it helps them. *(Social
> worker, DSD, ten years of practice experience as a social
> worker).*

> You find that the foster parent is earning less than R1500, 00
> per month and the foster child grant should supplement the
> income of the family. It enables them to pay for burial
> societies, and they always use that as an excuse for not saving.
> They will say R250, 00 is used to pay the burial society, we
> pay the funeral parlour so that should anything happens, we
> are safe as a family. -------. Now the foster child grant is
> R1000, 00 per month, and I think the government is trying.
> *(Social worker, DSD, eight years of practice experience as a
> social worker).*

The findings connote that foster child grant plays a huge role in alleviating poverty.

Furthermore, it ensures that the basic needs of children and youth are met. Therefore, based on

the above statements from the participants, it can be concluded that foster child grants have a huge contribution in meeting the financial needs of the foster care family, children and youths.

Provision for therapy or counselling services. Some of the social workers were of the view that foster care placement provides opportunities for therapy and counselling services for the children and youth placed in foster care. It should be noted that these children and youth have been faced with a number challenges which includes losing both parents, being abused, neglected, abandoned, HIV/Aids, substance abuse and even being exposed to circumstances that exposed them to harmful environments.

One of the social workers employed in DSD spoke about the importance of providing counselling to foster children:

> You know if the child had lost both parents and for example, you come to DSD in ten years to apply for foster care. This child was never exposed to any social worker before or social work services. Some of them have seen a lot in life, e.g., they saw their parents dying in front of them and others they do not have that family support. What I have realised is that when the prospective foster parents approach us on the first early stages so that we provide the child with counselling *(Social worker, DSD, five years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The above social worker was also supported by the below social worker employed within the CYCC, in which she emphasises the importance of therapeutic services for foster children:

> You know working with children sometimes make you happy you know, and that is what I like about working with children. ------------------------. In addition, some of them I even have

sessions with them. Moreover, you can see that they have improved since they have been placed in this CYCC. *(Social worker, CYCC, two years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Followed by another social worker who also supported her colleague:

In addition, ongoing counselling really helps children and youth placed in the CYCC because we cannot always rely on the Centre. (*Social worker, CYCC, five years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The strong views of the participants show that foster care services or placement provide children and youth with the opportunity to be able to share their experiences in a safe space. Casework or counselling is one of the methods of social work practice that is rendered to individual service beneficiaries.

Provision for care and protection. Findings indicate that children and youth placed in foster care are provided with care and protection. Furthermore, foster care placements provide children and youth with a sense of belonging, sense of identity, sense of religion and culture. One social worker from DSD spoke the importance of having a sense of belonging, culture, religion, self-identity and stability:

What I like about foster care, is that it gives a child a sense of belonging, it gives child stability, it gives a child an identity, and it gives a child an opportunity to have a parent who can take care of them, and take the child to school. ------ It gives a child that sense of culture --------- and that sense of religion. --------A child needs to have that parent who will groom them, nurture them, and care for them. ---------------- *(Social worker, DSD, eight years of practice experience as a social worker).*

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A social worker from CYCC emphasises the importance of placing children and youths in residential care:

> The advantages of placing children in this CYCC is that you find that these children when they come here, they are dirty and show signs of being neglected by their biological parents. ----------------They even come here very sad, but when they leave the CYCC, we ensure that they are happy. ------ Moreover, some of them even gain weight after a few days of being placed here. *(Social worker, DSD, four years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The above statements pinpoint that foster care services are in line with Section 28 of the Bill of Rights embedded in the South African Constitution, which claims that every child has the basic right to basic nutrition, shelter, health care and social services including the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse and degradation. The findings are also in line with the National Policy Framework for Families, which emphasises the importance of children and youths to have a family structure in which they can develop and be allowed to be with families.

Provision for educational opportunities: The greater number of the participants were of the prospect that placing children and youth in foster care provide them with educational opportunities. Most of the youth leaving care can complete grade 12 and others they even further their studies at the university. One of the social workers shared about the foster child who managed to go to the university with the little foster child grant:

> What I like about foster care is that at least it is helping at meeting the educational needs of learners since they do not have parents and some have abandoned them. So this foster care is at least making a difference in the children`s life because for now in my caseload there are learners who have

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managed to go to the university with that foster care money if foster parents were able to save the little that they get. -------------- The foster child grants help foster children to buy clothes and to have pocket money for school. (*Social worker, DSD, seven years of practice experience as a social worker*).

Another two social workers employed in the CYCC were also in support of the above participant:

There is one child who was placed here, she completed her matric in 2017, and after she completed her matric, there was no one to look after her or to take care of her. ----------------- Therefore, this year, we had to give her another chance to be able to complete her matric although she is no longer benefiting from the DSD or receiving any funding from the DSD. We had to take her to a private college to do computer studies. ---------I heard that now she is working at a local Clinic and she is getting some income through a learnership programme. *(Social worker, CYCC, two years of practice experience as a social worker).*

In addition, what I have found out is that most children who were found not attending school, but once they are placed here, they are able to attend school. (*Social worker, CYCC, five years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that everyone has a right to basic education and to further education. From the above findings, foster care services seem to be affording children and youth the above human rights.

5.3.4 Theme 4: Social support mechanisms available to youth leaving care

The participants` view on the social support services were contradicting. Some felt that all the social support services are important, and some felt that only a few of the social support services are important. However, what was of major concern to most participants is that they never received necessary social support services from the social workers while on their journey to leaving the foster care system. In contrast, other participants felt that social workers played a very big role in their lives. In addition, the participants indicated that they did not get social support from their families while in the foster care system as well as when leaving the foster care system.

One of the participants agreed that he did receive all the social support services from social workers:

> So in respect of the social support services, I cannot complain.
>
> I have been getting all the social support services from the
>
> social workers. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

The participant who was placed at the CYCC also shared the same sentiment:

> I think I did receive all the social support services from the
>
> social workers as well as from my friends, peers and
>
> housemother. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 25 years old).*

Lack of social support services. However, there were those participants who felt that they did not receive any social support services from social workers. The examples of social support services include emotional, esteem, informational, instrumental and network support.

One of the participants who was placed within DSD complained as follows:

> I did not receive any social support from social workers.
>
> Therefore, I had to do everything on my own. *(Care-leaver,*
>
> *DSD, 23 years old).*

Another participant who was placed at the CYCC also complained about a lack of social support services from social workers:

> I do not want to lie; I did not receive any social support services from the social worker, so what I did was to rely on myself. Social workers need to empower us with knowledge of how we should face life challenges. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

In addition to lack of social support services from the social workers, participants were also concerned about not receiving support from their biological families, more especially those who were placed at the CYCCs:

> Therefore, I think it is very critical for social workers to link the children who are placed in the CYCC with their birth parents. ------. So linking these children with their families outside the CYCC will assist social workers to facilitate re-unification services and to ensure that youth leaving care can be reunited with their families. Other parents leave children here at the age of five until those children turn 18 years. Even in prison, prisoners are allowed to be visited by their families. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 22 years old).*

The findings from the care-leavers were contradictory. Some of the findings show that social workers did not provide social support services to the youth, leaving the foster care system. On the other hand, there were those participants who were delighted with the social support services that they received from the social workers. Therefore, the strong views of the participants support the importance of social support services from both the social workers and biological families of youth leaving the foster care system since this will make it easier for social workers to render re-unification services.

Most of the social workers also concurred that there is a need for rendering social support services to youth leaving the foster care system to ensure that they become independent young adults and for promotion of sustainable livelihoods. According to the social workers, youth leaving the foster care system should be mentored, involved in the case and group work sessions and be provided with emotional, esteem, informational, instrumental and network support. The social support services are not only important for youth leaving the foster care system but for all the vulnerable groups including children, youth, women, people with disabilities, aged and those affected and infected with HIV/Aids. The following are the sub-themes that emerged during the process of data collection with the social workers:

Mentorship programmes. Some of the participants stressed the importance of mentoring, coaching and offering advises to youth leaving the foster care system to prepare them to understand that the foster care situation is not the same as the outside world where they are expected to be independent. The views of the social workers in this regard are supported by the quote below:

> Perhaps we can even mentor and coach youth leaving the foster care system to prepare them to leave care. *(Social worker, DSD, seven years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Followed by another quote below:

> Therefore, you need to understand that the situation in the CYCC is not like the situation outside there. Therefore, that is what I usually teach them about to say that there is a difference between the CYCC as well as the outside world. *(Social worker, CYCC, four years of practice experience as a social worker)*

Mentoring youth leaving the foster care system seems to be vital to prepare them to become self-reliant, independent youth adults and to be able to sustain themselves.

Case and group work sessions. Most of the participants were of the view that it is important to conduct one-on-one sessions with youth leaving the foster care system as well as with the foster parents. The casework sessions provide an opportunity to those foster children who are not free to be able to share their experiences in a bigger group.

One of the social workers shared as follows about the importance of conducting a casework session:

> Therefore, when I prepare them to leave care, I usually conduct individual sessions instead of group work because you find that if I conduct group work sessions, they don't benefit a lot hence I always prefer to see them one-on-one. *(Social worker, DSD, five years of practice experience as a social worker).*

In addition to the casework sessions, participants also stressed the importance of group work sessions where foster parents and youth can be able to share their experiences amongst themselves. One of the participants shared as follows about the importance of facilitating group work sessions:

> For those children in my caseload, I render group work sessions whereby I talk about hygiene to girls and behavioural problems of young boys. So what we do in our office is that if someone is offering parental skills in group work, I then refer my clients whom I really feel that they need a certain skill or training and to equip them better so that they understand what is parenting and what is being a foster parent.

The following social worker who shared that they also facilitate group work sessions with foster parents to allow them to learn from each other also supports the above participant:

We even give them practical examples, sometimes we run

groups with these foster parents to say, come and hear what

other parents are doing, what they are going through because

a child is a child and they grow up to become teenagers for

instance. You have to learn how other parents are managing

with teenagers. So foster care, it allows even other adults to

be parents because they do not have children of their own. In

addition, it gives them that experience of being a mother.

(Social worker, DSD, eight years of practice experience as a

social worker).

The above responses from the participants are in line with the methods of social work practice utilised all over the world, which includes case, and group work.

Social support services. The participant`s responses on the social support services necessary to prepare youth, leaving the foster care system were contradicting. However, I found out that of all the five types of social support services, e.g. emotional, esteem, informational, instrumental and network support, were mentioned. The following two statements capture the views of the participants on the importance of the social support services to prepare youth leaving care. The following participant shared that all the social support services are important:

For me, all the social support services are very important

because they work as per the need of that particular child or

youth. For example, as individuals you know, we also need

those different types of social support. Therefore, I cannot

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really say that this one is more important than the other is. So for me all of them they are very important. *(Social worker, CYCC, four years of practice experience as a social worker).*

In support of the above participant, the following social worker shared as follows:

I feel like all the social support services are important because, for example, you must make sure that these children can network with people outside the Centre. So for me, they need a holistic approach, otherwise, they need all these social support services. *(Social worker, CYCC, ten years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The findings proves that all the social support services are necessary to prepare youth leaving the foster care system depending on the needs of each youth.

5.3.5 Theme 5: Resilience of youth transitioning out of the foster care system

Findings demonstrate that youth leaving the foster care system are able to bounce back from the unfavourable situation. Participants shared that youth leaving the foster care system rely on many systems as coping mechanisms. The participant`s coping mechanisms are captured in the sub-themes below:

School and educational system. Some of the participants shared that they use education as their coping mechanism. They believe that education is vital for them to be able to face life after the foster care system. In addition, they consider grade 12 or furthering their studies as one of the things that can be able to assist them in achieving their goals in life.

One of the participants shared that he told himself that he would complete grade 12 irrespective of the challenges he faced in the foster care family:

The challenges that I had was that I had to do everything for other foster children since I was the eldest. However, through

that, I had to make sure that I study very hard since I used to put education first. I did not care that the foster parent was shouting at us. What I told myself is that I will complete Grade 12 irrespective of the challenges that I had. I had to make sure that I also protect other foster children that were placed in that foster care placement. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

Another participant shared that all he had to do was to push himself until he completed grade 12:

Therefore, I keep on reminding myself that this is not my home. What I always do is to push to matric or myself to complete my grade 12 and further my studies at a university in order to achieve the things that I wished for in life. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

Some of the social workers also specified that youth is leaving the foster care system use school and educational system as their coping mechanism. They try to focus on their education to have a bright future. In addition, the social workers reported that youth leaving the foster care system use the school as a coping mechanism with the hope that if they can complete their grade 12, they stand a good chance of finding a job or employment opportunities.

One of the participants supported the above statement as follows:

To cope with their experiences as a child growing up without a mother, being sent from this maternal/paternal aunt to that maternal/paternal aunt. That process they have survived it. In fact, that is their starting point. They use their experiences as a learning curve, and they talk to us as social workers. ------- ------. They also use the school as their coping mechanism by

studying hard and humbling themselves. With the hope that

things will be better in future. (*Social worker, DSD, eight*

years of practice experience as a social worker).

Another participant also supported the above social worker as follows:

The only way that helps these youth to be able to rise above

challenges is to come from them. It is very important to know

how motivated they are. ----------. Nevertheless, you know

when they pass their matric, they find something to do. If they

go to a tertiary institution and get their qualification, it

empowers them to be able to be independent. Therefore, you

know if they can have those qualifications, you know the

chances of them finding a job are high. *(Social worker, DSD,*

two years of practice experience as a social worker).

The findings signify that youth leaving the foster care system believe that education is

the priority for them to be able to be self-reliant once they are discharged from the provisions of

the Children`s Act 38 of 2005.

Religion or church affiliation. One of the participants shared that she could not cope

with the passing of her mother, but through attending the church services, she was able to heal.

The below verbatim quote capture the view of the participants:

In the beginning, I was not coping with my mother`s death

since I'm the one who was mostly loved by my mother. I cried

a lot during her funeral, and her death really hurt me so much.

Today I can still visualise that particular day. Therefore, what

is keeping me strong is that I am a Christian. Therefore, what

I can say is that Christianity is the way to go. -------. I have

accepted my mother`s death, and I have told myself that what

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happened was bound to happen. Sometimes you know when

I feel that I miss my mother; I just visit her grave and clean. I

even talk to her as if she is still alive or standing in front of

me. After talking to her at her grave, then I just feel better.

(Care-leaver, DSD, 19 years old).

Social workers were also of the view that religion and church play a very big role for

youth, leaving the foster care system to be able to rise above their hardships. The youths are not

only attending church services, but they are also encouraged to actively participate in the

church. Those youth leaving care who do not believe in Christianity, their belief systems are

also respected and recognised. The quote that follows capture the essence of the participant`s

views on the importance of religion or church for youth leaving the foster care system to cope

with life challenges:

We also have a church where every child is expected to attend

the church service, and they participate in the church.

However, for those children who do not want to attend church

services we do not force them especially teenagers you find

that they do not want to attend church services, so we just let

them stay in their rooms. You also find that some do not

believe in Christianity, so we respect their beliefs, ------------

---------. They are also allowed to have group discussions

amongst themselves. ------------------. In addition, those

sessions really make them aware that although their families

neglected them when they needed them most at least; there is

God who loves them. *(Social worker, CYCC, four years of*

practice experience as a social worker).

The finding show that religion or belief system of the participants is able to help them to accept the passing of their loved ones. Furthermore, the above findings stress the importance of allowing youth leaving the foster care system to practice the belief systems of their choice. This is also in line with Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, incorporating the Bill of Rights in which it is stated that everyone has the right freedom of religion, belief and opinion.

Peers, siblings and fiancé. The participants also shared that they relied on their peers, siblings and fiancé as their coping strategies. These people provided a terrace for them to be able to share their experiences with.

The first participant who relied on his *peers* shared as follows:

> Therefore, for me to be able to cope with the challenges that I faced, I just go and spend time with my friends and keep myself busy. What we do is to play music from the laptop. Sometimes I even share with them about my situation. Therefore, I can say that I rely on my friends most of the time. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

The second participant added that:

> The only people who were good to me were my peers and friends since I was able to share all my life experiences with them. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 23 years old).*

Moreover, the third participant shared as follows:

> I can say that the other children or youths are the ones who were able to make me strong because they used to support me and vice versa, I was supporting them. Therefore, I can say that they were the source of my strength. I also put my trust

in God, and I think that really helped me. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

The fourth participant shared as follows:

Therefore, what makes me stronger is other children that are staying with me in the Centre. They always keep me strong because we all know that we are all in the same situation, so it is not like staying alone. So sometimes, we talk a lot about our family backgrounds. So talking to them really keeps me strong that I am not alone in this situation. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

Two of the social workers also confirmed that youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa relied on their *peers* as their coping mechanisms. One of the social workers shared that being in the CYCC makes other children understand that they are not alone in their situation:

They always rely on each other, you know to be able to cope with whatever that has happened to them and once they find other children here, they get stronger to know that they are not alone. *(Social worker, CYCC, two years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another social worker shared that, in most cases, youths find it difficult to leave the CYCC because of the attachments they have created with their peers:

I think these children and youth use outside people to be able to cope with the challenges that they face. Moreover, you find that most of them do not want to leave the Centre because they receive the best care here inside the Centre. *(Social*

worker, CYCC, five years of practice experience as a social worker).

The two participants who rely on their *siblings* shared as follows:

In fact, I really do not know what to say, but I had to tell myself that I have to enjoy life despite everything that has happened to me. I knew that my mother is deceased and my father is in prison. Therefore, I had to accept everything that life threw to me. I had to be strong enough for my younger sibling who is still in the Centre. Briefly, I would say that my sister is a source of my strength. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 19 years old).*

My sister ------- is the one who is assisting me with food and other kinds of stuff that I need more, especially food. Therefore, where I am staying in a squatter camp, and we do not have access to electricity and water. Therefore, I will say that I survived my sister. In respect of the child, the father of the child is supporting his child. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years old).*

In addition, the one participant who used her f*iancé* as his coping mechanisms shared as follows:

I have one child who is a year old. I am staying with my fiancé, who is also the care-leaver. In addition, I met her while I was in foster care. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

One of the participants shared that she always relies on her *siblings, fiancé and fiancés' siblings*. This is what she had to say:

I do not know of any surviving relatives in the family. The only people that I stay with are my siblings, my fiancée and his siblings. We are all from foster care placement. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 23 years old).*

Findings demonstrate that sharing your experiences and challenges with someone you trust can be able to help you to heal or accept your circumstances. This means that each one of us need someone in our lives who always provide a shoulder to cry on.

Social workers, caregivers and CYCC manager foster resilience. According to the participants, social workers, caregivers and CYCC managers also play a very big role in their lives and to foster resilience. These people are able to give an ear to youth, leaving the foster care system.

One of the participants who relied on the *social workers* shared as follows:

Therefore, in order for me to cope with the loss of my parents, I had to rely on my social worker. Therefore, I can say that social workers were my source of strength since I could not change the fact that I lost my parents. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

Another care-leaver supported the above participant by sharing that social workers taught them so many things during their stay in the CYCC:

Social workers too, they were able to teach us many things. Briefly, I can say that those people were my strength. So they used to tell us that you need to leave your pride. Although we did not have enough time in the CYCC, they were able to motivate us. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 22 years old).*

Three of the social workers also confirmed that youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa relied on their *social workers* as their coping mechanisms. One social worker shared that care-leavers were relying on them during supervision sessions:

> The youth leaving care use social workers as their coping mechanism when they render supervision to them, and to their families. Their foster parents also had a big role to play in their lives, because these youth they consider them as their biological parents. *(Social worker, DSD, three years of practice experience as a social worker).*

This is also supported by the below social worker, who shared that re-unification services play a big role in the re-integration of care-leavers into their communities and with their families:

> The other thing that we do is to work with the field social workers to ensure that they reunify the child with the family outside the Centre. Because it is very important to be able to capacitate the family members to be able to ensure that the child is reunified with them. *(Social worker, CYCC, five years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another social worker shared that care-leavers used to rely on him or her as social workers to foster a good relationship with the foster parents:

> The challenge that the foster children face is that foster parents do not treat them as their children, and that is the reality that they are faced with. Therefore, you find that these children often rely on us as social workers to reach out and chat to us and share what is happening with their foster parents. Therefore, what we do is to provide counselling to

them or to call the foster parents so that we can be able to teach them how to treat these foster children. *(Social worker, DSD, seven years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The two participants who rely on their *caregivers* shared as follows:

I can say that my strength came from my foster mother, and she was able to teach us many things in life. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 22 years old).*

There is this woman called ------- and that mother used to come and engage with us about our life challenges. That is what I liked about her because she was always there for us. Since I was involved with her, I also started to improve in all aspects of my life. That is why most of the foster children respected her. She was open to every child in the Centre. During weekends, she used to give us food, and while eating, we would share everything with her. In fact, housemother was doing a better job than social workers were. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old)*

The one participants who rely on their *CYCC managers* shared as follows:

I cannot remember what happened or why I was placed in the Child and Youth Care Centre except being placed with my maternal aunt. What I can remember is that, when I was young, I refused to be placed under the foster care of my maternal aunt. They said I told them that I wanted a place where I need to be placed at, although I cannot remember that. -------. Currently, I am staying with The Director or Manager

of the CYCC. ------. She was also willing to stay with me even after I turned 21 and discharged from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 25 years old).*

The above findings from the participants indicate the importance of the social workers, caregivers and CYCC managers in the lives of youth leaving the foster care system and the role they play in providing a source of strength to them. In addition, these findings stress the importance of collaboration between the social worker and the caregiver to ensure that youth leaving care are supported at all times.

Further Education and Training. According to some of the participants, there are youths leaving the foster care system who strive to further their studies at the Further Education and Training Colleges (FET). The following are the voices of the two participants who managed to further their studies at FET Colleges. The first care-leaver shared as follows:

Then after Grade 12, I had to continue furthering my studies because I had to do basic computer as well as a certificate in counselling. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

In support of the above participant, the second care-leaver shared as follows:

I saved about R10000, 00 from my foster child grant and R5000, 00 was used to build a shack for my brother and myself. After I completed Grade 12, I was admitted at the FET College because of the poor matric results. -------. I registered for a Public Management course, and I managed to obtain N6. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

Findings from the social workers also indicate the importance of youth leaving the foster care system to further their studies in order to successfully leave care or transition out of the foster care system. Some of the social workers indicated that their organisations ensure that

youth leaving the foster care system are equipped with the necessary skills to face the world on their own. The social worker`s responses to support the above statement are presented below. One social worker shared that her organisation sent one of the care-leavers to a private college to do a certificate in computer studies:

> We had to take her to a private college to do computer studies. This has taught her to be able to know how to do administration and to gain experience. Therefore, after she completed her training, we kept her in the Centre for three months, but after that, we had to let her to go and to be reunified with her family. *(Social worker, CYCC, two years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another social worker shared that they also help youths leaving care to have drivers' licenses before leaving the CYCC:

> For those children or youth leaving care who are skilled, we asked them to further their studies and those who want drivers licences we assist them in getting one. *(Social worker, CYCC, four years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another social worker supported the above participants that youth leaving care are also offered computer and baking training before they leave the CYCC:

> We also have computer training, where we teach the youth who are about to leave the foster care services and we teach them how to bake. *(Social worker, DSD, four years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The findings show resilience amongst the youth leaving the foster care system to further their studies despite the challenges they faced. In addition, the findings stress the importance of

ensuring that youth leaving the foster care system are armed with necessary prowess that can aid them to be self-reliant and self-sustainable.

Employment. One of the participants shared that he started working while he was still placed in foster care:

> I started working at a restaurant when I was doing Grade 11 during weekends in order to look after myself. I even paid for my matric dance with my own money that I used to earn while working during weekends in the restaurants. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

The other four participants shared that they are currently employed in low paying jobs in order to sustain themselves. The first care-leaver shared that he has been employed at a Chesa Nyama and Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC):

> I worked at the Chesa Nyama until I moved out of the foster home. What I did was to stay with my friend for two months then after two months, I got a job at Chesa nyama, where I worked for two years and two months. I was retrenched last year (2018) in June. -------. What happened is that I got a job at KFC, and I only worked there for less than a month. The challenge there was that I had to work until very late at night. Hence, I decided to leave that particular job because we did not have transport to Cullinan. I used to work until the early hours of the morning (01H00 A.M.).-------. That is why I decided to resign at KFC because of those conditions. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 26 years old).*

The second care-leaver shared that she is currently employed at a local Spaza Shop:

So now, I am currently working at a Spaza Shop here at -----

-, and I am earning R200, 00 per week and R800, 00 per

month. So together with the child support grant of one of my

children, I am able to buy food, clothes, cosmetics and food

for my child. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years old).*

The third care-leaver shared that he is employed at Toys "R" Us:

I am currently working at Toys "R" Us since March 2019. I

was discharged from the foster care system in 2017, and then

in 2018, I was just looking for a job without success. I used

to stay in -------, but I had to move to ------- since ------- does

not have many job opportunities. Hence, I had to move to ---

---- to stay with my cousin. Life is better on this side of ------

- since it is an urban area. I only work for Toys "R" Us on a

part-time basis. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 19 years old).*

The fourth care-leaver shared that he is currently an intern:

With that certificate, I was able to get an internship. That is

where I am. However, in future, I want to study part-time with

the University of South Africa (UNISA). *(Care-leaver,

CYCC, 21 years old).*

The findings demonstrate that most of the participants try to look for jobs, although they

find less paying jobs. Others had to rely on their relatives for the place to stay.

Substance abuse and teenage pregnancy. One of the participants reported that abusing

substances helped him to be able to cope with life in foster care as well as after foster care:

Therefore, I will say that abusing substances really helped me

to be able to cope at school. Now I am no longer using drugs.

So since I was not working, I used to break into people's

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houses. In addition to break-ins, I was also robbing people of

their items. We used to target those people with cellular

phones because we used to make a lot of money selling them

on the streets. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

The social workers were also concerned that some of the youth leaving the foster care

system are engaged in sexual activities as a coping strategy. As a result, they get pregnant.

Other youths leaving the foster care system are reported to be resorting to drugs as a way of

coping with life challenges.

One of the participants shared as follows about the challenge of teenage pregnancy:

Foster children always get pregnant as a coping mechanism.

For example, they conceive in order to get money from the

father of the child. In addition, some of them resort to drugs

as a coping strategy. There is a high rate of use of dagga in --

----- and within the schools around ----------. Although I

cannot confirm that they use drugs as a coping mechanism,

but most of them do use drugs or abuse substances. *(Social*

worker, DSD, four years of practice experience as a social

worker).

The other participant was concerned about substance abuse by youth, leaving the foster

care system in South Africa:

Some of the youth leaving care end up abusing substances as

the coping mechanism as you know that people are different.

Some of them prefer to be silent, and it is difficult to deal with

all the children in our caseloads. *(Social worker, DSD, eight*

years of practice experience as a social worker).

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The above findings indicate that youth leaving the foster care system is not immune to the challenges faced by any youth in South Africa. Social workers need to strengthen the awareness and prevention programmes on teenage pregnancy and substance abuse and ensure that these programmes are effective.

*Importance of acquiring a driver`s licence before leaving the foster care system*. Social workers indicated that their organisations ensure that youth acquire driver`s licences before leaving care as a way of preparing them for life after the foster care system. In addition, they seek sponsorships to be able to refer their youths to. These sponsorships are able to assist the youth leaving foster care system free of charge. The responses of the three social workers are reflected in the statements below. One of the social workers shared that care-leavers were assisted with drivers' licences when they were in grade 12:

> We also assist them in getting the drivers licences, more especially those who have grade 12. Therefore, we ensure that they get a driver's licence to know how to drive before they leave the Centre. *(Social worker, CYCC, four years of practice experience as a social worker).*

According to the below social worker, the CYCC has acquired a sponsorship with one of the driving schools:

> Therefore, we also have a sponsorship with one of the driving schools that assists the youth who is about to leave care to get a drivers licence. *(Social worker, CYCC, two years of practice experience as a social worker).*

In addition, the below social worker highlighted that her organisation has organisation partnered with one of the companies that assist care-leavers with drivers' licences:

> I have got quite a lot. We have a program where we have private partnerships to ensure that our children have got

drivers licences to assist them in order to be able to ensure

that they get jobs like driving. *(Social worker, CYCC, five*

years of practice experience as a social worker).

The findings reflect that it is very important to ensure that youth leaving the foster care system are assisted in getting driver`s licences. Moreover, to build relationships with private companies that offer driving lessons.

5.3.6 Theme 6: Recommendations for addressing the challenges of youth leaving the foster care system

Participants proposed several solutions to deal with the challenges of youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa. These solutions are included in the sub-themes that follows:

Mandatory for foster parents and CYCCs to save money for foster children. Some of the participants recommended that it should be mandatory for foster parents and CYCCs to save money for foster children while they are still in the foster care system.

One of the participants` recommendation is presented below:

I think what they are supposed to do is to save some money

for us while we are in the foster care system so that we will

be able further our studies once we complete Grade 12.

Instead, what they do is to spend the whole money on food,

clothes and other basic needs of the family. It becomes very

difficult for us to face life after foster care, more especially

when we fail or drop out of school or after turning 18 or 21

years. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

The following social worker who emphasised the importance of saving part of the foster child grant also supports the above recommendation:

They must also ensure that the foster parent is able to save money for the child so that we can be able to use that money when we have to register at the university because what is currently happening is that the foster parent is using the entire foster child grant. She does not save any money for the foster child for future purposes. -------. If the foster parent was able to save my foster child grant, I was going to use it to register at the university, but now I do not have anything to do. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 23 years old).*

The three social workers below also support the above recommendations from the care-leavers. One of the social workers shared that she always encourages foster parents to save from the foster child grant:

We also encourage foster parents to save money for them in order to have something as a start, because it is easier for them to get funds from the tertiary institutions when they are inside. If they are outside, they need to pay for themselves in order to get into the system. -------. Although we do not have much in our networks that we can liaise with in terms of assisting the foster children in furthering their studies. That is what is happening now. We support where possible. *(Social worker, DSD, seven years of practice experience as a social worker).*

According to the following social worker, saving from the foster child grant assisted one of the care-leavers to register at the university:

I have cases where the child was under foster care, and now she is at the university because the foster parent has been saving for this child since these are one of the things that we

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encourage foster parents with. Just to save a little that they

have to ensure that the child is able to register at a university.

For instance, my child was going to Wits University this year,

and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)

could not pay the fees blah blah blah. -------. If the youth did

not manage to register at the university, the foster child grant

was going to be terminated, and the youth would have been

released from the prescripts of the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

(Social worker, DSD, eight years of practice experience as a

social worker).

The following social worker suggested that the money saved from the foster child grant could assist the care-leaver in starting life after the foster care system:

You know it is very important as a CYCC to be able to ensure

that we save some money for these youth leaving care so that

we can be able to give them that money once they leave the

CYCC to start their own life. *(Social worker, CYCC, seven*

years of practice experience as a social worker).

Therefore, making mandatory for foster parents and CYCCs to save some of the money for foster children can be able to help them in future. For example, it can help them to pay for registrations at the university and to be able to have money to begin life after foster care. Furthermore, to use that money as a start for life after the foster care system.

Continued contact with biological parents of foster children and panel between case manager and the social worker employed at the CYCC. The findings from the participants stress the importance of continued contact between the foster child and the biological parents. Foster children or youth leaving care need their parents or family members to contribute to their upbringing.

One of the participants recommended as follows:

> Therefore, I would recommend that when you place children in foster care, their parents are also involved in their lives because you cannot be in foster care for the rest of your life. Once you leave the foster care system, you are expected to be reunited with them. So just, imagine if you did not have contact with them. How are you going to start building a relationship with them? *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 23 years old).*

She further emphasises that:

> It is also very necessary that social workers ensure that foster children placed in the CYCC are able to visit their parents or families during school holidays. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 23 years old).*

Another participant stressed about how he wishes to know about his origin:

> I want to know about my family's whereabouts, more, especially my mother. Lastly, I also want to know about my father and his origin. I need to know about my roots. Currently, I do not know whether I am a Zulu, Tsonga or Pedi. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

Care-leavers feel that family preservation is very important for them, whether while in the foster care system or even if they are discharged from the provisions of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. In addition, they emphasises the importance of the right to identity of any individual.

Social workers also made a proposition that social workers (case managers) employed by the DSD must engage in panel discussions with the social workers employed within the

CYCCs. The findings indicate that there is no communication between these social workers, and these social workers work in silos.

One of the social workers made a proposition that:

> I should keep communicating with the case manager since I do not do a follow up with those children who are already out of the CYCC as it is the responsibility of the case manager to be able to do the follow-up visits to that particular youth and find out how is that particular youth. *(Social worker, CYCC, two years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another social worker added that:

> Normally we arrange a panel between a case manager and the social worker within the CYCC to try to prepare youth who is about to leave care, and that is beneficial to the youth leaving care. *(Social worker, CYCC, two years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another social worker concurred with the above social worker as follows:

> Sometimes I even invite the case manager of the child in question to be able to discuss those cases that are challenging. -------. Therefore, after those meetings, we then decide as a group in terms of what to do with that particular child or even if I need to refer that child to the Psychologist for one on one sessions. *(Social worker, CYCC, four years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The above propositions stress the importance of integrating social work services to ensure that youth leaving the foster care system are adequately prepared to leave the foster care system.

Promoting confidentiality and considering the views of foster children or youth leaving care. Participants were of the impression that social workers should interview them separately from the foster parents in order to promote the value of confidentiality. In addition, confidentiality will make them to be able to share their challenges and experiences within a safe environment.

One of the participants recommended as follows:

> Social workers should make sure that they do not interview foster children in front of the foster parents because they are always afraid to be able to divulge their experiences with them. Therefore, what you do is to always say good things about them (foster parents) because we are afraid that if we report bad things about them, we will lose shelter. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

The two participants below also support the above participant's recommendation. The first participant recommended as follows:

> They need to ensure that if they place a child to a certain place; they regularly come and visit to check the family circumstances. They must also ensure that the interviews are conducted in a private place. The foster child must be interviewed separately from the foster parent. -------. However, what I have realised currently is that they are now implementing with other foster children. However, with my siblings, we used to be interviewed in the same house with the foster parent. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 23 years old).*

The second participant recommended as follows:

I think I once tried sharing these incidences with the social

worker, but when he came to intervene, he wanted to involve

the foster parent in the interview. I was hoping that maybe he

will interview me separately and then talk to the foster parent

after that. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years old).*

Confidentiality means everything that the foster child or youth leaving the foster care system shares with the social worker remains confidential. Confidentiality should be breached once the consent of the foster child or youth is granted or unless if the information shared poses a danger to the foster child, youth leaving care or anyone around them.

The participants further suggested that social workers should always consider their views to ensure that they have a choice with regard to their foster care placement. One of the participants shared her suggestion as follows:

In my opinion, I feel that as children, we also need to be

allowed to decide for ourselves. If it was not for the social

workers from Pretoria, I think we would still be in that

abusive foster parent. All I can share is that I was not prepared

properly to leave foster care. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 23 years*

old).

The following care-leaver supported her:

What I also do not like about the CYCC is that they decide

for the children and they do not allow them to make their own

choices. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

The findings demonstrate that it is important to hear the voices of the foster children or youth, leaving the foster care system in all the matters involving them.

Linking youth leaving care with available resources and integration of services between government and the private sector. Most of the participants suggested that it is vital for social

workers to connect youth, leaving the foster care system with available resources that will assist them to be independent young adults.

The following participant recommended that social workers should assist youth leaving the foster care system to have access to *learnership programmes, internships and available job opportunities*:

> Therefore, what I can recommend is that before you leave the foster care system, social workers should make sure that you do not just leave foster care without having anything to do. ------. Therefore, what I can say is that they need to give us something like learnership programs or anything that can be able to help us to be sustainable. -------. They must communicate with us if there are available job opportunities or internships in the DSD and other Departments. In fact, we need to be the priority if there are opportunities that come up in the DSD. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 23 years old).*

The following participant also recommended that social workers should guide care-leavers on how to apply for a job:

> I can recommend that social workers develop proper programmes to prepare us for life after foster care. We need programmes that can keep us busy once we are out of foster care. Currently, I do not know where to develop myself. I need something that can be able to give me direction or maybe to apply for a job. Therefore, I can recommend that social workers guide us on how to apply or look for the job or to develop ourselves. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

The below participant also agreed with the above two participants that social workers should be able to assist them to find employment before leaving care:

> I can recommend that social workers must look for jobs for the youth who are about to leave care. More especially those who have completed their Grade 12. The government must also assist those youth who wants to further their studies at the Universities. They need to pay for their tuition, accommodation and give them pocket money. If the government can offer a job to youth leaving care, that particular youth can pay for his/her studies. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 19 years old).*

Some of the social workers` perspectives are that, government should ensure that they work together with the private sector to prepare youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa. One of the participants shared that some of the cases require the services of the Psychologists. Most of these psychologists are in private practice:

> Other children we refer them to Psychologists at ------- Hospital. At ------, we also have a Psychologist at Section --- ----, who comes there on certain days. However, normally we use ------ hospital. *(Social worker, DSD, five years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The below participant also concurred with the above participant on the importance of working with psychologists:

> To some extent, it is up to us as social workers to work hard in terms of giving them counselling. Therefore, if I cannot be able to assist them, I then refer them to other professionals

like psychologists. *(Social worker, CYCC, seven years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The findings call for social workers to ensure that youth leaving the foster care system are linked with any available resources that can help them while leaving care. Furthermore, findings indicate that social workers cannot render their services to youth leaving care alone; however, some cases need to be referred to psychologists.

Placing foster children with suitable foster parents. Participants emphasises the importance of ensuring that foster children are placed with suitable foster parents. The below participant felt that social workers just dump them under the foster care placement of unsuitable foster parents:

I can recommend that social workers need to do their job in the right way or as expected, for example, if they place children in foster care they must make sure that they place children with the parents who are suitable for those particular children. Especially those children who are placed in unrelated foster care. -------. The social workers must not just dump foster children with foster parents who are found not suitable to foster children. This makes us not understanding why they are always taking us in that particular private or unrelated foster care or maybe it is because they are working together with her, so we are not sure what it that is happening is. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 23 years old).*

Another participant also stresses the importance of ensuring that they are placed with suitable foster parents who are not driven by the love of money:

I also recommend that social workers place foster children with suitable foster parents. In addition, not to place foster

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children with those foster parents who are only interested in

the foster child grant? Social workers also need to commit

themselves now because there are so many people that rely

on them. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 19 years old).*

The findings from the participants stress the importance of ensuring that prospective

foster parents are thoroughly vetted and prepared before fostering children who are in need of

care and protection.

Rendering preparatory programmes for youth leaving care from the age of 15.

Participants recommended that social workers should start preparing youth, leaving the foster

care system as early as the age of 15. The recommendations of the participants in this regard are

supported by the two responses below. The first participant recommended as follows:

I can recommend that social workers should ensure that they

effectively prepare youth to leave the foster care system so

that they can become independent young adults. In fact, they

need to start preparing them for life after foster care from the

age of 15 so that once these youth leave foster care; they know

what to do, e.g. applying for admission to the university as

well as to prepare them about life as a whole. -------.

Therefore, even if you do not find the job immediately, but if

you have matric or grade 12 and/or a degree, you stand a

chance to be employed. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 22 years old).*

The second participant supported the above care-leaver as follows:

I think it is very important to be able to prepare youth leaving

care as early as at the age of 15 or 16. At that age, I think

youth leaving care are matured enough to be able to make

sense of what the social workers have taught them. *(Care-*

leaver, CYCC, 19 years old).

One of the social workers also supported the above recommendations from the care-leavers as follows:

I suggest that it is important to prepare youth leaving the foster care system from the age of 15. I start preparing them at the age of 15 to say they must remember that they are not here for life and then at the age of 18 they will be discharged from the provisions of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. Therefore, those who are at a special school we always discharge them at the age of 18 so the case manager needs to be able to identify a place where we can take these children for development. *(Social worker, CYCC, ten years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The findings suggest that the right time to prepare youth, leaving the foster care system is the age of 15 since most of the children are matured at that age. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 has changed the age of majority in South African law to be 18 years, while previously it was 21 years.

Provision of Therapy or counselling. Some of the participants recommended that social workers should always ensure that youth leaving the foster care system are always provided with therapy or counselling to be able to deal with what lead them to be placed in in the foster care system. Furthermore, therapy and counselling can also assist youth leaving the foster care system to be able to deal with the death of their parents or any social ills that they have experienced in life. One of the participants suggested as follows:

To me, I think it very important to provide counselling to foster children to be able to deal with their experiences. Since

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currently, I do not think counselling is done perfectly. For example, I do not know where my parents are, and this has been killing me since I was placed in foster care. -------. Alternatively, maybe just to know where they are you know even if they cannot change anything but for me, I still feel that I should know where they are. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 22 years old).*

Another participant also supported the above suggestion as follows:

I could not cope with the death of my parents. I still remember their death as if it happened yesterday. Even today, I still think about them, and I could not attend counselling sessions. I once attempted to commit suicide. I was admitted to the hospital, and they were able to provide me with a once-off counselling session. After that, they asked me if I want to come back again, and I said I do not want to come back. In my view, the professional is the one who was supposed to prescribe the number of counselling sessions that I had to attend based on her assessment. I wanted to commit suicide because things were not going well for me. In fact, I have many things that will trigger certain emotions that would make me miss my mother. I really miss her. Therefore, in other words, I can say that I have never dealt with the death of my parents. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 25 years old).*

The findings show that therapy and counselling can be able to assist youth leaving the foster care system to be able to deal with any challenges that they are facing in life. It can be the

challenge of losing a parent, any form of abuse they have experienced or any social problems that they have found themselves in.

Housing allocation of youth leaving care and establishment of the shelter for youth leaving the foster care system. Participants raised a concern that most of them exit the foster care system without having a shelter or any form of housing. They recommended that social workers should at least ensure that they have access to housing. The recommendations of the participants are captured in the following two quotes below:

> I think that before I was discharged from the foster care system, social workers should have made sure that I have a place to stay or an RDP house where I would stay with my siblings. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years old).*

> What I have told myself is that I need to make sure that I get a shelter for us since my younger sister will not be in the centre for the rest of her entire life. I need to ensure that we have a place that we can call home. A place that we can both own with my younger sister. I know it is difficult more, especially for young girls because if life is not good for them, they end up being engaged in prostitution. Therefore, I have to make sure that I look after her. Young girls are vulnerable, and most of them end up being involved with older men. They get into a relationship to get money from these older men. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 19 years old).*

Some of the social workers also supported the above care-leavers by recommending that the state should establish a shelter for youth, leaving the foster care system. One of the social workers shared that they have cases whereby NSFAS rejects youth leaving care:

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Because you find that there are those youth leaving care who are rejected by NSFAS, which can destroy their lives. Who is going to take care of these youths if the government rejects them? As much as we recommend to NSFAS to fund the youth leaving care. I also believe that the programmes that we render in the service points we continue with them since they assist the youth to be able to be self-sustainable. These groups also make them realise that they are not alone in their situation. *(Social worker, DSD, five years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another social worker shared that some of the youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa cannot be reunified with their families:

Therefore, what we also do is to rent houses outside the village for those children who are already out of the system and continue working with them. More, especially those who do not have families. Therefore, we always make sure that by the time they complete their matric, you know they have the necessary skills that they need. Currently, we have some youths who are about to reach 21years and about to leave the foster care system, so we have arranged a house outside the centre for them. *(Social worker, CYCC, five years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The above findings emphasises the importance of having access to housing as outlined in the Reconstruction and Development Policy (1994) and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). In addition, the findings indicate that establishment of this shelter can be

able to help meet the needs for those youth who are not in Further Education and Training, unemployed, without shelter and those whose families cannot be traced.

Supporting youth leaving care to complete grade 12. Some of the participants recommended that social workers should always ensure that they support them to complete grade 12 before they have been thrown out from the provisions of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. The recommendations of the participants are reflected in the two statements below. The first participant recommended that social workers should support care-leavers until they complete grade 12:

> Social workers were also supposed to make sure that they monitor us to able to go to school, complete our Grade 12, and not just to discharge us (foster children) the way they did. Therefore, I will say that the social workers did not support me since I did not get any information on the opportunities that are available out there. *(Care-leaver, DSD, 21 years old).*

The below participant supports the above care-leaver:

> Therefore, I can recommend that youth leaving care should not be discharged from the provisions of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 before completing Grade 12. *(Care-leaver, CYCC, 21 years old).*

Findings from the participants show that youth is leaving the foster care system regard completion of grade 12 as key for them to be able to unlock the doors of success or to enable them to be independent, self-reliant and self-sustainable.

Extending foster care placement beyond the age of 21. A number of participants proposed that foster care placement should be extended beyond the age of 21 since some of the youth would be still attending school. In addition, there are those youths who are having special

needs and others their families cannot be traced. The essence of the participant's proposals are captured in the following quote from one of the participants:

> So I think the way I view it, the DSD should extend the years so that we don't discharge these youth when they reach the age of 21 because not every one of them become successful after the age of 21. -------. Therefore, I think if we have a youth centre you know, we are going to refer these youth once they are above the age of 21 so that we can be able to fit them in or to those particular centres. Especially those who are not ready to be out of the foster care system. (*Social worker, CYCC, four years of practice experience as a social worker*).

Another participant suggested that foster placement should be extended until the age of 23:

> In addition, this CYCC sometimes assist the youth until the age of 23 years. Since we do have those youth, who are still struggling even after 23 years. -------. Therefore, that also helps a lot you know post 23 years. However, it also depends on the character and the attitude of the youth because we always tell the youth that you know they need to push themselves now and grab whatever opportunities we can offer to him/her. *(Social worker, CYCC, five years of practice experience as a social worker)*.

The findings suggest that youth leaving the foster care system should be kept in the system until such time where they can be able to provide for themselves and are self-sustainable. In other words, social workers should assess if the youth is ready to be on his/her

own. If he/she still needs assistance from the state, such youth should not be discharged from the provisions of the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

Supervision post foster care placement. Some of the participants also suggested that foster care supervision should continue to post foster care placement since some of the foster children often visits the social worker's offices for further assistance. Usually, they seek assistance with regard to the application to universities, NSFAS, employment or for any advice. One of the participant's suggestion is presented below:

> Yes, we do keep contact with those that we still able to contact them we still keep contact. I have a quite number of them, and I keep chatting with them on life, in general, giving them the support because we understand that they are out of the system, especially those who were placed in unrelated foster care or cluster foster care.-------. I can give an example of one person who wanted to do a learners license and who once said I am stacked here, and I do not have much. I said you do not worry, you can come to my office and we can deal with that because there is no income anymore and they are struggling to find their ways to live. Therefore, we do keep in touch with them. *(Social worker, DSD, seven years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another participant supported the above social worker as follows:

> I still have contact with youth leaving care, and I keep contact with them to check how are they doing and to find out what is it that they are now doing. In addition, I still encourage them to apply if the university applications have been opened. I also remind them of the NSFAS application dates, and I

remind them too during those dates. I even encourage them to come to my office to apply. *(Social worker, DSD, eight years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another three social workers employed within the CYCC also supported the above participants. One of the participants shared that care-leavers are still visiting their offices post foster care:

They still do come to us post foster care. Usually, for academic purposes, because normally they still need financial support even though we are not in a position to assisting them by virtue of them reaching the age of 21 years.--------. In the case of CYCCs, you find that some of the youth leaving care have no one at all to look after them. Then it is very difficult for them while they are transitioning to young adulthood. *(Social worker, CYCC, eight years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another participant recommended that it is important to keep contact with the care-leavers at least three years after they have been discharged from the provisions of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 since some of them would have left their siblings in the CYCC:

Therefore, what you do is to keep in contact with them after three years once they have left the CYCC to find out how are they doing. Others also have their siblings within the CYCC and those staying outside the centre. They do come and visit their siblings. *(Social worker, CYCC, 41 years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The third social worker indicated that they do keep contact with the care-leavers, more especially those who are residing closer to the CYCC:

Yes, we do have relationships with those who have been out of the foster care system. More especially those who are staying closer to the CYCCs. Therefore, what they sometimes do, they just visit during weekends, and we accept them because we consider them as our children even if they have been discharged from the centre. So when they visit, the other children in the CYCC become very happy for them. Even if they want to sleep over, we allow them to sleep over; we also provide food for them, although we do not keep them permanently. *(Social worker, CYCC, four years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The proposal is that social workers should continue supervision services for youth leaving care at least three years after they have been removed from the provisions of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 to facilitate smooth transitioning to young adulthood.

Implementation of the IDP. Most of the participants denoted that social workers should see to it that they are implementing the IDP since it is the most important document that outlines how the social worker is planning to support foster children. The participant's suggestions are demonstrated in the following word for word quote:

I think we need to go back to the IDPs. You know the IDP is the most important document. Normally we use them when we place children in the institutions and really do not apply it when we prepare children in foster care, and we tend to overlook it to say this is an institutional kind of the document. -------. So I think that document is very important and that we need to work on it to make sure that we reinforce it. In addition, it is more applicable to all levels of development.

Some of the participants emphasised the importance of integrating their services with other sister departments, the private sector, Non-profit Organisations (NPOs), Institutions of Higher Learning as well as local government to ensure that youth leaving the foster care system are effectively prepared. One of the participants shared that some of the challenging cases of foster children or youth leaving care; they refer them to psychologists employed by the Department of Health. Other cases involving HIV/Aids are referred to as NPOs, such as Future Families. The other sub-themes that emerged from the findings are presented as follows:

Working together with private companies. The participants emphasised the importance of working together with private companies as they render preparatory programmes for youth, leaving the foster system in South Africa. The two participants indicated that they are working with some of the private companies, including supermarkets such as *SPAR, Shoprite and Pick n Pay*:

> Sometimes, we even go to Spar and Shoprite to ask for help, but we do not do it often. Now we have a voucher from Spar, they gave us a cheque for R5000 to buy food, and it expires at the end of August. *(Social worker, CYCC, two years of practice experience as a social worker).*

> The school is also working together with Pick `n Pay as well as the Department of Labour and Private Hospitals. Some of the youth are referred to Pick `n Pay to be able to work as general workers. Therefore, if they do well, Pick `n Pay can employ them on a permanent basis. *(Social worker, DSD, ten years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The other participant shared that, they are working with some of the private companies such as *KFC and Ford Motor Company*:

> Therefore, for other donations, we rely on the community and private companies such as KFC and Ford Motor Company. However, it is not a lot of money. If you get funding, we only use it for psychological services. (*Social worker, CYCC, five years of practice experience as a social worker*).

Two of the participants shared that they are working with *Harambee*:

> We also send the children's name to Harambee so that they are able to assist them with skills that they want. *(Social worker, CYCC, five years of practice experience as a social worker).*

> When I was attending a workshop, they told us that we need to introduce these children to Harambee. *(Social worker, CYCC, two years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Another participant shared that, they are working with *Dalsey Hillblom Lynn (DHL) Express*:

> We also have a program from the DHL where we send these children to do job shadowing. We have two programs for preparing youth leaving care, namely, we have children who are within the village and outside the village. Once these children complete the program from the DHL, they register them in their database for job opportunities. *(Social worker, CYCC, five years of practice experience as a social worker).*

Integration of services with Institutions of Higher Learning. Many of the participants shared about the importance of working together with the Institutions of Higher Learning in preparing youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa. The following quote gathers the ethos of the participant's views:

> It is also very important to be able to link these youth leaving care with the outside organisations like the Department of Higher Education and other departments that can be able to assist them. It is also significant to have a very good relationship with the Universities so that they can be able to assist us with the admission of the prospective students for them to be able to further their studies. *(Social worker, CYCC, 41 years of practice experience as a social worker).*

The findings point to the importance of working with private companies to prepare youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa. In addition, the above findings also stress the importance of the welfare sector to work together with the Department of Higher Education and Institutions for Higher Learning in order to ensure that youth leaving care are equipped with the necessary skills that can promote independent living. The social support theory states that support is intended to ease the burden on the shoulders of any individual.

Working in partnership with local government. One of the participants mentioned that it is important to work together with Local Government in order to guarantee that youth leaving care have opportunities to get housing, more especially the Department of Housing and Human Settlement. This will be promoting the most important human right of youth leaving care as stipulated in Section 26(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa which state that everyone have a right to have access to adequate housing. The statement of the participant is supported by the quote below:

So sometimes, I even try to work with the local government
to ensure that we find a place for this child to stay. For
example, I sometimes speak to the local councillor to provide
shelter for those youth who are about to leave care and
without families. *(Social worker, CYCC, two years of
practice experience as a social worker).*

The findings argue that youth leaving care also have a right to have access to housing like any South African Citizen, as outlined in the Constitution.

Ok, what we do here we will use the IDP in order to guide us
on how we can prepare youth leaving care. We also refer
some of the children to ITSUSENG. The IDP has many
things, for example school and the child's views. -------. In the
IDP, we also have a program called Tshiamo, where these
children are supposed to attend classes during Saturdays.
*(Social worker, CYCC, five years of practice experience as a
social worker).*

The participants stress the importance of utilising the IDP as one of the tools to prepare youth leaving the foster care system. Therefore, these calls for social workers to go back and review why are they not implementing the IDP and start utilising it for the benefit of the foster children.

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings are discussed from the data collected from care-leavers and social workers. In addition, the results are incorporated with literature and the theoretical frameworks.

6.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND INTEGRATION OF LITERATURE

Experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa. The findings indicate concurring views of participants (care-leavers and social workers) on their experiences of the foster care system. As maintained by the participants, children have experienced abandonment, orphanhood, abuse, deliberate neglect, substance abuse, HIV/Aids, and mothers deceased and father`s whereabouts unknown. The participants highlighted that all the children or youth who were put in foster care was because of one or more of the above-mentioned reasons. This is in conformity with the provisions of Section 150 of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 identifying children who need care and security as those children who amongst other reasons, are those children who have been deserted, orphaned and is without any visible means of assistance, stays on the street, addicted to a dependence-producing substance, is in a condition of physical or mental disregard, is mishandled, and ill-treated or intentionally neglected by a parent or guardian (Republic of South Africa, 2006). This is additionally upheld by Shaw et al. (2020) when they stated that the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 recognise a child as someone needing care and protection because of abuse, neglect and being orphaned.

Frimpong-Manso (2018) states that children housed in residential care in Ghana are placed as a result of the following reasons; abandonment, orphaned hood and being destitute children. Poverty is regarded as the main reason why children are placed in a children's village (Frimpong-Manso, 2018). In other international countries such as India, Brazil, Spain, Netherlands, and the USA, a child is placed in foster care for the same reasons as are prevalent

in South Africa such as being orphans, abuse, abandonment and neglect (Dutta, 2017; Cassarino-Perez, Crous, Goemans, Montserrat & Sarriera, 2018; Cooley, Womack, Rush & Slinskey, 2020). However, according to van Breda (2020), in South Africa, we do not have available public information on the purposes behind children to be put in residential care facilities, although, available information suggests that children are most anticipated to be placed in residential care because of behavioural challenges.

Challenges faced by social workers in rendering foster care services. The findings from the participants show that social workers are confronted with many difficulties and barriers that hampers the rendering of foster care services to foster children and youth, leaving the foster care system. These challenges and barriers range from poor working relationship amongst the social service professionals and foster children, as well as social worker and the caregivers. Shaw et al. (2020) conducted a study in which it was found that almost all the participants were not adequately prepared to face life after the foster care system or perhaps seen by the social worker after the placement has been processed. The perspective of the researchers alludes that, the reality of the situation in South Africa is that social workers are having challenges of high caseloads that are believed to influence their time management in respect of the preparing youths to face life after foster care, since they put more focus on keeping their caseload updated (Shaw et al., 2020).

In addition to the above-mentioned challenges and obstacles, the participants shared that social workers lack resources, they are also faced with challenges of delay in the funding provided by the DSD, and they are understaffed. Foster parents and the CYCCs are also criticised for poor management of the foster child grant. As part of the main cause for the non-availability of policies and adequate services for care-leavers, this is contributed by the lack of human resources and financing intended specifically for youth leaving care (Van Breda, 2018). Due to lack of funding, residential care facilities are left without a ratification to render aftercare services, and youth often move away from the care facility after being discharged from

the prescripts of the Act, Children`s Act 38 of 2005 (Van Breda, 2020). In most cases, future planning for youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa often occurs in the last year in youth`s placement at a CYCC, and this adds the burden of stress to the already challenging time (Bond & Van Breda, 2018). In a study conducted by Dhludhlu (2015), the findings indicate that there is no enough provision of resources by the DSD and consequently, this impedes the delivery of social services to the beneficiaries.

Challenges faced by care-leavers. The findings from the interviews held with the participants indicate that youth leaving the foster care system are confronted with numerous difficulties and barriers which ranges from unemployment, lack of housing, lack of supervision services, teenage pregnancy, school dropouts, abuse from the legal caregivers, sexual abuse, and abuse of foster child grant. As claimed by some of the participants, youth leaving the foster care system are unemployed, and those who are employed are in unstable jobs. South Africa has the most elevated rate of unemployed youth globally (Bond & Van Breda, 2018; Shaw et al., 2020). In his address to the nation (2020), the South African President, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa shared that in South Africa, the greater part of all youths are jobless and this is a crisis (Republic of South Africa, 2020).

Youth leaving the foster care system are also amongst these youths who are affected by unemployment. According to the QLFS results that were released by the StatsSA in the first quarter of 2019, there is a decline in employment rate (down by 237 000) and a rising number in the unemployment rate (up by 62 000), compared to the fourth quarter of 2018 (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Therefore, it was reported that the rate of joblessness in South Africa has increased by 0, 5 and bringing the unemployment rate above 27% (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Many of the unemployed population in RSA is the youth between the age 15 and 34 (Statistics South Africa, 2019). It is further reported that those unemployed youths did not finish their secondary education, and the ones who were blessed enough to find employment are in a low-skilled job (Statistics South Africa, 2017; Sulimani-Aidan, 2017; Bond & Van Breda,

2018). The unemployment rate amongst youth leaving the foster care system with lower levels of secondary education is reported to be significantly higher than those care leavers with higher levels of secondary education (Cassarino-Perez et al., 2018; Shaw et al., 2020).

In addition to the challenges of youth unemployment, the findings from the participants point out that youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa find themselves without housing or shelter. Moreover, those who manage to find shelter are either renting a room or staying in the houses that are not registered under their names. Homelessness for youth leaving care is also regarded as a global challenge. In the studies conducted on the outcomes for foster care alumni or care-leavers, indicates that these youths are at risk of being without homes (Shaw et al., 2020). Van Breda (2018) shared that in one of the studies conducted on the challenges of accommodation, it was found that the third of the youth leaving care were residing in an informal residence between one and seven years after being taken off from the rules of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005. It was further highlighted that owning a home is associated with one of the goals for successfully transitioning to young adulthood (Van Breda, 2018).

Some of the participants raised concerns about inadequate supervision and reunification services from social workers. This results in some of the care-leavers without knowing their biological parents or relatives. When children are taken to alternative care, family bond or involvement is often ended, and there are an inadequate rendering of reunification services by the social workers (Van Breda, 2018). The primary goal of the majority of children and youth leaving care is to be reunified with their biological parents (Killos et al., 2018). Shaw et al. (2020) embarked on a study and the majority of participants mentioned that the part played by the social worker is critical during rendering of preparatory programmes to leave care and to ensure that their circumstances in life changes. Supervision, reunification and aftercare services during the first year out of care is also regarded as useful in reducing the likelihood of youth being involved in criminal activities (Van Breda, 2020).

The findings from the participants indicate that some of the youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa are victims of teenage pregnancy during their adolescence stage. This hinders them from completing their secondary education since they had to leave school to look after their children. Teenage pregnancy amongst youth leaving the foster care system is amongst the well-documented poor outcomes of care-leavers globally (Bond & Van Breda, 2018). However, it should be noted that teenage pregnancy is not only the reason that leads many youths leaving care to drop out of school. Instead, care-leavers often leave school earlier than expected due to various reasons (Van Breda, 2018). In addition, some of the youths do not complete school because of their money struggles (Shaw et al., 2020). Some of them later realise the importance of completing their secondary education, and they return to school without the support of the foster child grant (Shaw et al., 2020).

The findings reveal that some of the youths leaving care turned out to be the victims of maltreatment by the caregivers, sexual abuse by the members of the foster care family, including the abuse of their foster child grants. According to Cassarino-Perez et al. (2018), approximately two and a half million children and youth are victims of abuse and neglect around the whole world; hence, the Child Welfare System takes them into care. Although youth placed in the foster care system have positive experiences such as provisions of basic needs, they are also faced with negative experiences, which includes the staff incompetence, bullying, sexual abuse and lack of aftercare services (Nurcombe-Thorne, Nadesan & Van Breda, 2018)). Therefore, it is essential to always make sure that children are placed in foster care with the caregiver who is fit to provide a stable and caring environment that promotes effective mentoring (Cassarino-Perez et al., 2018). Exposure to a dependable, caring and professional caregiver is believed to have the capacity to develop possible positive selves that contributes to the development of reliance (Bond & Van Breda, 2018). Foster parents are also urged to always manage the foster child grant to the child`s benefit or youth since this grant possess a pivotal function in the lives of the foster children or youths (Shaw et al., 2020). Moreover, to what

happens in the life of the youth once they are discharged from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 (Shaw et al., 2020).

Opportunities for foster care placement. Despite the challenges of being a care-leaver in foster care, there are also benefits brought by foster care services. A vast number of participants perceive that foster care placement comes with many opportunities for foster children and youth placed in the foster care system. Placement in foster care offer children and youth opportunities to receive therapy and counselling, which they often do not receive prior to their placement. In contrast, Tanur (2012) is of the view that youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa intensive therapeutic services are not provided when they leave care. Nurcombe-Thorne et al. (2018) suggested that CYCCs should limit the worker-to-child ration in order to provide more opportunities for meaningful and individualised interaction. Based on the arguments above, the conclusion is that youths leaving the foster care system are not prepared to manage difficulties of unemployment, forming and maintaining positive and healthy relationships, particularly in South Africa (Tanur, 2012).

In addition to therapy and counselling, foster children and youths under foster care are allowed to benefit from their fundamental human rights of belonging to the family and having shelter, having a sense of identity, religion, culture and access to education. One of the major goals of foster care is to insure that foster children are placed in a safe and loving family environment until they reach the stage of adulthood (Killos, Vesneki, Pecora, Rebbe & Christian, 2018). Although, there are those children or youth placed in foster care who feel like the aspects of culture, more especially language is being neglected by those rendering foster care services (Nurcombe-Thorne et al., 2018).

Foster children also receive a foster child grant, which helps them to meet their financial needs. The benefits of the foster child grants are regarded as allowing children to have access to free basic education and basic health services (Dickens & Marx, 2018; Nurcombe-Thorne et al., 2018; Shaw, Steyn & Simeon, 2020). Cassarino-Perez et al. (2018) state that investing in

education is also vital in order to facilitate the achievement of positive employment outcomes. This inline with Section 27, 28 and 29 of "the Constitution of the South Africa Republic, which state that every child has a right to social security, family or parental care, shelter, social services, basic education, including adult primary education and to further education" (Republic of South Africa, 1996:p1255-1256). Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017) also stress this when they state that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa shall enshrine both the social and economic rights as human rights that must be enjoyed by all the citizens of the country irrespective of their gender, ethnic group or race.

Social support services. The findings of the participants on the social support services rendered to care-leavers seemed to be contradicting. Some of them emphasise the importance of all the social support services namely; emotional support, esteem support, informational support, instrumental support, and network support, while in contrast, others were of the idea that not all the social support services were vital. According to Adley and Kina (2017), the most important thing to realise is that young people are all different and they need customised support packages.

The major concern from most of the participants was the inadequate supply of the social support programmes to youth leaving care by the social workers and their families. This sentiment is supported by Sulimani-Aidan (2017) and Frimpong-Manso (2018) when they shared that young people from residential care usually navigate the stage of emerging adulthood with little or no support from the Welfare Sector. The findings from the study conducted by Melkman and Benbenishty (2018) revealed that many of the youth leaving care enjoy sufficient levels of support from at least three persons or more with whom they have regular contacts with for at least once a week. In a study conducted by Tanur (2012), participants indicated that during the course of leaving care, they mostly experienced the absence of the following support services from social workers; financial, social and emotional support. While in a study conducted by Shaw et al. (2020), participants shared that they still needed a security for

continued financial, social and emotional support and nurturing that would have to be offered by their families of origin after leaving care. The data collected by Melkman and Benbenishty (2018) proved that the size of the emotional and informational support has made a notable contribution to the adjustment of youth to post-school environment, while the acceptability of the network has had an impact on their economic and housing outcomes. Based on the arguments presented above, it can be concluded that youth leaving care need social support prior leaving the foster care system and after leaving the foster system in order to move out of the foster care system successfully.

Although there were those who felt, they would not have survived without the social support provided by the social workers. Moreover, these youth are regarded as resilient care leavers. Besides the personal strengths that they possess, resilient care leavers are reported to depend on the positive relationships and support from various sources, namely; partners, fiancée, peers, social workers, family members, foster parents and/or caregivers in order to face whatever challenge they happen to encounter in life (Adley & Kina, 2017; Dutta, 2017; Frimpong-Manso, 2018). Adley and Kina (2017) also emphasise the importance of social support services, and they highlighted that the youths who have exited the foster care system had little support networks as compared to those young people who are still in the system since they were involved in less social events.

It is believed that with the presence of positive relationships, youth leaving care usually successfully transition to young adulthood. Research reveals that any form of well-grounded social support from the caregiver, family members, peers and/or friends may lead to successful outcomes in the process of leaving care (Dutta, 2017; Wojciak, McWey & Waid, 2018). Youth leaving care in Flanders shared that their focus is, in particular, on the sources of support within themselves and their immediate environment (Van Audenhove & Vander Laenen, 2017). They further shared that the importance of significant others is their motivator to deal with challenges that they are faced with (Van Audenhove & Vander Laenen, 2017). The housemothers or

caregivers within the residential care facility are also believed to be playing a good role in the positive transitioning of youth leaving care (Frimpong-Manso, 2018). Research also found that belonging relationships with either a parent, peers, relative and foster carers are central to identity development amongst the children and youth placed in foster care (Nurcombe-Thorne et al., 2018). Other support systems are the CYCC managers, nurses, psychologists and social workers (Frimpong-Manso, 2018). In conclusion, the findings showed that all the social support services are essential to prepare youth on their journey of leaving care depending on their individual needs.

Resilience. The findings on resilience in leaving the foster care system indicated that every individual, including youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa, has the potential to bounce back from any challenging situation. Resilience is one of the factors that can enable youth leaving care to find accomplishment in their lives in spite of the poor backgrounds, challenges or misfortune that they have gone through in life (Adley & Kina, 2017). In the face of difficulties, those with resilience enablers may rely on personal, related environmental resources for successful adaptation (Frimpong-Manso, 2018). Some of the participants viewed graduating as the key element for them in securing a better job and lessening their social vulnerabilities, such as financial difficulties and housing challenges (Van Audenhove & Vander Laenen, 2017; Cassarino-Perez et al., 2018; Van Breda, 2018). Many researchers had over the years highlighted that educational qualification is another factor that is believed to have a positive connection with the experience of social reunification of young people out of care (Dutta, 2017). Dutta (2017) further stated that Iglehart concluded in 1994 that performance from school is an important predictor for care-leavers future capability to develop a positive support environment.

According to the participants, youth leaving the foster care system, they also rely on various systems including social workers, caregivers, peers, siblings, fiancé, CYCC managers, school and educational system, religion or church and family members. What came out from the

results in a study conducted by Frimpong-Manso (2018) was that the care-leavers capacity to form important relationships with the members of staff in the residential care facility and their peers contributed significantly to their successful transitioning out of care. This is also an element that has also been discovered by other researchers in the research conducted on care leaving (Bond & Van Breda, 2018; Collins, Spencer & Ward, 2010; Schofield & Beek 2009; Sulimani-Aidan, 2016). In a study conducted by Adley and Kina (2017), some of the participants also shared that the church played a significant role in terms of their support network.

In addition to these systems, the results specify that some of the youth leaving the foster care system also abuse substances and engage in sexual activities as their coping mechanisms and these results in teenage pregnancy. Foster youth are reported to have higher rates of many sexual risks and substance abuse, which exposes them to early, unintended pregnancies and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) (Albertson, Crouch, Udel, Schmmel-Bristow, Serrano & Ahrens, 2018). According to Albertson et al. (2018), youth leaving the foster care system resort to teenage pregnancy because they believe that a baby can provide them with the relationship in which they can be able to give and/or receive the kind of affection, love and family and connections that they have never received from their parents.

Findings from the participants from various CYCCs indicated that youth leaving care also ensure that they get a driver`s licence before they are discharged from residential care and securing employment before leaving care. In a study conducted by Van Breda (2018), care leavers reported that in some cases, they are being supported with obtaining a driving licence by the residential care centres. This can also be found in the study conducted by Bond (2010) that some of the youth leaving care indeed are assisted in securing a driving licence. Perhaps this should be adopted by all the organisations rendering foster care services to children and youth. As we build resilience amongst the youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa, it also critical for the investigators and social welfare practitioners to understand and integrate training

of foster parents as well as support that can also strengthen foster parent resilience (Cooley, Womack, Rush & Slinskey, 2020).

Lack of guidelines for preparing youth leaving care. The findings from several participants showed that there are no guidelines for preparing youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa; instead, social workers used their discretion on how to prepare these youths. In South Africa, there is an absence of guidelines or programmes possible to prepare youth leaving the foster care system and the South African legislations do not make provisions for independent living programmes for preparing youth for life after foster care (Bond, 2018; Shaw et al., 2010; Van Breda, 2018). In a study conducted by Nurcombe-Thorne et al. (2018), participants shared that they are not involved in decisions regarding their care, and they reported that they are not adequately prepared for life aftercare. According to Van Breda (2018), in 2015 Bond did a comparative policy review of the USA, UK, Australia, and RSA and she concluded that there are very limited policies for care leaving in the South African Children`s Act and aiding documents. In other words, social workers are left to decide for themselves on how to render services to youth, leaving the foster care system. Hence, all the participants shared that they were not adequately prepared for life after foster care and as a result, they struggle to grapple with life after leaving the foster care system (Shaw et al., 2020). This seems to be also a regional challenge. In a study conducted in Ghana by Frimpong-Manso (2012), it was found that most residential facilities lack structured programmes designed to prepare youth for independent living. Lack of guidelines for preparing youth leaving care can also be a global challenge. Sulimani-Aidan (2017) found that youth leaving care face challenges and hurdles in attaining future goals since they lack support and guidance from adult figures or those working in the Welfare Sector.

Poor monitoring of social workers in rendering supervision, reunification and aftercare services. In addition to lack of guidelines for preparing youth for life aftercare, the participants shared that the DSD do not monitor how social workers render supervision, reunification and

aftercare services. What is important to social workers is to ensure that they extend the foster care orders and to check if the child or youth is still attending school. Supervision, reunification and aftercare services are regarded as essential programmes intended to promote social reintegration (Dutta, 2017). Reunification programmes are essential to allow the biological parents of the children who have been identified as in need of care and protection, to approach the commissioner of the children`s court with a view to end guardianship of his/her child (Killos et al., 2018). Moreover, to seek for an opportunity to be reunified with the biological child if he/she can prove that there is an improvement in the family circumstances and they are found to be in a good position to look after their children (Killos et al., 2018). Findings of the study conducted by Adley and Kina (2017) revealed that social workers are usually not aware what is going on behind the scene of a care leaver and as result, that leaves the care leavers feeling isolated and without emotional support.

Some of the findings from the participants indicate that social workers employed within the CYCCs are struggling to render reunification services, and as a result, youth leave the foster care system without anyone to look after them. Lastly, the findings indicate that youth leaving the foster care system are only informed that their foster child grant will be suspended without preparing them for life after foster care. Shaw et al. (2020) suggested that guidelines for independent living or for preparing youth, leaving the foster care system should be developed by the DSD and/or NPOs.

Integration of services. The findings on the integration of services within the DSD, CYCCs, other government departments, private sector, non-profit organisations, Institutions of Higher Learning and local government seems to indicate that it is lacking. The participants emphasise the importance of working with the following stakeholders; the Department of Housing and Human Settlement, SPAR, Shoprite, Pick n Pay, Harambee, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), Ford Motor Company and Dalsey Hillblom Lynn (DHL) Express. The term integration is used in most of the policies and legislations of the government. The NPAC in

South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 2013) gives a comprehensive framework for the combination of all regulations and plans developed by government departments, non-profit organisations and civil society to promote the welfare of children. In addition, "the White Paper for Social Welfare which was adopted in 1997 to promote the developmental approach, It refers to social welfare, which includes foster care services, to an integrated and comprehensive system of social services, facilities, programmes and social security to promote social development, social justice and the social functioning of people" (Republic of South Africa, 1997:p04). The gap in the literature on the integration of services seems to indicate a lack from the DSD in developing programmes, which are built to better lives of foster care parents, children, and their families. The participants, therefore, proposed that social workers employed within the DSD and CYCCs should strengthen their working relationship since this has been found to be lacking.

Intimate and marital relationships. The findings from the participants show that most of them are not married, and they have children born out of wedlock. In a study conducted by Dutta (2017) on the social reintegration of young girls leaving the foster care system, it was found that less than 32% of the participants were married and three per cent were separated with their husbands. Looking at these findings, it seems there is a less percentage of youth departing the foster care system who are married. Furthermore, the findings indicate that youth leaving the foster care system have many children who were born out of wedlock. This is a challenge since research suggest that women who give birth during the teenage stage have a less chance of completing secondary education compared to those who gave birth beyond adolescence stage (Addo, Sassler & Williams, 2016). In addition, this is also believed to limit their opportunities for employment in high-quality jobs (Addo, Sassler & Williams, 2016).

Suggestions for preparing youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa. The participants have proposed many solutions to address the challenges of youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa. These solutions range from making it mandatory for foster parents

and CYCC to save money for foster children; rendering of supervision post foster care placement; panel between the case manager and the social worker employed at the CYCC; preparatory programme for youth leaving care from 15-18 years; integration of services between government and the private sector; extending foster care placement beyond the age of 21; implementation of the Individual Development Plan and establishment of the shelter for youth leaving the foster care system or housing allocation of youth leaving care; continued contact with biological parents of foster children; promoting confidentiality; considering the views of foster children or youth leaving care; linking youth leaving care with available resources; placing foster children with suitable foster parents; therapy or counselling, and supporting youth leaving care to complete grade 12.

Most of the participants suggested that it must be obligatory for foster care parents and CYCCs to make savings of a fragment of the foster child grant or stipends paid monthly to residential care centres. According to the participants, these savings can go a long way in assisting youth leaving the foster care system to pay for registration at the university and to have a capital that can assist them while they are trying to adapt to life after foster care. Although looking at the economy of the country, we cannot expect foster parents are saving from the small foster child grant of R1000 per month. The study conducted by Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017), showed that this is possible if the foster care parents and CYCCs are committed to doing so. In his Budget Speech 2020, the Finance Minister Mr Tito Mboweni announced that the foster child grant would increase from R1000 to R1080. For example, saving R280 per month for eighteen years is a guarantee that the foster child will have savings of more than R60 000 once he/she is discharged from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005.

Another proposal from the participants is that rendering of aftercare programmes for youth leaving the foster care system should continue at least three years after the youth has been emancipated from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 to allow them to have a

smooth transitioning to young adulthood. Other participants suggested that foster care placement should continue beyond the age of 21 if the young person is still attending school or furthering his/her studies at a tertiary institution. This can also cater for those youth who have special needs and cannot be reunited with their families. Shaw et al. (2020) believed that foster children who have reached the majority age of 18 years or 21 years to leave the foster care system in South Africa are often not efficiently prepared for transitioning to young adulthood. In a study conducted by Van Breda (2018), only few care-leavers felt ready to leave the foster care system in South Africa, since they believed that they were adequately prepared, and more than 90% desired they could remain in the foster care system. In the USA, the Fostering Connections Act allows states to continue providing subsidies beyond the age of 18 if the young adult meet conditions such as completing high school, enrolled in a post-secondary or vocation education programme, preparing to work or having a condition that prevents him or her engaging in these activities (Killos et al., 2018). Frimpong-Manso (2018) warned social workers that they should always consider that being in school for care-leavers meant that they are guaranteed to enjoy an extended stay in care. To have this extended stay in alternative care means that they do not need worry about tuition and accommodation while furthering their studies (Frimpong-Manso, 2018).

One of the participants suggested that social workers should start rendering preparatory programmes for care-leavers from the age of 15 to 18 years. Some of the participants also suggested this since they believe that most of the children start to be matured at the age of 15. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 defines the child as any person under the age of 18 years, and therefore children are required to be discharged from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2010), at the end of their eighteenth year, thus at the end of the school year. However, according to Tanur (2012), many young people who are 18 years old do not yet possess necessary skills to be able to face life on their own after being released from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2008. Therefore, the abrupt termination of the state

support in the form of foster care and foster child grant at age 18 results in poor outcomes for care-leavers, who are believed to still require financial, social and emotional support from the state (Tanur, 2012). In the USA, there is an Independent Living Programme (ILP), which assists current and care-leavers between the ages of 16 and 21 to be self-sustainable before and after leaving care (Shaw et al., 2020). Youth leaving the foster care system, therefore, suggested that social workers should frequently visit them and organise pre-arranged meetings so that the responsibility is not only on the young person to call up the social worker and seek for help (Adley & Kina, 2017).

The participants stress the importance of utilising the IDP as one of the tools to prepare youth leaving the foster care system. Therefore, these calls for social workers to go back and review why are they not implementing the IDP and start utilising it for the benefit of the foster children. According to the Children`s Act 38 of 2005, every child placed in alternative care should have an Individual Development Plan (IDP) which is regarded as an assessment tool (Republic of South Africa, 2006). According to the Children`s Act 38 of 2005, assessment of the child can be defined, "as a process of investigating the developmental needs of the child, namely; family environment or any other circumstances that may have a bearing on the child`s need for care, protection and therapeutic services". This assessment needs to be conducted within four weeks after the child has been placed in alternative care and the review of the IDP take place every six months (Republic of South Africa, 2012). In addition to the IDP, some of the participants recommended that the state should establish a shelter for care-leavers, more especially those who are not reunited with their families. Furthermore, participants suggested that social workers should ensure that they have access to housing. Most of the studies on the outcomes of youth leaving care indicated that youth leaving care are most-at-risk of being homeless (Shaw et al., 2020; Van Audenhove & Vander Laenen, 2017; Van Breda, 2018).

In order to ensure that youth leaving the foster care system are adequately prepared for life after foster care, the participants felt that there must a continued contact with their

biological parents while they are in foster care. They believed that family preservation is vital for them to ensure that they reunite with their families once they are discharged from the provisions of the Children`s legislations. Furthermore, this will make certain that their fundamental right to identity is protected. The participants suggest this proposal because they feel that family engagements often ceases once they are placed in foster care or residential care and in addition, this hinders effective rendering of reunification services (Van Breda, 2018). If the family engagements cease many youths, lose their identity or denied an opportunity to know about their family roots or backgrounds. The "section 28 (1) (a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa lays down that all children have the right to a name and nationality from birth" (Republic of South Africa, 1996:p11). This is also in line with Article 8 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which also emphasises the importance of respecting the child`s right to maintain his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relationships (United Nations, 1990).

Participants also proposed that social workers should always adhere to the ethics of confidentiality when they interview them to render supervision services. According to a number of participants, they are not free to be able to share their experiences with the social worker in the presence of the foster parent or any person working in the CYCC. Therefore, social workers are warned to always remember that rendering of social work support services to care-leavers is very likely to turn down if the youth has his/her own idealistic vision of how the transition will play out (Adley & Kina, 2017). In a study conducted by Van Audenhove and Vander Laenen (2017), youth indicated that social workers should combine the three important counselling components, namely confidentiality, unconditional positive regard and flexibility. Therefore, it is very crucial for social workers to hear the views or voices of youth leaving care in every matter that involves them. This was also one of the findings from this study undertaken by the researcher.

A notable number of participants suggested that social workers should always ensure that they link them with any available resources that can enable them to be self-sustainable and to live independent lives. With that said, the youths are not disputing the fact that they are the ones holding the key for successfully transitioning to young adulthood and that the social workers or agency is only there to grant them access to the resources that can help them to tackle difficulties that life presents (Audenhove & Vander Laenen, 2017). Most of the social workers interviewed shared that they supported some of the youth leaving care to obtain a driving licence, on-the-job learning and to access sponsorship for further education and training. The participants in a study conducted by Bond (2010) also confirmed this.

A portion of the participants proposed that social workers should ensure that children placed in foster care are placed with an applicable foster parent since they are the most vulnerable groups in the community. This means that prospective foster parents must be thoroughly vetted, for example, they need to submit a police clearance, and in addition, they should be checked if they are not listed in the Child Protection Register as individuals who are not allowed to take care of the children. Some of the foster parents face various challenges if they are not adequately prepared to take care of the children (Albertson, Crouch, Udell, Schimmel-Bristow, Serrano & Ahrens, 2018; Colley et al., 2020). They face challenges such as insufficient finances, dissatisfaction with the quality of services, and having difficulties in navigating the system (Cooley et al., 2020). Participants pointed that prospective foster parents seemed to be more obsessed with the payment of foster child grant than focusing on the care of the child (Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017). Findings hinted that some of the foster parents lose interests in the caring of the foster child when the foster child grant lapses or when the child becomes a teenager or turn eighteen. Care-leavers are reported to be experiencing immediate adulthood because they have to depart from foster care at the age of 16-18 years and without any probability of returning to foster care placement if they encounter difficulties in life (Frimpong-Manso, 2018). This also results in the youth leaving care to have poor outcomes

when ageing out of foster care since they are not adequately prepared for independent living (Shaw et al., 2020).

Some of the participants recommended that social service practitioners should always ensure that youth leaving the foster care system are always provided with therapy or counselling to be able to deal with what lead them to be placed in in the foster care system. Furthermore, therapy and counselling can also assist youth leaving the foster care system to be able to deal with the death of their parents or any social ills that they have experienced in life. Tanur (2012) argues that youth leaving the foster care system is not prepared to deal with the susceptibilities such as acquiring a job and building and sustaining healthy relationships after leaving care.

Lastly, participants recommended that care-leavers should always be supported to complete grade 12 before leaving the foster care system. Completion of grade 12 is believed to be their ticket to be self-reliant and live self-sustainable and independent lives. However, many studies indicate that youth leaving the foster care system are more likely to experience challenges in education (Van Audenhove & Vander Laenen, 2017). Other studies show that youth leaving the foster care system have a desire to continue with their knowledge and to further their studies, but having discomfort to pursue it and a lack of support within the social environment (Van Breda, 2018). In closing, we should note that youth leaving the foster care system are aware that returning to school or staying in care longer to gain higher or secondary education level means they have a better chance of finding a stable job and income (Frimpong-Manso, 2018).

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the research findings and conclusions drawn from this research study. Lastly, recommendations will be made based on the results and conclusions to give an in-depth understanding of the challenges and experiences of youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa. In addition, social workers will have more knowledge of what needs to be done to ensure that youth leaving the foster care system are adequately prepared to live independent lives.

7.2 Conclusions

This study seeks to explore the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa, in an attempt to promote independent living and to guide social workers rendering services to youth leaving care. The researcher is of the view that this goal has been achieved from the results obtained during the interviews with the social workers and care-leavers. Furthermore, the results are anticipated to add value to social work practice by ensuring that guidelines for preparing youth leaving care are developed for social workers and to contribute to policy development.

Experiences of youth leaving the foster care system - It is evident, considering the results that youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa have experienced abandonment, orphaned hood, abuse, deliberate neglect, are from families with parents abusing substances, they are born from parents infected with HIV/Aids, and mother`s deceased and father`s whereabouts unknown. This is in line with Section 150 of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2006), which plainly states who is the child in need of care and protection.

In this study, a number of elements have led to children being placed in alternative care. The research results indicate that the majority of the foster children in South Africa, were placed in foster care as results of abandonment, orphanhood, abuse and deliberate neglect, parents abusing substances, parents infected with HIV/Aids and the father`s whereabouts unknown. These findings are confirmed with the literature, which states that approximately 2.7 million of children and adolescents who are placed within the welfare system globally are placed because of abuse and neglect (Cassarino-Perez et al., 2018; O'Higgins, Sebba & Gardner, 2017). In South Africa, as compared to anywhere in the planet, children are regarded as one of the most at-risk class in the public (Shaw et al., 2020; Van Breda, 2020). These children are protected by the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 if found to be needing care and protection, for example, amongst others being orphaned, abused and neglected (Shaw et al., 2020; Van Breda, 2020).

Youth leaving the foster care system also has various experiences post the foster care placement. Some of the experiences of youth leaving the foster care system include a less prepared and not focused process of leaving care, an absence of opportunity to participate in decisions concerning their lives, a lack of support from immediate birth families, giving up a safe network and a period of successful support (Haggman-Laitila et al., 2018). From the perspective of care-leavers (FYIC) in the study conducted by Rutman and Hubberstey (2018), most of them frequently shared that they lacked guidance or support from their families or other caring adults. Youth leaving the foster care system have these experiences despite having the strengths and resilience to lead a better life and the survival skills the youth have acquired during foster care placements (Haggman-Laitila et al., 2018).

Challenges and barriers of youth leaving care - It is clear in the research results that youth leaving the foster care system are faced with various challenges and obstacles. They face challenges such as unemployment, lack of shelter or housing, constant changing of foster care homes, lack of communication with foster parents, lack of reunification services, abuse by the

foster care parents or caregivers, teenage pregnancy, school dropout, sexual abuse and prostitution and abuse of their foster child grants. In a study conducted by Chambers et al. (2018), many of the participants used the term "abuse" to describe how foster parents, caregivers and residential care staff members treated them. Haggman-Laitila, Salokekkila and Karki (2018) also confirmed that youth leaving the foster care system are faced with challenges including lack of educational qualifications, housing challenges, unemployment and financial unsteadiness, difficulty in forming relationships and taking into cultural norms, and denied access to universal health care. It can, therefore, be deduced that youth leaving the foster care system have been faced with various challenges before foster placement, during foster placement and after foster care placement.

The findings convey that youth leaving the foster care system are not treated well by the foster parents or caregivers. To cope with the challenges that they face while in the foster care system, some of them resort to unprotected sex and prostitution that in some instances, results in teenage pregnancy. In a study conducted in the USA, it was found that youth leaving care and care-leavers are at a higher risk of early and unwanted pregnancies and the majority of these pregnancies are unintended (Albertson et al., 2018). About 50% of young girls placed in foster care reported that they had at least one pregnancy by the age of 19 and the young boys shared the same sentiment concerning their paternity (Albertson et al., 2018). Coler (2018) shared that females are most likely to be first time parents (7%) as compared to males (2, 5%).

Suppose the youths are leaving care experiences teenage pregnancy, they drop out of school and find themselves without a stable job. Literature indicates that on the comparison, care-leavers fall out of school at an earlier age than youth from the population at large (Gypen, Vanderfaeillie, Maeyer, Belenger & Van Holen, 2017; Chambers, Crutchfield, Willis, Cuza, Otero, Harper & Carmichael, 2018). Since the majority of the youth leaving care do not have a stable job, they also end up without any form of shelter or housing that is registered in their names. The above challenges and barriers of youth, leaving the foster care system in South

Africa seems to be affecting both children and youths placed within the DSD and those placed within the CYCCs. According to Van Breda (2018), internationally, the challenges of youth leaving care are well documented across number important life realms, namely; employment, education, housing, pregnancy and involvement with the criminal justice system. South Africa has the highest unemployment rate amongst the youth globally, and the majority of the unemployed youths are either not completed secondary education (StatsSA, 2017; Bond & Van Breda, 2018).On the other hand, young people regard school as an anchor in their lives when they face life challenges due to changes in foster care placement or serious family breakdown (Rutman & Hubberstey, 2018). Furthermore, school personnel are also regarded as people to whom youth sought solace when they experience a difficult situation. A number of studies indicate that the challenge of unemployment amongst youth leaving the foster care system with lower levels of education is higher than amongst care-leavers with secondary or higher education (Cassarino-Perez, 2018). The above challenges and barriers are believed to be caused by a lack of programmes or guidelines for preparing youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa (Shaw et al., 2020).

Challenges and barriers in rendering foster care services - Social workers indicated that they also face a number of challenges when rendering foster care services to youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa. The findings suggest that social workers face various challenges and barriers, including non-cooperation from foster children and foster parents or caregivers. It is imperative to take note that a stable relationship with a caring caregiver is necessary for the enhancement of effective mentorship (Cassarino-Perez et al., 2018). Social workers are also confronted with difficulties such as the absence of resources, funding for the rendering of effective foster care services and expensive psychological services to youth leaving care. In South Africa, CYCCs do not receive funding for rendering aftercare services, and they are also not mandated to provide such aftercare services to youth leaving care, and as a result, young people often move remotely from the residential care facility after being discharged from

the prescripts of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 (Van Breda, 2020). In a study conducted by Dhludhlu (2017), social workers shared the opinion that the supply of adequate resources could facilitate the effective rendering of social work services to service recipients. The findings indicate that social workers employed within the DSD are amongst others working in conditions where there is no enough office space, no enough vehicles, poor access to internet services, few cellular phones and non-functional printing machines. In addition, the findings from the social workers employed with the CYCCs indicate that there is a delay in the provision of funding from the DSD, shortage of children`s clothes and expensive psychological services.

Foster care supervision, reunification and aftercare services - In addition to the challenges faced by youth leaving the foster system in South Africa, the findings further indicate that the DSD currently do not have guidelines for preparing youth leaving the foster care system in South. This also a case with the CYCCs. Social workers use their own discretion on how to prepare youth leaving care. Literature concurs that there are no enough policies or legislations for youth leaving care in the South African Children`s Act 38 of 2005 and supporting document (Van Breda, 2018). According to Shaw et al. (2020), South Africa do not have aftercare programmes or guidelines available to prepare youth, leaving the foster care system.

In South Africa, the future planning of the youth leaving care is often not attended to until the final year in a young person`s placement at a residential care facility, and as a result, this adds the load of pressure onto an already strenuous time for youth and welfare system (Bond & Van Breda, 2018). This is also the case in Africa where most residential care facilities are reported to lack well-planned structured programmes for preparing youth to live independent lives (Frimpong-Manso, 2018). Social workers seem not to understand what is happening behind the closed doors of youth leaving care and as a result, this leaves care-leavers secluded and without necessary social support services (Adley & Kina, 2017). It can, therefore, be concluded that the DSD does not have guidelines for preparing youth leaving the foster care

system in South Africa. Youth leaving the foster care system are only informed that their foster care placement and foster child grant will be terminated without preparing for life after alternative care. The Children`s Act 38 of 2005 also does not specify how youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa can be prepared for independent living.

Opportunities of foster care placement - As much as there are challenges and barriers in foster care, youth is leaving the foster care system are also offered with numerous opportunities which include provision of basic needs, provision of family environment, poverty alleviation, recreational or extramural-activities, care and protection, therapy or counselling services, as well as educational opportunities. These opportunities offered by the foster care system is in line with Bill of Rights as outlined in the Constitution of South Africa. The Bill of Rights is the most essential document of the new South Africa, and it holds the State accountable in protecting the fundamental human rights and dignity of all the citizens of the country (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Children`s Act 38 of 2005 is also one of the documents that are in line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa created to ensure that children are cared for, protected and that their rights are respected at all times. I must also be noted that not all the youth leaving the foster care system are provided with therapy or counselling locally, regionally and globally. The study conducted by Johnson and Menna (2017) show that some of the youth leaving the foster care system do not receive counselling from social workers and they would therefore be hesitant to seek such professional services. Furthermore, other youths leaving the foster care system do acknowledge the counselling services provided to them by social workers. Therefore, it can be concluded that although youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa face various challenges; however, they also are also provided with a number of opportunities such as the provision of basic needs, relationship with the society is strengthened, provision of family environment, promotion of independence, opportunities for recreational activities, poverty alleviation, provision of therapeutic services and provision of care and protection.

Social support services - It is evident, considering the results that youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa require social support services to ensure that they are self-reliant, self-sustainable and are able to live independent lives. This theme supports the Ecological systems theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979. In this study, the participants concurred that youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa need social support services before leaving care and post foster care. The research results indicate that youth leaving care need social support services such as emotional, esteem, informational, instrumental and network support. Research demonstrates that good social support services are vital for young care leavers as they navigate their way to young adulthood (Ibrahim & Howe, 2011).

In addition to these social support services, they also need mentorship programmes, case and group work sessions, social workers and biological families. Significant others are regarded as the most important motivator for youth leaving care to be able to face any life challenge (Van Audenhove & Vander Laenen, 2017). The social support from the social workers and biological is regarded as one of the critical models that promote effective reunification services. These findings are demonstrated by the literature, which states that individuals do not live in isolation, but instead they exist within various settings, namely; family, work, community, school and organisations (Duerden & Witt, 2010). Based on these findings, it is significant for those employed within the welfare sector always to ensure that they explore all the various environments that can assist youth leaving the foster care system to live independent lives. The conclusion is that youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa need social support services more, especially from social workers, biological families and all those rendering services to youth leaving care.

Resilience in transitioning out of the foster care system - Van Breda (2017) defines resilience as factors that enable individuals to be able to bounce back despite the challenges they have faced in life. Resilience is about overcoming the challenges, coping with life

challenges and recovering from an adverse situation (Greene, 2014; Taormina, 2015; Adley & Kina, 2017). The research findings indicate that youth leaving the foster system in South Africa rely on school and educational system, religion, family, siblings, peers, fiancé, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse social workers, caregivers, CYCC managers and employment to be able to bounce back from the challenges that they have faced in life. In a study conducted by Ibrahim and Howe (2011), the most comfortable people with whom the youth leaving care relate and relax with are those who had been placed in the foster care system with, e.g. brothers, sisters and any other child with whom they had been placed with, as well as kindly care workers. As already indicated on the theme on the reasons for foster care placement in South Africa that these youths have lost both parents, being abandoned, neglected, affected and infected with HIV/Aids, abused and are from families or parents using substances. It can, therefore, be established that youth leaving the foster care system like any other individual has the potential to be able to bounce back from any challenging situation.

The above summary, therefore, answers the research question and the assumptions that were set out in this study conducted. The explorative study on the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa seems to provide a proper understanding of the subject matter. The research results enlighten the researcher on the reasons why he embarked on this study as this social phenomenon is challenging to the youths who have been emancipated from the prescripts of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005. The researcher has practical experience of the subject matter since he has been employed as an intake and field social worker from 2009 to 2015 in the DSD. Furthermore, the researcher has a practical experience of the subject matter based on his experience as a researcher working in academia as well as by researching Honors, Masters and currently Doctorate level.

This study indeed highlighted to him the importance of further researching care leaving since there is a dire need for social workers and those employed within the welfare sector to accept the degree or significance of this social problem facing the youth. It is evident from the

research results that there is no policy, legislation, guidelines, or structured programmes for preparing youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa. This lack of clear guidelines inevitable leads to youth leaving the foster care system to face a bleak future—a future without employment, secondary and tertiary education and without shelter.

The research results show that social workers and all those working within the welfare sector are ill-equipped to deal with the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa. It can therefore be concluded that this is the case for both the DSD and CYCCs registered with the Department. This, unfortunately, leads to youth leaving care having to face life after foster care on their own. In addition, social workers are left to use their own discretion on the preparatory programmes for youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa. This study anticipated that it would recommend for the development of guidelines or policy for preparing youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa since the South African youths are faced with many life challenges or social ills. This study will also make a significant contribution to understanding the challenges and experiences of youth, leaving the foster system in South Africa. In addition, to appreciate their resilience, coping mechanisms and social support services that are available to achieve the goals of the youths leaving care.

Social workers should be able to utilise this research study and the results obtained in support of their recommendations and those of the youth leaving care. Furthermore, it should enable welfare practitioners to be able to understand the challenges and experiences of youth, leaving the foster care system. The research results and outcomes of this study should also influence policymakers to acknowledge that there is an urgent need to develop guidelines and policy for care-leavers since they are faced with enormous challenges. These guidelines and policy can be used as a strategy on how to deal with this phenomenon of care leaving. This research study also enabled the researcher to become an expert on the topic of care leaving and the challenges and experiences of youth placed in the foster system in South Africa.

7.3 Recommendations

The recommendations that follow emanated from the research results that were gathered during the interviews with the participants (Care-leavers and social workers).

7.3.1 Integration of services

Integration of services within all the various stakeholders will help to address the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa. The integration of services should include all areas of government (national, provincial and local government), private sector, non-profit organisations, civil society, institutions of higher learning and research institutions. In 2006, the DSD developed an Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM), which adopted the following "key principles for the developmental approach relevant to the South African context (Republic of South Africa, 2006); participation, self-reliance, empowerment, universal access, equity, transparency, appropriateness, accountability, accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness, partnership, social integration and sustainability". These principles were developed to support the delivery of social welfare services in the DSD. In support of the integrated social welfare services, social workers working within the DSD and CYCCs shared that they are indeed working with some of the stakeholders, namely; the Department of Higher Education, Institutions for Higher Learning, Department of Housing and Human Settlement, SPAR, Shoprite, Pick n Pay, Harambee, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), Ford Motor Company and Dalsey Hillblom Lynn (DHL) Express in order to ensure that youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa are equipped with all the skills that can promote independent living.

7.3.2 Effective implementation of cluster foster care in the Tshwane Regional Department of Social Development

The DSD in the Tshwane Region seems to be struggling to implement the cluster foster care schemes as one of the alternative forms of care. Cluster foster care is legally acknowledged as one of the forms of alternative care for children who have been found to be in need of care and protection in South Africa. The cluster foster care scheme is discussed in Chapter 12 of the Children`s Amendment Act 41 of 2007 under the title "Foster Care" and is defined as receiving children into a cluster foster care scheme registered with the provincial DSD (Republic of South Africa, 2008). These schemes are developed to assist social workers to deal with the high demands of foster care placements (Du Toit, Van Der Westhuizen & Alpaslan, 2016). However, the implementation of these cluster foster care schemes seems to be the challenge not only in the Gauteng Province but also in the other eight South African Provinces (Gallinetti & Sloth-Nielson, 2010; Taback & Associates, 2010). As one of the recommendations, Du Toit et al. (2016) recommended that the DSD should develop a financial model, which ensures the funding of the cluster foster care schemes, as well as proper management of funds and, donations and grants. The researcher, therefore, recommends that the DSD should develop a clear guideline for the implementation of the cluster foster care schemes in all the South African nine provinces. The implementation of these cluster foster care schemes can ease the burden of social workers with the high demands of foster care placements as well as to ensure that youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa are adequately prepared for independent living.

7.3.3 Mandatory for foster parents and CYCC to save money for foster children

The DSD should make mandatory for foster parents and CYCCs to save money for foster children. According to the participants, keeping a little from the foster child grant can help the youth leaving the foster care system to be able to pay the university admission and registration fees. In addition, to ensure that they have a capital that they can rely on as they

begin life after foster care. In a study conducted by Dhludhlu (2017), one of the participants recommended as follows: *"If foster care parents keep on saving money for foster children, I would say foster care is developmental. It should be mandatory to save money for foster children."* Therefore, the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 should be amended to include a section that makes obligatory for foster parents and CYCCs to save money for the foster child, and this should be monitored during the rendering of supervision services.

7.3.4 Panel between the case manager and the social worker employed at the CYCC

In a research conducted by Shaw et al. (2020), the participants identified the function of social workers as vital during the process of leaving the foster care system. Furthermore, they believed that if the social workers were involved in their preparation programmes, their circumstances would have been different compared to what is currently happening. It is therefore advocated that social workers working within the DSD and those employed within the Residential Facilities should often engage in panel discussions to always come with innovative ways of preparing youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa.

7.3.5 Establishment of the preparatory programme for youth leaving care from 15-18 years

Literature reveals that in 2015 of the 243, 060 children and youth leaving the foster care system nationally in the United States of America, roughly 19% exited from care while between the ages of 16 and 19, and 47% of those youth leave through ageing out or escaping the system (Powers, Fullerton, Schmidt, Geenen, Oberweiser-Kennedy, Dohn, Nelson, Iavanditti & Blakeslee, 2018). Therefore, it is recommended that preparatory programmes for youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa should begin from the age of 15 to 18 in order to ensure that care leavers are adequately prepared for life after the foster care system. In the United States of America, there is an independent living programme (ILP), which is a federally funded

programme which assists youth leaving care between the ages of 16 and 21 years to be able to achieve self-sufficiency before and after leaving the foster care system (Shaw et al., 2020). In addition, there is a programme called Youth Initiated Mentoring (YIM), which intends to help youth to keep the benefits achieved in residential care facilities through their transition back to their families or homes and beyond by allowing them to elect a mentor from their communities to support them for a period no more than a year (Spencer, Drew, Gowdy & Horn, 2018).

Career readiness preparation is also one of the programmes provided through foster care to promote more successful transitions to adulthood for youth in care (Gates, Pearlmutter, Keenan, Divver and Gorroochurn, 2018). These types of programmes lack in South Africa. Lack of preparatory programmes is also experienced by other countries globally. For example, in Argentina, youth leaving the foster care system are often not well prepared for independent living, and their transitioning to young adulthood is often rushed and lack an organised path (Coler, 2018). According to Coler (2018), the only preparatory programmes rendered for youth leaving the foster care system usually centres on preparing them acquire work experience and one of the examples of such programmes is the "Programa Sosten" (Support Program). In ensuring that youth leaving the foster system in South Africa are prepared between the age of 15 and 18, social workers should ensure that they implement the Individual Development Plan (IDP) since this is the most important tool guiding social workers in planning for the support of the child who has been recognised to be in need of care and protection.

7.3.6 Extending foster care placement beyond the age of 21 and/or the rendering of supervision post foster care placement

Foster care services for youth, leaving the foster care system should extend beyond the age of 21 since some of the youths are struggling to complete secondary education in record time. Coler (2018) concurred that some of the risks involved with leaving care to young adulthood included challenges such as unfinished education. If youth leaving the foster care

system lack education, they may also have more significant behavioural problems (O'Higgins et al., 2017). In addition, we also have youths who have special needs and those youths whose families cannot be traced. In South Africa, currently, we have few services for young people leaving care, more especially those who have already been released from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005 (Tanur, 2012; Van Breda, 2020). Therefore extending supervision services beyond the age of 21 will help to respond to the needs of these neglected youths. Foster care agencies are encouraged to provide longer social and financial assistance to youth who have been emancipated from the prescripts of the Children`s Act (Gypen et al., 2017).

7.3.7 Establishment of the shelter for youth leaving the foster care system

One of the outcomes for youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa is that they find themselves without shelter. Studies from the most developed and developing countries show that a number of youths leaving care face negative outcomes such as being without shelter (Dickens, 2017; Dutta, 2016; Frimpong-Manso, 2018; Van Breda, 2018). Furthermore, it is reported that in the early months and years after leaving the foster care system, youth leaving care experienced periodic homelessness. In contrast, others seek shelter from their fellow care-leavers (Ibrahim & Howe, 2011). Section 27, "of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa emphasises the importance of ensuring that every child`s rights to have access to a shelter is met" (Republic of South Africa, 1996:p1255). The DSD in collaboration with the Department of Housing and Human Settlements should ensure that that youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa have access to housing or shelter.

7.3.8 Proper screening of prospective foster parents

The findings from the participants indicate that social workers are not placing prospective foster children with suitable prospective foster parents and they are also lacking in rendering supervision services that involve the child`s biological parents or biological families.

Literature indicates social workers often do not have sufficient time to assess the fit of the prospective foster child and prospective foster parent (Zeijlmans, Lopez, Grietens & Knorth, 2017). Therefore, social workers should always guarantee that prospective foster care parents are earnestly vetted and provided with parenting programmes. A British survey that was explicitly targeted for youth leaving care conveys how child-rearing had positive end results for those young people because it allowed them to develop a sense of family and ownership (Coler, 2018). Furthermore, social workers should always ensure that children or youth placed in the foster care system have constant visitation to their biological parents or biological families in order to promote reunification services. According to Van Breda (2018), when children are placed in foster care, family engagements always end. Social workers should bear in mind that reunification services are regarded as the primary goal for children or youth placed in foster care (Killos et al., 2018).

7.3.9 Promoting confidentiality during foster care supervision

One of the professional values of social work is the value of confidentiality. Confidentiality entails that what has been shared during the session will stay confidential and will not be reiterated to someone outside the session (Grobler, Schenck & Mbedzi, 2013). The findings from the participants indicate that social workers always interview foster children and youth in the presence of the foster parent. Therefore, it is commended that the social workers should always adhere to the value of confidentiality and interview foster children and youth in privacy in order to create a favourable environment where they will be able to share their challenges and experiences freely.

7.3.10 Considering the views of foster children or youth leaving care

There was a cry from youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa that social workers do not listen or consider their views about their foster care placement and how they

would like to be prepared for life after the foster care system. This seems to be caused by the fact that social workers have high caseloads and do not have enough time to sit down with foster children. Further, there is a lack of individual therapy or group therapy to assist foster children or youth leaving care to deal with the challenges that they have gone through before their placements and during placements. Therefore, social workers are urged to always involve foster children in all the matters regarding their lives and to ensure that they are provided with individual and group therapy. Youth leaving the foster care system stressing the importance of pre-arranged meetings with them in order to be proactive, rather than waiting for the young person to call the social worker for help (Adley & Kina, 2017). Tanur (2012) also argues that youth leaving the foster care system is unprepared to deal with vulnerabilities such as finding a job as well as building and sustaining relationships. In comparison to their peers, youth leaving the foster care system have to manage with significant changes in their daily lives from the young age up until they leave the foster system (Shaw et al., 2020).

7.3.11 Linking youth leaving care with available resources

It is important to empower youth with knowledge on the available resources that can assist them to live independent lives. Youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa was concerned that they do not have information on how to apply to the FET colleges and universities as well as the different types funding that are available for them. Furthermore, they are also not aware of the available learnership programmes, internships programmes and employment opportunities that can assist them in achieving sustainable livelihoods. Young people shared that the agency is the desire; ability and granting access to resources that can help them to face life challenges (Audenhove & Vander Laenen, 2017).

7.3.12 Supporting youth leaving care to complete grade 12

The findings from the youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa indicated that they wish that social workers supported them to be able to complete their grade 12 or matric before being discharged from the provisions of the Children`s Act 38 of 2005. Therefore, it is recommended that social workers should ensure that they support young people to complete grade 12 before leaving the foster care system in South Africa; matric is deemed as the key to unlock their futures and to become self-sustainable. Research shows that those youths who have dropped out of school for different reasons have poor outcomes in life such as getting involved in drugs, teenage pregnancy and prostitution (Van Breda, 2018). In a study conducted by Dickens and Max (2018), they recommended that there should be an increased emphasis on preparing youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa to meet with the criteria for education to increase their chances to find employment.

7.3.13 Developing guidelines and policy for preparing youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa

In addition to addressing the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa, the researcher recommends for the development of guidelines and policy for preparing youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa. According to Van Breda (2018), policies of youth, leaving care seems to be a neglected topic in the South African research field. This might be attributed to the fact that care-leaving research in South Africa is still in its inception and many researchers` primary focus is on understanding the phenomenon, rather than advising for policy development (Van Breda, 2018). The Children`s Act 38 of 2005 should be amended to include a section on youth leaving care, and the guidelines should be developed to guide social workers on how to prepare youth leaving care. The proper age for preparing youth leaving care should be from 15 years. Furthermore, the age for discharging youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa should be amended to be between 24 and

26, instead of 21 years. This will give social workers ample time to be able to ensure that youth leaving care complete their grade 12, further their studies, are employed and are having access to housing.

7.3.14 Further research on care leaving

Furthermore, future research needs to be conducted to explore more of the challenges and experiences of youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa to promote independent living. Other areas for further research on the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa should be as follows:

- Developing a database of all the youth leaving the foster system in South Africa.

- Conducting a longitudinal study of youth leaving the foster care system in South Africa, as an extended case study that seeks to observe these young people over a long period.

- Piloting and monitoring the effectiveness of the guideline for preparing youth, leaving the foster care system in South Africa.

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Appendix A

UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

21 February 2019

Mr Sandile Dhludhlu 21808927
School of Applied Human Sciences – Social Work
Howard College Campus

Dear Mr Dhludhlu

Protocol reference number: HSS/1919/018D
Project title: The challenges and experiences of youth leaving foster care system in South Africa.

Full Approval – Full Committee Reviewed Application

With regards to your response received 19 February 2019 to our letter of 04 December 2018, the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

....
Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Prof J John-Langba
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr M Mthembu
cc School Administrator: Ms A Ntuli

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za
Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

1910 - 2010
100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood   ■ Howard College   ■ Medical School   ■ Pietermaritzburg   ■ Westville

Open Rubric

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AppendixB

GAUTENG PROVINCE
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: Mr. Lawrence Xipu
Tel: 082 776 3643
File no.: 3/01/02

Dear S Dhludhlu

> **RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Thank you for your application to conduct research within the Gauteng Department of Social Development.

Your application on the research on *"The Challenges and Experiences of Youth Leaving Foster Care System"* 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 16th January 2019.

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

Ms Amanda Hartmann
Deputy Director General: Support Services
Date: 22|1|2019

Open Rubric

Appendix C

Name of student:	**Sandile Dhludhlu**
Student number:	**218083927**
Name of school:	**School of Applied and Human Sciences**
Name of Discipline:	**Discipline of Social Work**

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

PROJECT TITLE: THE CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH LEAVING FOSTER CARE SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Goal of the study:

- To explore the challenges and experiences of youth leaving foster care system in South Africa.

Biographical Information

1. Gender: Male_____   Female_____   Other_____

2. Age of the participant: Age_____

3. Educational history

   (a) Which degree(s) did you complete? _____

   (b) Do you have any postgraduate qualification? [Probe- *If Yes, which one?*]

4. Years of experience practising as a social worker _____**.**

5. How long have you been involved in rendering foster care services_____**?**

6. How big is your foster care caseload_____**?**

7. Type of the organisation

   (a) Department of Social Development_____

   (b) Private Child and Youth Care Centre_____

Question 1

- Tell me about various reasons that results in children to be placed in foster care? [Probes:

  Orphan hood, abandonment, neglect, child abuse, domestic violence or HIV/Aids]

Question 2

- What are your views on foster care services? [Probes: What is it that you like the most

  about foster care services?; *What is it that you do not like about foster care services?*]

Question 3

- What are the challenges you face in rendering foster care services within your

  organisation? [Probe: *How do you overcome those challenges*]

Question 4

- What are the current services rendered to youth leaving care in order to be prepared while in the process of leaving care and becoming independent young adults? [Probes: *What type of school or educational system do children attend during foster care?;What type of services do they access during foster care e.g. health care, counselling, life skills programmes?; What is your view about those services?; How are you treated as social workers by the significant others of the youth leaving care?*]

Question 5

- What do you think are the factors that enables youth leaving care to rise above hardships while transitioning to young adulthood?

Question 6

- What is your relationship with youth post foster care? [Probe: *Do they still visit your offices to seek for assistance?; If Yes, what type of assistance do they usually need?*]

Question 7

- How do you prepare youth leaving care for life after foster care? [Probes: *For example, on how to manage finances, anger management, life skills, children`s rights, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS.*]

Question 8

- What are the preparatory programmes that you would recommend in order to ensure that youth leaving care are adequately prepared to leave care?

Question 9

- What are the most important social support services that you think social workers should prioritize for youth leaving care e.g. emotional support, esteem support, informational support, instrumental support, and network support?

We have come to the end of our interview. However, before we close, I would like to find out if there is anything or issues you would like to share with me that was not asked in the above questions.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is it fine to contact you again for further information and/or clarification if the need arises?

Yes_____   No_____

Thank you very much for taking part in this research study.

OBSERVATIONS:

- Before the interview process.

_____

_____

_____

- During the interview process.

_____

_____

_____

- After the interview process.

_____

_____

_____

General comments about the interview

_____

_____

_____

Name of student:	**Sandile Dhludhlu**
Student number:	**218083927**
Name of school:	**School of Applied and Human Sciences**
Name of Discipline:	**Discipline of Social Work**

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR YOUTH LEAVING CARE

PROJECT TITLE: THE CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH LEAVING FOSTER CARE SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Goal of the study:

- To explore the challenges and experiences of youth leaving foster care system in South Africa.

Biographical Information

1. Gender: Male_____   Female_____   Other_____

2. Age of the participant: Age_____   Age at which you were placed in foster care_____

3. What is the type of the organisation you were placed at during foster care?

     (a) Department of Social Development_____

     (b) Private Child and Youth Care Centre_____

4. How long have you been placed in foster care?

0-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
16-20 years	
21+ years	

Question 1

- Tell me about your early life experiences, which led you to be placed in foster care? [Probes: *Are your biological parents still alive?; How many siblings do you have, including their ages?; Are you married?; Do you have children? If so, how many children do you have and how old are they?; Where do you currently stay?; Do you have any surviving relatives? If so, what role do they play in your life?*]

Question 2

- Tell me about your experiences of foster care? [Probes: *What is it that you liked the most about foster care?; What is it that you did not like about foster care*]

Question 3

- What are the challenges of being in the foster care system? [Probe: *How did you overcome those challenges?; What type of school or educational system did you attend during foster care?; How were you treated by the society?*]

Question 4

- What were the services rendered to youth leaving care in order to be prepared while in the process of leaving care and becoming independent young adults? [Probe: *What is your view about those services?*]

Question 5

- Do you think you successfully transitioned out of foster care? [Probe: *If yes, why do you think you successfully transitioned out of foster care?; If no, what do you think hindered you for successful transitioning out of foster care?*]

Question 6

- What are the factors that enabled you to rise above hardships during your foster care placement? [Probe: *How did you bounce back and recover from a most difficult situation*]

Question 7

- What are your life experiences post foster care? [Probes: *Positive experiences and negative experiences*]

Question 8

- Do you think you were well prepared for life after foster care? [Probes: *If yes, were those after care programmes effective? Why are you saying they were effective? If no, why do you think you were not well prepared for life after foster care?*]

- What are the preparatory after care programmes that you would have liked in order to ensure that you are adequately prepared to leave care? [Probe: *please give examples*]

Question 9

- Do you think that you received necessary social support (e.g. emotional support, esteem support, informational support, instrumental support, and network support) from social workers, family, friends, welfare organization and the community? [Probes: *If yes, why do you think you received necessary social support?; If no, why do you think you did not receive necessary social support?*]

- What are the social support services or programmes that you can recommend to assist social workers in rendering after care services or programmes?

We have come to the end of our interview. However, before we close, I would like to find out if there is anything or issues you would like to share with me that was not asked in the above questions.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is it fine to contact you again for further information and/or clarification if the need arises?

Yes_____   No_____

Thank you very much for taking part in this research study.

OBSERVATIONS:

- Before the interview process.

_____

_____

_____

- During the interview process.

_____

_____

_____

- After the interview process.

_____

_____

_____

General comments about the interview

_____

_____

_____

Appendix E1

CONSENT FORM FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

Name: Sandile Lucas Dhludhlu

Contact details: 072 550 7599

Supervisor: Prof John-Langba

Occupation: Academic Leader & Associate Professor (Social Work)

Institution: University of KwaZulu- Natal (Howard College)

Contact details: (031) 260 2792

Research participant

I will be pleased if you play a part in the study which I am going to conduct.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Exploring the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South

Africa. I want to do this through a semi-structured interview with you.

ESSENCE OF THE STUDY

I would be keen to have 45 minutes to a sixty minutes interview with you, and I might require to have a follow-up interview when needed. I will have to utilize an audio recorder during our interview sessions to be able to capture the interview precisely. I want to conduct an interview in your place and at the most appropriate occasion for you. Should you commit oneself to participate in this study; please be advised that there will be no reimbursements for your participation. Also, the following are some of the crucial things to notice:

CONFIDENTIALLY CLAUSE

Whatever you divulge during the interview will not at all be disclosed to anyone apart from my promoter at the university. Your name will be withheld/ I will be using pseudonyms. I will guarantee that in my theses, your name, and any other identifying details are not noticed. Also, the information will be kept in a safe place, and after five years, it will be destroyed.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

This means that you can pull out from this study at any time if you feel comfortless, and there are no negative repercussions of failure to participate or pull-out from the study that you will experience as a result of walking out.

CONSENT

I _____ hereby accept to be part of this research study concerning the challenges and experiences of youth leaving foster system in South Africa. I acknowledge that I am participating voluntarily without being compelled in any way. I also comprehend that I can quit from this study at any time should I not want to carry on and that this resolution will not influence me adversely.

The intention of the study was described to me, and I comprehend what is anticipated of my participation. I acknowledge that this is a research project whose motivation is not to benefit me individually automatically. I also understand that my responses will stay confidential.

Participant signature: _____   Researchers' signature: _____

Date signed: _____ Date signed: _____

Additional consent

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / semi-structured interview   **YES / NO**

Participant signature: _____ Witness signature: _____

Date signed: _____ Date signed: _____

FOROMO YA TUMELELANO YA BADIRELA LEAGO

Leina: Sandile Lucas Dhludhlu

Mogala wa kgokagano: 072 550 7599

Mohlahli: Prof John-Langba

Mošomo: Academic Leader & Associate Professor (Social Work)

Mokgahlo: Unibesiti ya Kwazulu-Natal (Howard College)

Mogala wa kgokagano: (031) 260 2792

Motšeakarolo diphatišišong

Ke rata go tšea karolo diphatišišong tšeo ke tlo go dira.

MORERO WA THUTO YE

Go fatolla mathata le tšeo baswa ba gahlanago natšo mo ba dulago e lego mafelo ao ba dulago le bao ba sego ba tswalana le bona mo Afrika Borwa.

Ke rata go dira seo ka mokgwa wa dipotšišo tšeo di sego tša logiwa ka botlalo le wena.

MOHUTA WA THUTO YE

Ke rata go go botšiša dipotšišo tšeo di ka tšeago metsotso ye 45 go iša go iri gape nka rata

go dira tšhalomorago ya dipotšišo tšeo ke tla bego ke di botšišitše ge go hlokagala.

Ke tla gatiša poledišano ya rena gore ke kgone go tšea poledišano ya rena gabotse.

Dipotšišo tše di tla arabja kantorong ya gago ka nako yeo o tla go iketla.

Ge o ka rata go tšea karolo thutong ye; ka kgopelo tseba gore go ka se be le tefo go tšeyeng

karolo ga gago. Gape, tše latelago di bohlokwa go tsebja:

KAROLO YA SEPHIRI

Se sengwe le se sengwe seo o ka se bolelago ka nako ya dipotšišo se ka se senollelelwe

go motho ge e se fela mohlahli waka unibesiti. Leina la gago le tla lotwa/ ke tla diriša

mainakakanywa fela. Ke tla kgonthišiša gore theseseng ya ka, leina la gago, le se sengwe

le se sengwe seo se ka go go hlaola di ka se tšweletšwe. Gape, tshedimošo ye e tla lotwa

mo go bolokegilego gape ka morago ga mengwaga ye mehlano e ka thunkantšhwa.

GO TŠEA KAROLO KA BOITHAOPO

Seo se ra gore o ka no itokolla thutong ye nako efe kapa efe ge o ekwa o se wa lokologa;

gape o ka se tšeelwe magato a boima ge o sa tšeye karolo goba o itokolotše thutong ye.

TUMELELANO

Nna_____ ke dumela go tšea karolo mo go diphatišišo tše mabapi

le mathata le tšeo baswa ba gahlanago natšo mafelong ao ba dutšego le bao ba sego ba

tswalana nabo mo Afrika Borwa. Ke kwešiša gore ke tšea karolo ka bolokologi ka ntle le

kgapeletšo. Gape ke kwešiša gore nka itokolla mo go thuto ye nako efe le efe ge nka kwa ke sa nyake go tšwela pele gape sephetho se se ka seke ke sa nkama bošaedi.

Morero wa thuto ye o hlalositšwe gape ke kwešiša seo se hutšwago go tšeeng karolo gaka. Ke kwešiša gore wo ke mošomo wa diphatišišo woo morero wa wona e sego gore ke bune ka bonna go wona. Gape, ke kwešiša gore dikarabo tša ka di tla ba sephiri.

Mosaeno wa motšeakarolo:_____ Mosaeno wa mofatišiši: _____

Letšatši la mosaeno: _____ Letšatši la mosaeno : _____

Koketšo ya tumelelano

Ke fa tumelelano go:

Segatiša-mantšu a dipotšišo / dipotšišo tšeo di sego tša logiwa ka botlalo **EE /AOWA**

Mosaeno wa motšeakarolo: _____ Mosaeno wa tlhatse: _____

Letšatši la mosaeno: _____ Letšatši la mosaeno : _____

CONSENT FORM FOR YOUTH LEAVING CARE

Name: Sandile Lucas Dhludhlu

Contact details: 072 550 7599

Supervisor: Prof John-Langba

Occupation: Academic Leader & Associate Professor (Social Work)

Institution: University of KwaZulu- Natal (Howard College)

Contact details: (031) 260 2792

Research participant

I will be pleased if you play a part in the study which I am going to conduct.

<u>PURPOSE OF THE STUDY</u>

Exploring the challenges and experiences of youth leaving the foster care system in South

Africa. I want to do this through a semi-structured interview with you.

ESSENCE OF THE STUDY

I would be keen to have 45 minutes to a sixty minutes interview with you, and I might require to have a follow-up interview when needed. I will have to utilize an audio recorder during our interview sessions to be able to capture the interview precisely. I want to conduct an interview in your place and at the most appropriate occasion for you. Should you commit oneself to participate in this study; please be advised that there will be no reimbursements for your participation. Also, the following are some of the crucial things to notice:

CONFIDENTIALLY CLAUSE

Whatever you divulge during the interview will not at all be disclosed to anyone apart from my promoter at the university. Your name will be withheld/ I will be using pseudonyms. I will guarantee that in my theses, your name, and any other identifying details are not noticed. Also, the information will be kept in a safe place, and after five years, it will be destroyed.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

This means that you can pull out from this study at any time if you feel comfortless, and there are no negative repercussions of failure to participate or pull-out from the study that you will experience as a result of walking out.

CONSENT

I _____ hereby accept to be part of this research study concerning the challenges and experiences of youth leaving foster system in South Africa. I acknowledge that I am participating voluntarily without being compelled in any way. I also comprehend that I can quit from this study at any time should I not want to carry on and that this resolution will not influence me adversely.

The intention of the study was described to me, and I comprehend what is anticipated of my participation. I acknowledge that this is a research project whose motivation is not to benefit me individually automatically. I also understand that my responses will stay confidential.

Participant signature: _____   Researchers' signature: _____

Date signed: _____   Date signed: _____

Additional consent

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / semi-structured interview   **YES / NO**

Participant signature: _____   Witness signature: _____

Date signed: _____   Date signed: _____

Papetlana ya F2 (SePedi translation)

FOROMO YA TUMELELANO YA MOSWA YO A TLOGELAGO LEFELO LA TLHOKOMELO

Leina: Sandile Lucas Dhludhlu

Mogala wa kgokagano: 072 550 7599

Mohlahli: Prof John-Langba

Mošomo: Academic Leader & Associate Professor (Social Work)

Mokgahlo: Unibesiti ya Kwazulu-Natal (Howard College)

Mogala wa kgokagano: (031) 260 2792

Motšeakarolo diphatišišong

Ke rata go tšea karolo diphatišišong tšeo ke tlo go dira.

MORERO WA THUTO YE

Go fatolla mathata le tšeo baswa ba gahlanago natšo mo ba dulago e lego mafelo ao ba dulago le bao ba sego ba tswalana le bona mo Afrika Borwa.

Ke rata go dira seo ka mokgwa wa dipotšišo tšeo di sego tša logiwa ka botlalo le wena.

MOHUTA WA THUTO YE

Ke rata go go botšiša dipotšišo tšeo di ka tšeago metsotso ye 45 go iša go iri gape nka rata go dira tšhalomorago ya dipotšišo tšeo ke tla bego ke di botšišitše ge go hlokagala.

Ke tla gatiša poledišano ya rena gore ke kgone go tšea poledišano ya rena gabotse.

Dipotšišo tše di tla arabja lefelong la gago ka nako yeo o tla go iketla.

Ge o ka rata go tšea karolo thutong ye; ka kgopelo tseba gore go ka se be le tefo go tšeyeng karolo ga gago. Gape, tše latelago di bohlokwa go tsebja:

KAROLO YA SEPHIRI

Se sengwe le se sengwe seo o ka se bolelago ka nako ya dipotšišo se ka se senollelelwe go motho ge e se fela mohlahli waka unibesiti. Leina la gago le tla lotwa/ ke tla diriša mainakakanywa fela. Ke tla kgonthišiša gore theseseng ya ka, leina la gago, le se sengwe le se sengwe seo se ka go go hlaola di ka se tšweletšwe. Gape, tshedimošo ye e tla lotwa mo go bolokegilego gape ka morago ga mengwaga ye mehlano e ka thunkantšhwa.

GO TŠEA KAROLO KA BOITHAOPO

Seo se ra gore o ka no itokolla thutong ye nako efe kapa efe ge o ekwa o se wa lokologa; gape o ka se tšeelwe magato a boima ge o sa tšeye karolo goba o itokolotše thutong ye.

TUMELELANO

Nna_____ ke dumela go tšea karolo mo go diphatišišo tše mabapi le mathata le tšeo baswa ba gahlanago natšo mafelong ao ba dutšego le bao ba sego ba

tswalana nabo mo Afrika Borwa. Ke kwešiša gore ke tšea karolo ka bolokologi ka ntle le kgapeletšo. Gape ke kwešiša gore nka itokolla mo go thuto ye nako efe le efe ge nka kwa ke sa nyake go tšwela pele gape sephetho se se ka seke ke sa nkama bošaedi.

Morero wa thuto ye o hlalositšwe gape ke kwešiša seo se hutšwago go tšeeng karolo gaka. Ke kwešiša gore wo ke mošomo wa diphatišišo woo morero wa wona e sego gore ke bune ka bonna go wona. Gape, ke kwešiša gore dikarabo tša ka di tla ba sephiri.

Mosaeno wa motšeakarolo: _____ Mosaeno wa mofatišiši: _____

Letšatši la mosaeno: _____ Letšatši la mosaeno : _____

Koketšo ya tumelelano

Ke fa tumelelano go:

Segatiša-mantšu a dipotšišo / dipotšišo tšeo di sego tša logiwa ka botlalo **EE /AOWA**

Mosaeno wa motšeakarolo: _____ Mosaeno wa tlhatse: _____

Letšatši la mosaeno: _____ Letšatši la mosaeno : _____

Appendix G: Originality report from Turnitin

The challenges and experiences of youth leaving foster care system in South Africa