EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES OF YOUTH HEADING HOUSEHOLDS IN
PORT SHEPSTONE

By

Thandeka Grace Ndaleni

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Masters of Social
Work (Welfare Policy) in the School of Applied Human Sciences

College of Humanities

University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban

2012

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM

I, Thandeka Grace Ndaleni declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.

2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

4. This thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:

a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced

b. Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed in italics and inside quotation marks, and referenced.

5. This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the References sections.

Signed

………………………………………………………………………………

THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE SUPERVISOR

SIGNED:…………………………………………..

DATE:…………………………………………..

ABSTRACT

After the death of their parents many youth resume full parental responsibility in taking care of their orphaned siblings. The aim of this study was to explore the experiences and challenges of youth fostering their siblings and heading households in Port Shepstone. This study was guided by the ecological systems theory and used a qualitative research approach to undertake the study. A sample of ten participants was used with whom face to face interviews were conducted.

The study revealed that the youth heading households resumed parental responsibilities at a young age. They shoulder new responsibilities such as domestic chores and child care duties. In addition, the youth heading households experience financial challenges due to lack of employment. As a result, the foster care grant was the only source of income which was not enough to meet all the needs of their siblings.

The participants further indicated that they and their siblings are still dealing with the death of their parent(s). Both the participants and their siblings had never received counseling after the deaths of their parents. In addition, the participants revealed that they were experiencing challenges regarding disciplining their siblings who were presenting with behavioral problems. Furthermore, the findings reveal that the social workers spend more time on foster care placement (statutory work) rather than focusing on early prevention programmes. Lastly, the youth heading households wanted more social work support, as social workers rarely visited the youth headed households to check on the progress of the placements. To overcome all these challenges, I support the recommendation made by the Department of Social Development as it recently announced an intention to create a kinship grant (Jamieson *et al.,* 2012). This will decrease the workload of social workers so that they can attend to other therapeutic services.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late grandmother Mrs. Matoko Mbewana: you have played a huge role in my upbringing. It is sad that I did not get an opportunity to make you happy. Thank you! You will always be remembered: may your spirit rest in peace.

This study is also dedicated to my two year old daughter, Phumelele Ayanda, Onako Ndaleni. I love you Mancani. You are the purpose of my life.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ACRWC-   African Chapter on the Right and Welfare of the Child

AIDS-   Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

CINDI-   Children in Distress Network

DOE-   Department of Education

HIV-   Human Immune Virus

NYP-   National Youth Policy

NGO-   Non Government Organization

NSFAS-   National Student Financial Aid Scheme

OVC-   Orphans and Vulnerable Children

PEPFAR-   President Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

SASSA-   South African Social Security Agency

SAUS-   South African Union of Students

UNICEF-   United Nations Children's Fund

UN-   United Nations

UNAIDS-   United Nations Programme on HIV/ AIDS

UNCRC-   United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

USAID-   United State Agency for International Development

Table of Contents

List of tables

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

One of the consequences of the AIDS pandemic is the huge number of orphaned children (Gow and Desmond, 2002: 460). According to Meintjes and Hall (2012: 86) "the number of children who have lost both parents has more than doubled since 2002 (from approximately 350 000 to 885 000), indicating an increase of nearly three percentage points in South Africa ([that is] 2002: 2.0% - 2010: 4.8%)". KwaZulu-Natal has the largest population and the highest number of orphans, with 27% of the children recorded as orphans who have lost either a mother, a father or both parents (Meintjes and Hall, 2012: 86).

Besides children being orphaned as a result of AIDS, there are a number of other reasons that have led to increased numbers of orphans in South Africa. According to Sloth-Nielsen (2004 as cited in Maqoko 2006: 722) children are orphaned or left without adult caregivers on account of fatal car accidents, death by natural causes, parents migrating or otherwise abandoning their children. The phenomenon of increasing number of orphans and vulnerable children as a consequence of AIDS-related deaths requires practical placements strategies such as foster care placements (Roux, Bungane and Strydom, 2010: 44). The Children's Act 38 of 2005 defines foster care as "the placement of the child in the care of a person who is not a parent or guardian of the child" (Section 180). A foster care grant is available to foster parents who have a child placed in their care by court (Hall, 2012: 89). According to Hall (2012: 89) the grant was initially intended as financial support for children removed from their families and placed in foster care for protection in the situation of abuse and neglect. However, it is increasingly used to provide financial support to caregivers of children who have lost the biological parents.

This chapter provides a description of the research problem and the rationale for the study followed by the aim, objectives, research questions, underlying assumptions and the value of the study. The theoretical framework that forms the foundation of the study is also discussed.

1.2   Description of the problem and rationale

Generally, the death of caregivers can reduce the well-being of children in several ways. However, the educational, social, economic, and psychological problems encountered by children may be most severe prior to a parent's death (Gow and Desmond, 2002: 6). Some of the problems orphans experience include poverty, reduced levels of care, stigma, loss of family connection and other social relationships, and, the psychological implications of repeated personal and material losses such as trauma, stress, and depression (Ndinga–Mavunga and Pharoah, 2008: 149). According to the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund Report (2001: 14) "orphans living in child headed households face many problems which include poverty, discrimination, stunting and hunger, lack of supervision and care, child labour, exploitation, education failure, psychological problems, lack of adequate medical care, poor housing, early marriage, disruption of normal childhood and adolescence". In addition, children shoulder new responsibilities such as additional domestic chores, income generating activities and child care duties (Evans, 2010). According to Chauke *et al,* (2008: 24) the study conducted by the University of South Africa found that 91% of children heading households are not employed, have premature parental responsibilities, drop-out of school, have early pregnancies, are exploited, exhibit negative behaviour and are stigmatised. To this end, Thurman *et al.* (2006: 220) state that psychosocial support is essential for children to develop life skills and hope for the future.

Due to the increasing number of orphans and shrinking number of potential caregivers, the majority of children without parental care tend to live in bigger households headed by older relatives and some orphaned children are placed with their older siblings (UNICEF 2003).

Freeman and Nkomo (2001: 303) state that in Africa, the extended family is a traditional social security system where the members are responsible for the protection of the orphaned and vulnerable children. However, with the rise in AIDS related deaths, caregivers assuming parental responsibilities may also be too old or too young to properly care for the orphaned children (Sangedo and Nambi, 1997 as cited by Freeman and Nkomo 2001: 303). This can lead to poor discipline and inadequate socialization. According to the UNICEF (2009: 79) the proportion of children living in child headed households compared to those living in adult headed households is smaller. What is not known however is the extent of youth headed households,

I was employed as a social worker at Child Welfare between 2007 and 2012 and I observed an increasing number of youth fostering their siblings. According to the case files at Child Welfare, many of the youth heading households are unemployed but receive a foster care grant, which in many cases is the only source of income for the families. The majority of the youth had dropped out of high school in order to take care of their orphaned siblings.

Given this background, I embarked upon this study in order to explore the experiences and challenges of youth heading households in providing primary care for their siblings and households. This study is intended to provide guidelines for the development of programs that will empower youth heading households with various skills and knowledge, useful in raising their orphaned siblings. Whilst literature shows that multiple studies (Ramsden *et al.,* 2002; UNICEF, 2003b; Richter *et al.,* 2004; and, Gow and Desmond, 2002), have been conducted to explore the experiences of child headed households, limited studies have been conducted on youth heading households. Gow and Desmond (2002: 83) confirm that the situation exists where older siblings often head up households. This study therefore will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on youth heading households.

1.3 Research aim

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of youths fostering their siblings in Port Shepstone. The research sampling criteria were: youth between the ages of 18-25 who were formally fostering their siblings (order of the children's court) and heading households.

1.4   Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To explore the experiences and challenges of youth heading households in Port Shepstone.

- To identify the psychosocial and economic support systems available to youth heading households.

- To ascertain what assistance, services and programs are required by youth heading households to adequately equip them for their role.

1.5   Research questions

This study was guided by the following key questions:

- What are the experiences and challenges of youth heading households in Port Shepstone?

- What are the current psychosocial and economic support systems available to youth heading households?

- What assistance, services, and programs do youth heading households require to adequately prepare for their role?

1.6   Underlying assumptions of the study:

This study was based on the following key assumptions:

- There is insufficient income to fulfil the basic needs of youth headed households.

- Youth heading households and their siblings have not received bereavement counselling.

- Youth heading households lack social support from their extended family and neighbours.

- Youth heading households feel inadequately equipped to provide parental guidance and discipline to their siblings.

- **1.7   Value of the study**

The information derived from this study provides knowledge and understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by youth heading households. The findings reveal availability of psychosocial and economic support systems, and, services and programmes required by youth heading households. This study provides information required in developing programmes to assist youth heading households cope with the responsibility of fostering their orphaned siblings. In addition, the results are useful in informing social workers of the problems of youth heading households so as to respond with appropriate measures to address their problems and needs.

1.8   Theoretical Framework: Ecological systems theory

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994: 37) understanding human development requires a consideration of the ecological system in which growth occurs. The theory provided a platform for understanding how youth heading households interrelate with different persons within their environment.

The ecological system is composed of different subsystems that help support and guide human growth which include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Berk 2000: 27). The microsystem refers to the relationship and interaction a child has with his/her immediate surroundings (Berk, 2000: 27). In the context of this study, the microsystem comprised the youth heading household and the siblings being cared for. It also included other members of the extended family residing within the household such as nieces, nephews and cousins. The family is central to youth heading households as it provides support, nurturing, security, and love in the upbringing of the child. Multiple studies (Save the Children 2007, Richter *et al.,* 2004) recommend family care as the most significant structure because it preserves a sense of identity and cultural values.

In order for a child to develop to their full potential, child rearing support must also exist in the larger environment (Berk, 2000: 28). The mesosystem is the second level in the ecosystem model and it encompasses the connections among micro systems such as schools and neighborhoods (Berk 2000: 28). It is characterized by interactions between different systems, for example, it includes the interaction between the school and the child, and, youth and their neighbourhood.

According to Berk (2000:26) "the third level is the exosystem which refers to "social settings that do not contain the developing person but nevertheless affect experiences in the immediate settings. The social settings can be formal organizations' such as the board of directors in the individual's workplace or health and welfare services in the community". In this study the exosystem is demonstrated by the resources that are supporting the youth heading households such as welfare organisations, and community based organisations.

The macrosystem level is the outermost layer in the child's environment. "It refers to institutional patterns of culture, such as the economy, customs, and body of knowledge" (Bronfenbrenner 1994: 40). At this level policies are made that affect the lives of youth heading households.

For example, South Africa has ratified two international treaties pertaining to children's rights and they include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ARCWC). The international treaties make provisions relating to children and advance international standards on children's rights with the aim of putting children's best interest first (UNICEF, 2004). The South African Constitution Act 108 of 1996, White Paper for Social Welfare of 1997, Children's Act No. 38/2005 and the Social Security Act affect children's rights to social services. If the structures at the macro system do not fulfill the requirements of the policies, children's rights would be violated.

1.9   Structure of the dissertation

The study is composed of six chapters as outlined below:

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the background and the rationale to the study. It incorporates the research aim and objectives, key questions and key assumptions of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews literature on youth headed households, policies, and legislation.

Chapter 3 provides the methodology used in this study.

Chapter 4 analyzes and discusses the results of this study.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the findings, conclusions reached as well as recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In an African context, raising children is a communal responsibility espoused by a famous African proverb, which states that 'it takes a village to raise a child' (Bequele, 2007: 11). Despite this wisdom on raising children, the responsibility of caring and protecting orphans has become a major challenge in South Africa. Poverty and unemployment have made it difficult for households and extended families to care for children.

This chapter provides a review of literature on youth headed households by first focusing on international treaties. Secondly, the national legislation framework and policies regarding youth headed households are examined together with kinship care. Lastly, challenges faced by youth heading households and community interventions for orphans and other vulnerable children are discussed.

2.2 International treaties

South Africa has ratified two international treaties pertaining to children's rights, which include the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (Sloth-Nielson, 2004). The UNCRC of 1989 is the most important international treaty, which deals with all aspects of children's rights (Sloth-Nielson, 2004). It makes provisions which advance international standards on children's rights with the aim of putting children's best interests first (UNICEF, 2004).

2.2.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

According to Article 1 of the UNCRC the term 'child' refers to "every human being below the age of eighteen unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" (UNICEF 2004: 11). The UNCRC provides that every child has the right to family, care, and protection, to grow up in a family environment with an atmosphere of happiness, love, and understanding. This implies that the primary responsibility for raising children rests with the parents at a micro system. However, when parents are not available, the state has the responsibility to provide the child with alternative care. Article 19(1) provides that the state must:

> *...protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, negligent maltreatments, or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any person who has a care of the child.*

Under this article, national states are obliged to take appropriate legal steps to protect children in need of care. Furthermore, Article 20 provides that should a child temporarily or permanently be deprived of his or her family environment, the child is entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the state. In addition, if family support is inaccessible, the state parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care.

Lastly, under the provisions of Article 27, every child has the right "to a standard of living adequate for her/his development" and obliges the state to "provide material assistance". Related to this is the provision under Article 26, which guarantees "every child the right to benefit from social security" (Sloth-Nielson, 2004: 19).

At a micro level, the youth heading households assume parental responsibility after the death of their parents. They find themselves obliged to take care of their young orphaned siblings as primary caregivers and it becomes their responsibility to ensure that the needs of their orphaned siblings are met.

In this matter, the UNCRC requires that the State should protect and safeguard the rights of orphaned children including the rights to alternative care, health care, social security, and education.

2.2.2 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

According to Stover *et al.* (2007: 21), over 140 million children under the age of 18 in the developing world have lost one or both parents. Some form of public assistance is therefore required to provide these children with adequate food, health care, education, and psychosocial support. Because of their physical and mental immaturity, children need special safeguards and care. The ACRWC of the Organization of African Unity adopted in 1990 identifies the need to respond appropriately to promote and protect the rights of the African child (September, 2008: 143). In chapter 1 of this study, it was noted that orphaned children experience challenges regarding food security to which Article 14(1) of the ACRWC provides that state parties shall take measures "to ensure the provision of adequate nutrition" (Eba, 2007: 271). Additionally, the State under Article 20(2) of the ACRWC is mandated to avail support to all those responsible for the development and well-being of the children" (Eba, 2007: 271). The state therefore is solely responsible for protecting the rights of children lacking parental care.

2.2.3 Alternative Care

The UN General Assembly approved the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children in 2008 (Human Rights Council Report, 2009: 12). The Guidelines' purpose is to enhance implementation of international instruments pertaining to the protection and well-being of children without parental care (Human Rights Council Report, 2009: 12). The key principle to implementing the Guidelines is that removal of a child should be seen as a measure of last resort (United Nations, 2009 para 14 cited by Matthias, 2010: 57). In addition, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of the Children para 37 affirm that:

> *...support and services should be available to siblings who have lost their*

parents or caregivers but choose to remain together in their household, to the extent that the eldest sibling is both willing and deemed capable of acting as the household head.

The purpose of the Guidelines is to keep children in the care of their families; however, if parents are not available, alternative care is a suitable method that can promote the well-being of children. Where the biological parents are unable to care and support their children, the state is responsible for ensuring appropriate alternative care such as foster care and adoption. According to UNICEF (2004: 120), "foster placement of children should be regulated by law" and that a competent authority or agency should be responsible to ensure the welfare of the child and the regular review of the appropriateness of the care arrangement is provided.

According to Shetty and Powell (2003: 26) large numbers of orphaned children have become reliant on ageing and often impoverished grandparents for care. However, in the absence of grandparents or other extended family, the children are reliant on the oldest sibling, a situation that is increasingly practiced (Shetty and Powell, 2003: 26).

The USAID (2007) indicated that children living in youth headed households are less likely to attend school, have greater vulnerability to physical and mental health problems, and may demonstrate behavioral problems (due to lack of appropriate adult guidance and comfort). In addition, children living in youth headed households live without a caring adult to advocate for their interest; this makes them vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse, land grabbing, and labour exploitation (Hunter, 2000 cited by USAIDS, 2007). Noteworthy is that children from youth headed households have huge unmet needs that require action from the state (Taylor, 2010). At the macro level the UNCRC, ACRWC and the UN Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children require states to provide special protection and assistance to the families of youth headed households through various methods of protection such as foster care, adoption and institutional care. All these policies aim to safeguard the rights of the children.

2.3 National legislation framework and policies

At a national level, children's rights, like many other rights are achieved through adopting appropriate policies and legislation. The South African Constitution Act 108 of 1996, White Paper for Social Welfare of 1997, Children's Act 38 of 2005, and the Social Security Act are aimed at implementing children's right to social services. Richter *et al.* (2004: 53) assert that government actions are essential to support families in responding to the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children. In addition, Hunter and Williams (1998 cited by Richter *et al.,* 2004) stress the need for government to enact policies which protect children's right to health, education, inheritance, and protection from abuse and to legalize the policies that will help secure placements and guardianship for children who lack adequate adult care.

2.3.1 The Constitution of South Africa

The South African Constitution of 1996 was designed to address the apartheid legacy, which included widespread poverty and the disruption of family and community life (Dutschke and Monson, 2008). Thus, the inclusion of broad socio-economic rights, such as the right to health care services, food, water, and social security is one of the ways in which the Constitution addresses the injustice of the past. Against that background, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 embraces the concept of "best interest of the child" (September, 2008: 57). It provides constitutional protection for children against all forms of maltreatment, neglect of their basic needs, abuse, and exploitative labour practice. The Constitution also reiterates the promotion of children's rights ensuring that all children have equal access to basic services (UNICEF *et al.,* 2006). Under the provisions of the constitution, anyone who is younger than 18 is considered to be a child (Maqoko and Dreyer, 2007: 728).

Section 28(1) (c) of the Constitution (1996) enshrines children's rights which provide that "every child has a right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care and social services."

In addition, section 27(1) (c), reiterates that "everyone has the right to access social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependents, appropriate social assistance."

The Constitution therefore makes provisions for children's rights, as they need special care and protection. Eba (2007: 271) states that "designing and implementation of measures of protection and assistance by the state is based on the fundamental principles of a rights based approach, the right to: non- discrimination; participation and inclusion; respect for the best interest of the child; survival and development of the child and respect for the rule of the law." Although the aim of the Constitution is to protect children's rights in South Africa, many children are still struggling as they continue to lack education because of poverty, difficulty in obtaining food and shelter, the high risk of sexual abuse by relatives and neighbours, the threat of child prostitution and child labour, difficulty in getting birth registration, procuring health care and social security benefits (Maqoko and Dreyer, 2007). This shows that policies created at the macro level are not implemented effectively by the relevant entities at a mezzo level as stated above. But in reality orphaned and vulnerable people are still struggling at a micro level due to poor service delivery.

2.3.2 White Paper for Social Welfare

During the apartheid regime, "South Africa had a residual system of social welfare where remedial services were only offered when social problems manifested" (Dutschke and Monson, 2008: 23). This system did not recognize that most social ills were a direct result of poverty, thus did not provide services to prevent occurrence of such problems. To address the weakness of the apartheid social welfare system, the White Paper of 1997 adopted a developmental approach to social welfare; it addresses both economic and social development. The White Paper's framework on children's rights provides that a child has the right to care and protection in a family environment within a developmental social welfare framework (Dutschke, 2007: 31).

13

South Africa's developmental social welfare policy recognizes that widespread poverty is a driver of social problems and emphasizes prevention and early intervention services. "This developmental approach reduces the need for tertiary and costly services like court inquiries and placement in children's homes" (Smith, 2007: 58). The prevention and early intervention services are aimed at supporting a child's own family before the situation warrants a more formalized child protection service action (September, 2008: 146).

2.3.3 Children's Act No. 38 of 2005

According to Jamieson (2007: 10), children's social services were neglected in the past due to absence of legislative framework consistent with the constitution and international law. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 replaced the Child Care Act 74 of 2003 and came fully into force on 1 April 2010 (Matthias and Zaal, 2010: 57).

The Children's Act promotes preservation and strengthening of children's own families as the first option of intervention for children in need of care and protection (Proudlock and Jamieson, 2007). It recognizes that families do better if they live in strong supporting communities (Richter, 2004). September (2008) identified key principles of the Children's Act as: preserving and strengthening families; providing care and protection to children in need of care; providing services which promote and monitor the well-being of children; and, developing and strengthening community structures to care for and protect children.

McKerrow and Verbeek (1995 as cited in by Richter *et al.,* 2004: 37) assert that family care is the first choice for all children. However, when this is not available, fosterage, adoption and residential care need to be established. The Children's Act provides for court processes that formally place orphaned children in the care of foster parents (Sloth-Nielson, 2004). Under the provisions of the Act, children's courts are mandated to grant services essential for specific children such as foster placements, adoption, and institutional care (September, 2008).

Section 156 of the Children's Act empowers the courts, with recommendation from social workers, to place children in need of care and protection in the custody of foster parents. This is done under the supervision of social workers to ensure that the needs of the orphaned children are met and the foster care grant is used appropriately. On a mezzo level, this is adding an administration load on social workers and courts that have to assist families at a micro level with finalization of foster care grants so that the needs of orphaned children are met adequately.

The Children's Act has introduced changes in the administration of foster care. It promotes the use of the foster care system for extended family members caring for orphans (Hall and Proudlock, 2011: 5). Section 186(2) of the Children's Act allows the court to extend foster placement with a relative until the foster child turns 18 years. This practice is aimed at facilitating permanency planning for children living with relatives (Smith, 2007). The child is discharged in terms of Section 175 after attaining 18 years after which he/she stays in alternative care until the end of the year. However, the child can remain in the alternative care until the age of 21 by applying to the provincial Head of Social Development (HSD) in terms of Section 176. The HSD can allow the extension if the current alternative caregiver agrees and is able to care for the child and the extension is necessary to enable the applicant to complete his/her studies (Mahery *et al.*, 2011).

2.3.4 The Provision of Social Security

Social security systems have been established in many countries throughout the world including developing countries (Richter, 2010: 82). South Africa is well known for its rights based approach to cash transfers for the elderly, disabled, orphaned and vulnerable children in poor households, and its emphasis on development rather than welfare (Hailu and Soares, 2008 cited by Richter 2005: 85). Access to social security is a constitutional right as provided for in section 27(1) (c) of the Constitution of South Africa.

Youth fostering young orphaned siblings are eligible in terms of the Social Assistance Act No.13 of 2004 to apply for a Foster Care Grant after a child is found in need of care and protection. A Foster Care Grant is a cash transfer currently equal to R750 per month per foster child under the age of 18 years.

The older sibling is obliged to ensure the social, physical, psychological, and emotional needs of their siblings are provided for and that their rights are fulfilled as stipulated in the Constitution. Rosa and Lehnert (2003: 38) state that poverty, HIV, and AIDS create the conditions within which children look after children and take financial and other responsibilities for younger children. The failure to recognize this and assist such children is discrimination because they come from poor backgrounds.

Langba *et al*. (2007: 73) state that, the fundamental purpose of the right to social assistance is to ensure that persons living in poverty are able to access a minimum level of income sufficient to meet basic subsistence needs so that they do not live below minimum acceptable standards. Thus, cash transfers were acknowledged as a mechanism to reduce poverty and inequality and promote economic growth (Richter, 2010: 82).

2.3.5   National Youth Policy

The National Youth Policy (NYP) (2008-2013: 3) aims to produce "empowered young persons who are able to release their full potential and understand their roles and responsibilities in making meaningful contributions to the development of a non racial and prosperous South Africa". It is based on the principles of social and economic justice, human rights, empowerment, participative citizenship, the promotion of public benefit, and distributive and liberal values (National Youth Policy, 2008-2013 para 3, p. 5). At the macro level the NYP was created to enhance the capacities of young people through addressing their needs, promoting positive outcomes, and providing an integrated coordinated package of services, opportunities, choices, relationships, and support necessary for holistic development of all young people particularly those outside the social, political, and economic mainstream (National Youth Policy, para 5, p. 6).

However, this remains a challenge because at a micro level youth in rural areas face particular constraints with regard to accessibility and availability of services, which result in fewer opportunities and less information and employment than in urban areas. The National Treasury Report (2011: 10) revealed that there are currently 4.1 million unemployed people and about 2.8 million who are long term unemployed. The employment challenge facing South African youth is even greater as 3 million young people were unemployed in December 2010. The National Treasury Report (2011: 10) states that applying the International Labour Organization's definition, which restricts "youth" to those aged between 15 and 24 years, the number of unemployed is more than 1.2 million with an unemployment rate of 49 percent: one in every two people below the age of twenty-five is jobless.

Due to unemployment, people are living in horrific poverty. Mayer (2011: 17) indicated that unemployment in South Africa is highest amongst females, the black population and those aged between 15-24 years. May (1998: 4 as cited by Triegaardt, 2005: 251) defines poverty as "the inability to attain a minimal standard of living, measured in terms of basic consumption needs or the income to satisfy them." According to Chennells and Hall (2011: 84) there are substantial differences in the prevalence of poverty across provinces and races as indicated as follows:

> *...both Limpopo and Eastern Cape [have] almost 80% of children living below the poverty line, compared to the Western Cape (28%) and Gauteng (36%). It can be estimated that two out of three children living in Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga also live in households below the poverty line. Comparing poverty rates among races reveals that, over two thirds of African children (68%) lived below the poverty line compared to one-third of Coloured children (33%). Only 6% Indians and 4% White children live in income poverty at this level* (Chennells and Hall, 2011: 850).

17

According to UNICEF (2007: 13), orphaned children often live in households headed by unemployed older siblings, thus are unlikely to have a regular source of income. This may result in orphans receiving inadequate care and food.

2.4   Kinship care

The Child Welfare League of America defines kinship care as the full time care, nurturing, and protection of children by relatives, members of tribes or clans, godparents, stepparents, or any adults who have a kinship bond with a child (Child Welfare League of America as cited in Msomi, 2009: 9). Kinship care can also be regarded as "a form of alternative care that is family based, within the child's extended family or close friends of the family known to the child" (Save the Children Report, 2007: 2). Therefore, at a micro level kinship care may include anyone who has a kinship bond with a child such as a sister, brother, aunt, uncle, and grandmother. Save the Children Report (2007: 2) further states that kinship care maybe formal or informal. "Formal kinship care is described as arrangements that have been ordered by judicial authority. It usually involves assessment of the suitability of the family for the child and the provision of some kind of continuing support and monitoring of the placement" Save the Children Report 2007:2). Conversely, "informal kinship care refers to any private arrangement provided in a family environment, whereby the child is looked after by relatives or friends, at the initiative of the child, his or her parents, or other persons" (Jini and Roby, 2011).

In certain situations, youth take on the responsibility of caring for their siblings if there is no one else in the family willing to take up parental responsibility after the death of their parents. In such a case, the placement only becomes formal once the Children's court has made an order in terms of section 156 of the Children's Act. A social worker then supervises the placement.

The aim of kinship care is in line with the focus of the policies and the Children's Act because:

> *...kinship care preserves continuing contact with the family, if desirable, siblings and the extended family networks, to maintain identity, to decrease trauma and distress of relocation and grief of separation from parents, to reduce the likelihood of multiple placements and to expand capacity for self sufficiency, on going support throughout life and that children and relatives provide mutual care and support* (Jini and Roby, 2011: 16).

Multiple studies (Conway and Hutson, 2007; Freeman and Nkomo, 2006; Save the children Report, 2007; and Crosson-Tower, 2001) stress the value of kinship care as safe, most viable and preferred option for orphaned and vulnerable children. At the micro level kinship placements are described as less likely than unrelated foster placements to be disrupted where the kin is more likely to keep the children until they reach adulthood. More importantly kinship care enables children to remain with familiar caregivers, reducing the need for separation from loved ones, and preserving attachments and a sense of identity (Save the Children, 2007). Thus, youths in youth heading households play a huge role in keeping their orphaned siblings in the family unit.

2.5   Challenges faced by youth headed households

The study conducted by Nelson Mandela Children's Fund (2001) listed the problems and the needs of orphans as economic hardship, educational failure, psychological problems, and discrimination, lack of supervision and care, child labour, exploitation, lack of adequate social care, poor housing, and early marriage. These challenges are examined in detail in this section.

2.5.1 Economic hardship

The most obvious challenge of youth headed households is that children are forced to take on the adult role of supporting the family.

Baquele (2007) asserts that the eldest child assumes full parental responsibilities by engaging in parental chores and the task of earning an income. Siblings lack strong family support because they cannot rely on adult care, guidance, and protection. The economic impact of HIV/AIDS on orphans increases their vulnerability to HIV infection. Shetty (2003) found that orphaned youth are more likely to have engaged in sexual intercourse earlier than their peers. For some youth, prostitution and survival sex serve as a means to obtaining basic needs.

2.5.2 Psychological problems

A study conducted by Gow and Desmond, (2002) revealed that the death of parents contributes to psychological problems, especially among young children as the emotional well-being of children is threatened. Moreover, as a result of the death of their parents, absence of guidance and unmet need for love and security, the affected families' experience bereavement and psychosocial depression (Sloth-Nielson, 2004 cited in Maqoko 2006). Ramsden *et al.* (2002) assert that children grieve over the loss of people they love and for the happy times that are no more. After the death of their parents, the children may experience on-going hurt and pain that can build up and change the child's psychological well-being. In such cases, the caregivers are often frustrated by the behavioral problems of the children who have been traumatized by the death of their parents (Richter *et al.,* 2004). Subbario and Coury (2003 as cited in Richter et al, 2004) state that many organisations are aware that children get affected emotionally by the losses associated with death in their homes and communities. Nevertheless, there is generally less attention given to programmes, which deal with children's psychological needs when compared to their physical needs.

2.5.3 Educational failure

Education is often disrupted when children (especially older children) assume adult roles due to lack of appropriate adult guidance and comfort (USAID, 2007). In a study conducted by Maqoko and Dreyer (2007), it was revealed that a great number of children who become heads of households drop out of school, and look for work in order to care for their siblings.

2.5.4 Stigma and discrimination

There is stigma and discrimination that surrounds people affected by HIV/AIDS and in situations where parents died of HIV/AIDS, children bear the stigma (Shetty and Powell, 2003). This further compounds the emotional distress and social isolation experienced by children because they are rejected by their relatives and communities in fear that the children also have the virus (Shetty and Powell, 2003).

In order to support youth heading households in fulfilling their potential for growth and development, many approaches are needed such as economic, educational, psychological, and health care along with community mobilization (Gruskin and Tarantola 2005: 134). There has been proliferation of "Programmes to assist children, families and communities as government, foreign donors, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based groups have responded to the plight of affected children" (Richter *et al.,* 2004: 6).

However, community based organizations or public sector support programmes reach only about 15% of households supporting children orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS (Richter, 2004). In addition, a large number of very diverse small projects have been initiated to provide income and emotional support to orphaned and vulnerable children (UN Secretary General Report, 2006 as cited by Richter, 2010: 82). Experience with such programs has shown that it is essential to empower communities to provide support for vulnerable children (Phiri and Tolfree, 2005 as cited by Matthias and Zaal, 2008: 292).

The NGOs have been successful in forming collaborative partnerships that have mainly been responsible for piloting community and familial-based care mechanism in South Africa (Matthias 2008: 292). Notable examples include Children in Distress Network (CINDI), Thandanani and Isolabantwana (the Nguni word means Eye on Child).

2.6   Conclusion

When parents die older siblings often assume the roles of being caregivers to their siblings. Ramsden (2002: 1) asserts that children start to carry the burden of heading households before and after the death of their parents. The eldest child resumes full parental responsibilities by engaging in household chores and the task of generating income. The children are left with the responsibility of sustaining the family by providing material and emotional support to their orphaned siblings. However, children who are deprived of their parents have a right to special protection and assistance through the provisions of the many treaties that government has ratified for the protection of children's rights. If the parents are unable to care for the children, it is the obligation of the State to place the children in alternative care and to provide support to foster parents.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1   Introduction

This chapter provides the research methodology adopted in this study. It discusses the research design, sampling, and data collection strategies, the validity and reliability, method of analysis, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. The researcher obtained data from ten youth participants who were fostering their siblings and who were heading households in Port Shepstone.

3.2   Research design

This was a descriptive research, where a qualitative research approach was applied in this study. Babbie and Mouton (2001) state that qualitative researchers have always primarily been interested in describing the actions of the participants in great detail and then attempting to understand these actions in terms of the participants' beliefs, history and context. Kelly (2006: 287) points out that qualitative researchers want to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations or phenomena as they occur in the real world and therefore want to study them in their natural settings. According to Creswell (2009: 173), qualitative researchers tend to collect data at the site where participants experience the phenomena and information is gathered by talking directly to people. Durrheim (2006) states that in qualitative research data is collected in the form of spoken language. Unlike a quantitative approach, the qualitative approach of this study allowed the researcher to apply interview skills in soliciting information about participants' lived experiences and challenges in heading households. In addition the researcher was able to seek clarity, using interview skills to ensure that information obtained was accurate. The qualitative approach allowed the participants to engage in interview discussions freely and the researcher gained rich and detailed information (Delport and Fouch, 2005).

Creswell (2009) affirms that in developing a research design, the researcher must consider whether the main aim of the study is exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory, as this will impact on the type of study to be conducted. In keeping with the qualitative nature of the study, this study was descriptive. According to Delport and Fouche (2005) qualitative research is longer and more descriptive: it describes phenomena accurately, through narrative-type descriptions (Creswell, 2009). For example, during interviews youth heading households were expected to provide rich and detailed descriptive information on their experiences in fostering their orphaned siblings and heading their households.

3.3   Sampling

The participants were selected through purposive sampling: a non-probability sampling technique. Purposive sampling depends not only on availability and willingness to participate but also that cases which are typical of the population are selected (Strydom, 2005). Purposive sampling is based on the researcher's judgement, in that a sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population (Strydom, 2005). For the purpose of this study, a purposive sample was selected from the Child Welfare Port Shepstone caseload. The research criteria were youth between the ages of 18-25 who were formally fostering their siblings (by order of the children's court) and heading households. The sample consisted of 10 participants.

3.4 Data collection procedures

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the office of Child Welfare Port Shepstone. The researcher used in-depth interviews in collecting information from all ten participants. A semi-structured one-to one interview guide with open-ended questions was used (see Annexure 2). Researchers use semi-structured interviews in order to gain detailed information of participants' beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of a particular phenomenon (Greeff, 2005: 297).

The above methodology is the most flexible which gives the researcher and participants' freedom to express themselves. Greeff (2005: 288) states that the researcher must also ask open-ended questions which do not predetermine the answers and must allow room for the participants to respond in their own words. The individual interviews took about one to two hours per participant. All the interviews were conducted in isiZulu in the participants' homes. All the participants provided permission for the interviews to be tape-recorded.

3.5 Data analysis

De Vos (2005) defines data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data, a process applied to this study's data analysis. According to Creswell (2009) qualitative procedures have unique steps in data analysis, and this study adopted the procedure described by Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006). The interviews were transcribed individually after which all the transcripts were read thoroughly and notes taken down in order to make sense of the data. The researcher found this useful as it allowed developing understanding of all the information collected during the interviews. The information was then categorized into themes (formed through repeated information during interviews) noting all the common issues identified in the participants' responses. Sub-themes therefore were developed from the above and noted in the study.

When developing themes, it is recommended that the researcher codes the data and in this study coding was done using different colors to highlight themes. (Terre Blanche *et al.* 2006). Once information was categorized and coded the researcher checked if the information obtained during the interviews addressed the research questions or that the themes were relevant within the study context and research objectives. The researcher then compared the findings of this study with other studies and relevant literature to support the findings. The responses of the participants were quoted during the entire writing process in order to provide detailed descriptions.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

According to Gibbs (2007 cited in by Creswell, (2009: 182) "qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects". The four ways to ensure trustworthiness are credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, cited in by De Vos, 2005).

De Vos (2005: 346) defines credibility as "the alternative to internal validity in which the goal is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such as manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described." For the purpose of this study, credibility was enhanced when the researcher shared the information with colleagues who had knowledge and understanding of the background of youth heading households. Since the sample was selected from the Child Welfare- Port Shepstone caseload, all the social workers were involved in identifying youth heading households in their caseloads. Thus, they had knowledge and better understanding of the background of youth heading households in their case loads. Another way of enhancing credibility is that as the researcher was employed as a social worker at Child Welfare Port Shepstone supervising youths fostering their orphaned siblings and heading households. As a result, the researcher had an understanding of the issues affecting youth heading households.

The researcher developed an interest to conduct this study in order to explore the experiences and challenges of youths fostering their siblings and heading households in Port Shepstone and to ascertain what assistance, services and programs are required to equip them for their role. The participants showed willingness to participate in this study by giving consent. This enhances credibility because the participants were motivated and were able to engage in discussions openly during interviews.

Durrheim and Painter (2006: 152) states that "reliability refers to the dependability of a measurement instrument; that is, the extent to which the instrument yields the same

26

results on repeated trials". "Dependability refers to whether the findings will be consistent if the research was conducted with the same people or else in a similar environment". A semi-structured one-to-one interview guide with open ended questions was used. The semi-structured interview guide was very helpful because it did not predetermine the answers and allowed room for the participants to respond in their own words. Semi-structured interview guides added to the dependability to this study.

Transferability refers to whether the findings of the study can be applied to other settings. According to de Vos (2005) qualitative research provides detailed information. Thus, the primary approach to ensure transferability was the provision of detailed descriptions on the lived experiences and challenges of youth heading households. In this study the researcher ensured that thick descriptions of information from participants' responses were discussed throughout the data analysis process.

Trustworthiness is the main principle of qualitative research and the researcher had to verify the trustworthiness of the results by being neutral during interviews. Neutrality is the exclusion of the researchers own prejudice from the results of the study. The researcher verified information by asking the supervisor to establish whether all the aspects of the interview themes were comprehensively discussed in the study.

3.7 Ethical consideration

Strydom (2005: 57) points out that "ethics is a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents". Prior to the data collection stage, pre-arrangements were made that consisted of calling the participants telephonically to establish their willingness to participate in the study. Participants were asked to attend a group meeting. At this meeting the researcher explained and clarified the purpose of the research and discussed the contents of informed consent letter and orally translated it into isiZulu. All the participants were asked to give written consent at this stage and they were all allowed to

withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and it was made clear to them that the findings of the study will not be used against them. The participants were assured of confidentiality in handling the information given during the interviews. This enabled the participants to freely express themselves during the interviews.

The participants were informed that their personal details would not be disclosed in this study. Strydom (2005: 61) mentioned that violation of privacy, the right to self-determination and confidentiality can be viewed as being synonymous. The researcher noted that youth heading households were living in particularly vulnerable life circumstances and some participants were very emotional during the interviews. The researcher informed the participants that counselling services would be provided for those who would need it. Youth heading households had hopes that the researcher would provide them with additional material and financial assistance. This made the whole encounter difficult although the purpose of the study was explained before it was carried out. The researcher also made it clear to the participants that there would be no gain in order to eliminate the misunderstanding.

3.8   Limitations of the study

This study had some limitations and these are discussed in detail in this section. The study was limited to ten youth heading households who are in the age range of 18-25 years.

One of the limitations of the study is that the study focused on the Port Shepstone area, therefore the findings could not be generalised or extended to other areas. The study design did not incorporate interviews with other people (neighbours, relatives, and siblings) to confirm the experiences of youth heading households.

In addition, this study did not include other race groups as the study was done among isiZulu speaking participants only. Therefore, the findings are contextualized within the area where the research was done.

Some issues covered in the interviews were sensitive to the respondents. For example, the issue of death or family abandonment by a head of family or sibling appeared too sensitive. This led to some participants failing to open up about some issues relating to the death of their parents.

Moreover, other participants were very emotional during interviews. Some topics like "family backgrounds" reminded them of the past. This was a limitation itself, since the researcher was unable to probe more. As a professional social worker the researcher was able to observe changes in participant's responses.

3.9 Conclusion

The methodology adopted in this study was described and discussed in detail throughout this chapter. The research study was qualitative and adopted a descriptive approach. This study's methodology included: purposive sampling technique; the data collection using semi-structured interview schedule, which used open ended questions; and, data analysis using themes emerging from the data. Finally, the limitations of the study and ethical issues of the study were presented. The findings of the study will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

4.1   Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences and challenges of youth heading households in the Port Shepstone area. The study comprised ten youth heading households who are foster parents to their orphaned siblings. The findings are presented in four sections. It commences with a profile of youth heading households and provides a contextual background for them and their households. The second section presents the experiences of youth heading household in managing their households. The third section presents a discussion on social work services. The last section demonstrates the impact of responsibilities on youth heading households.

SECTION A: CONTEXT: PARTICIPANTS AND HOUSEHOLDS

4.2   Short Profile of Participants

At the time of data collection, the participants were profiled as follows:

Participant 1 was a 22 year old black female. She lived with her two sisters aged 17 and 13, and, her five cousins aged 19, 14, 9, 8, and 6 years. The participant witnessed her mother's brutal murder in 2005. She and her siblings were left in the care of their grandmother and aunt who later died in 2005 and 2006 respectively. After the death of their aunt, the participant took over the responsibility of caring for her siblings and cousins. Her two sisters were officially placed by court in her foster care in 2008 but despite this, she does not receive a foster care grant with respect to her cousins.

Participant 2 was a 23 year old black female. She had four brothers, aged 27, 21, 16, and 6 years and her eldest brother leads a nomadic lifestyle. The father despite being employed has not provided financial or any other support. Their mother died from tuberculosis in 2010 after which the participant assumed full parental responsibility for her two young siblings and formally became a foster parent in 2011. Despite having

relatives living in the same area the participant and her siblings preferred to stay on their own for fear of being ill-treated.

Participant 3 was a 23 year old black male who lived with his two brothers, aged 13 and 10 and his cousin who is 21 years old. His mother and father died in 2005 of cancer and Tuberculosis (T.B.) respectively and at the time the siblings were left in the care of their sister. However, the eldest sister died from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in 2007 while the other sister is allegedly staying with her boyfriend in Durban. The participant dropped out of school at the age of 15 after the death of his mother and is employed as a taxi driver. He has been officially fostering his two brothers since 2009.

Participant 4 was a 20 year old black female who lives with her three siblings, aged 27, 23 and 15 years, and, her four year old son. In addition, the household included her five cousins, aged 25, 21, 19 (twins) and 14. In 2005, her mother was brutally murdered after which the siblings lived with their grandmother until her death in 2009. Her cousins' mother also died while their father's details and whereabouts are unknown to the family. The participant resumed full parental responsibility of her siblings and cousins in 2009 and she receives a foster care grant for her 15-year-old sister. She applied to foster her 14-year-old cousin but was told that the cousin did not qualify for a foster care grant and was advised to find the father of her cousins.

Participant 5 was a 24-year-old black female who lives with her 6 year old daughter, three brothers, aged 20, 11, 4 and her 15 year old sister. Her father and mother died in 2006 and 2007 respectively, after which the participant and her siblings stayed in their own home with their maternal grandmother. However, their grandmother left in 2009 without informing the siblings. Three of her siblings were placed in her foster care by court order in 2009.

Participant 6 was a 24-year-old black female who lived with her two children, aged, 8 and 4, and, her three siblings aged 19 and 13 (twins). The participant disclosed that she was married and used to live with her late husband's family, and, that she is HIV positive. In addition, she disclosed that her parents (who were never married but lived together) were HIV positive. Her father and mother died in 2009 and 2010 respectively, after which she was instructed by her uncles to take care of her siblings. The siblings were then given an old house, which was previously used by their late grandmother to live in. In 2011, the participant's siblings were officially placed in her foster care.

Participant 7 was a 20 year old black female who lived with her 15 year old brother and her sister's (who died in 2006) children, aged, 12, 7, and 15 years. The participant dropped out of school in grade 10 to nurse her diabetic mother who was wheelchair bound. The children were placed in her foster care in 2010 whilst her mother was still alive.

Participant 8 was a 23 year old black female who lives with her two brothers aged, 29 and 21 and two sisters, aged, 19, and 14. She also cares for her sister's (who died in 2008) children, aged, 10 and 7 years. She has a 7 year old son who lives with his father's family. Her father and mother died in 2003 and 2005 respectively, after which the participant dropped out of school to care for her siblings and sister's children. She is fostering her sister and sister's children who were placed in her foster care in 2009.

Participant 9 was a 23-year-old black female who has two children, aged, 7 and 4 years. She is also the foster parent of her 15 years old sister and 16 year old cousin. The participant and her sister were born out of wedlock and lived with their maternal family. Her grandmother and mother died in 1998 and 2000 respectively, after which the siblings were left in the care of their uncle and his wife. However, her uncle's wife informed an extended family member that she was not in a position to care for both siblings and then their step grandmother then accepted responsibility for their care.

After the death of the uncle and his wife the step grandmother took on the care of both their children,   one of which subsequently of died. The step grandmother died in 2009 after which the children's court placed the sister and cousin in her foster care in 2010.

Participant 10 was a 23-year-old female who lives with her two sisters aged, 12, and 9. Their mother died of AIDS in 2010. Their maternal aunt who had been living with them since the death of their mother, left in 2011. The Participant, has since 2011 been receiving a foster care grant with respect to her siblings.

4.3   Biographical Profile of Participants

Table 4.1 provides a summary of the demographic profile of the participants.

Table 4.1: Biographical Profile of the Participants

Participant	Race	Gender	No. of children being fostered	Number of people living in household	Cases leading to youth heading households
1	Black	Female	2	8	Murder (mother)
2	Black	Female	2	4	T.B.
3	Black	Male	2	4	Cancer (mother), T.B. (father)
4	Black	Female	1	8	Murder
5	Black	Female	3	5	HIV
6	Black	Female	2	7	Father (reason of death unknown) mother (uterus cancer)
7	Black	Female	3	4	Diabetes
8	Black	Female	3	6	HIV
9	Black	Female	2	5	HIV
10	Black	Female	2	3	HIV

This study was conducted in the rural areas of Port Shepstone and all the participants were Zulu speaking Black South African citizens. The majority of participants were females with just one male heading a household. This finding is congruent with the findings of other research studies. Richter *et al*. (2004) for example found that women and young girls often take on the burden of caring for children.

According to four participants in this study, their parents died after which they were taken care of by their grandmothers who later also passed away. After the death of their grandmothers, they felt obliged to look after their orphaned siblings and this is evident from Participant 4's comments as follows:

> *I started staying with the children in 2009 after the death of my mother. There was no one else to take care of the children. The social worker found me fit to take care of the children. The grant was transferred to my name (Participant 4).*

Although the above participant mentioned that she started staying with her orphaned siblings after the death of her parents, two participants mentioned that they assumed parental responsibility before the death of their parents. They were nursing their parents prior to their death. The following elaborates their experience:

> *My mother was the sort of person that used to do everything for herself. She had a vegetable garden but when she became sick all this changed. Her leg was cut due to diabetes and was in a wheelchair. I had to do things for her as she was unable to walk. I had to cook and leave food near the bed before I went to school. In addition, I had to look after everyone in the house. I played a role of a mother, aunt, and sister. There was no one else who could play these roles. It is hard. If I die, I will not rest in peace; my heart will still be with these children (Participant 9).*

> *My mother was critically ill and she was unable to do things for herself. I had to wake up early in the morning to bath and feed her before going to school.*

I could not sleep at night as I was nursing my mother. She used to wake me up to call the spiritual healer (umthandazi) who resides in the area (Participant 5).

Some participants indicated that their relatives refused to take up the responsibility of taking care of the orphans. Sometimes relatives do not accept the responsibility of taking care of orphans because they have their own families to look after. One participant indicated that she was instructed to care for her siblings; she elaborated this by stating that:

After the death of my mother, my uncles told me that there was no one who would be able to take care of my mother's children. They have their own families to look after (Participant 8).

The quotes above indicate that there are many factors leading to children taking up the responsibility of taking care of their orphaned siblings. They also indicate that children take up the responsibility of caring for their siblings before and after the death of their parents. Unwillingness of relatives to take up the responsibility of caring for orphans makes the orphans feel obliged to take care of themselves. Evans (2010: 8) found that for some young people, "their caring pathways started when a parent became ill, gradually providing more intensive nursing care as their health deteriorated."

Most of the participants were responsible for more than one orphan in their care. The microsystem in these families comprises of the youth heading households, their own children, siblings, cousins, and other members of extended family who were cared for. Four participants cared for young siblings who were younger than seven years old. This is a critical age group in child development, which needs close supervision and care. Nine participants were taking care of teenagers aged 12-17 years old. According to Meyer, Moore and Viljoene (1995) "the quest for identity often causes the adolescent to clash with rules of society and with persons who are close to them. However, some individuals may withdraw or fall in love, turn to drugs and alcohol to relieve anxiety". This is a crucial part in a child's development process requiring parental guidance and supervision.

4.4 Education profile of participants

All the participants indicated that taking care of their siblings impacted on their own education. The following subthemes emerged: nursing sick parents, taking care of orphaned siblings, post matric education, and lost dreams.

4.4.1 Nursing Sick Parents

Two participants reported that they dropped out of school in order to nurse their terminally ill and bedridden parents. They described their experiences as follows:

> *I left school in standard 8. I decided to drop out of school due to my mother's and sister's poor health condition. I used to wake up at 4 o'clock in the morning in order to cook porridge for my mother and to prepare the children. It was my responsibility to change blankets and to bath them before I go to school. It was hard to concentrate in class thinking about home* (Participant 7).

> *My mother was critically ill and it was not easy to focus on my school work as I was thinking of my mother. I was nursing my mother and she did not have energy. It was my responsibility to bath her and to cook porridge every day before I went to school. She was unable to go to the toilet and she was using the bucket system. It was my responsibility to clean the bucket. I could not sleep at night because she was complaining of sharp pains* (Participant 5).

What is most noticeable from the above quotations is the huge burden participants had to carry in taking care of their sick parents to ensure that they were clean and had something to eat at all times. This finding is consistent with Ayieko's (2003: 9) findings in a study done in Kisumu and Asiaya Districts where many orphans were not in school due to heavy domestic responsibilities. Usually, school attendance is affected when there is an ill parent in a household and in most cases girls take up the responsibility of caring for female relatives (Geoff and Williamson, 2000).

These youths are deprived of their constitutional right to education as provided for in Section 29 of the Constitution of South Africa.

4.4.2   Taking Care of their Orphaned Siblings

According to three participants, they dropped out of school to take care of their orphaned siblings. They did this because there was no one else to take up the responsibility after the death of their parents. Their experiences are encapsulated in the following statements:

> *I dropped out of school in 2005 after the death of my mother. There was no one to take care of the children (Participant 6).*

> *I left school a long time ago when I was in standard five. I could not continue with my studies because I had to look after my siblings (Participant 8.)*

> *Things became worse after the death of my mother and I was forced to look after my sisters. My grandmother resides in the same area but I did not want to stay with her because she stays with my auntie's and uncle's children (Participant 10).*

The above findings are consistent with Masondo's (2006: 37) study who found that orphans sacrifice their education because the task of taking care of young siblings is so cumbersome that is it is impossible to focus on their education. The findings from the same study also reveal that children drop out of school in order to fend for their siblings' daily and educational needs.

4.4.3   Post-Matric Education

Four participants stated that they did not pursue tertiary education because of the fostering responsibility they assumed. Besides their responsibility, the participants revealed that the other contributory factor for not pursuing tertiary education was lack of funds. The participants elaborated this by stating that:

All my dreams disappeared after the death of my grandmother. I wanted to be a business manager. It is hard to continue with schooling because there is no one who will pay for my school fees (Participant 4).

I wanted to study nursing at university but all my plans were unsuccessful. I did not manage to continue with school due to financial challenges. There was no one to pay for my studies (Participant 9).

I completed grade 12. I wanted to do business management. Before my mother passed away, she had plans to pay for my computer course and drivers license. Now there is no one to support me to further my studies. All my plans were fruitless (Participant 2).

I completed grade 12 in 2007. I did not continue with schooling due to financial challenges. I wish a bright future for my siblings as they are in grade 10. My wish is for them to complete their grade 12 and find bursaries to continue their studies. I do not wish for them to suffer like I did (Participant 1).

The participants' statements reveal how the death of parents can impact on children's dreams, hopes and future, a sentiment shared by Mokgatle-Nthabu *et al.* (2011: 66). Another study conducted by Masondo (2006: 36) reveals that the death of parents can have adverse impact on children's education. In particular, loss of income emanating from the death of parents reduces the capacity to pay school fees and other school related costs.

Dropping out of school and not pursuing post matric education has a direct impact on employment opportunities.

4.5 Employment

Seven participants in this study reported that they were unemployed but seeking jobs. The frustration of two of the participants is evident in the following responses.

At present I am unemployed. I am looking for job opportunities in different places but I have bad luck. Job opportunities are very scarce. I submitted C.Vs in different stores in town. At Shoprite, I am always seeing new workers but I do not receive my response. I am cursed (nginamanzi amnyama) (Participant 2).

I am still seeking jobs. I have been submitting C.Vs in different places such as Toll Gates but they do not employ me (Participant 1).

Three youth heading households were involved in unskilled labour. They recounted the challenges which they faced because they were engaged in unsecured jobs. One participant, a taxi driver, stated the following:

I am working as a taxi driver. I started to work here in 2008. I earn R500 per week. The type of job that I am doing is not reliable because if the taxi is broken, the taxi owner takes a long period to fix it (Participant 3).

Another participant stated that:

I am working as a domestic worker. I work one day per week and I earn R80.00 per day (Participant 5).

She further indicated that she does not work if it rains and therefore does not get paid. Participant 4 explained her situation as follows:

Sometimes I find piece jobs. I earn R50.00 per day. It would be much better if I worked three days. I afford to buy a packet of 10 kg rice, maize meal, and some curry stuff (Participant 4).

Findings from this study reveal that some of the government policies at a macro level are not strictly enforced. For example, chapter two of the National Youth Policy (2008-2013) is based on the principles of social economic justice, human rights, empowerment, promotion of public benefit, and, distributive and liberal values.

However, youth heading households face constraints with regard to accessibility and availability of job opportunities.

Unemployment is a major problem that affects women mostly throughout the world. In South Africa, the broad division of society along class lines was formed based on ethnicity. Hall (2012: 87) indicated that 40% of African children have no working adult at home as compared to 13% coloured children, 7% Indian children and 3% white children. Mayor (2011: 17) reported unemployment in South Africa as highest among females, the black population and those aged between 15-24 years. The findings of this study are consistent with literature since the majority of the participants were unemployed and mainly relied on the foster care grant as a steady source of income.

4.6   Foster Care Grants

Hall (2010: 107) states that "there is substantial evidence that grants, including child support grants, are spent on food, education and basic goods and services. This evidence shows that the grants not only help to realize children's right to social assistance but also improves their access to food, education, and basic services." All the participants received a foster care grant for the fostered siblings. Six participants were dependent on the foster care grant as the only source of income while four participants received the foster care grant for the fostered siblings and a child support grant with respect to their biological children. The two sub-themes which emerged were delays in obtaining the grant and difficulty in obtaining birth certificates.

4.6.1   Delays during Foster Care Grant Application

Seven of the participants indicated having waited more than a year before their application for a foster care grant was finalized. In addition, participants narrated the challenges experienced in trying to apply for a foster care grant; some of the sentiments are indicated as follows:

During the application of foster care grant, I waited two years before the grant was finalized. The living conditions were very bad. When I consulted a social worker about progress of the case, the social worker could not find my file. I was asked to re-submit new documents (Participant 1).

The participant further stated that:

I also applied for a foster care grant with respect to my cousins orphaned in 2009 but up to date the grant has not been finalized. The social worker said I must wait. I am scared to go to the social worker to ask about the progress of the case. It is like I am pushing too much and yet they have other things to do (Participant 1).

This finding is similar to the review done by September (2006: 57) which showed that the situation where social workers were dealing with high caseloads while the number of children orphaned from HIV/AIDS increased rapidly, was getting worse in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. According to Jamieson (2012: 17) the large numbers of families applying for the foster care grant is straining social workers. This has resulted in lengthy delays and inadequate services for abused and neglected children who require social workers' support and interventions. September (2006: 57) states that "due to heavy workload, many cases could not be processed rapidly and in certain districts it took 3-5 years to finalize".

In this study, the participants expressed that they were experiencing challenges in obtaining necessary documents. This will be discussed further in the following subtheme.

4.6.2 Application Documents

During the application process for a foster care grant with respect to her cousin, one participant said that she experienced problems. She stated that it took several days before her application for a birth certificate was approved by the Department of Home Affairs. She shared her experience as follows:

My auntie's children are orphans. My aunt did not register them for birth certificates. During the application of foster care grant with respect to the children, the social worker advised me to apply for the birth certificates. I contacted home affairs. At first, they advised me to bring a letter from the ward councilor. On the second day, they said I must bring a letter from the social worker. My application was approved on the third day (Participant 1).

The study shows that acquiring the necessary documents in support of the application for a foster care grant is one of the challenges faced by youth heading households. Maqoko (2007: 725) states that South African citizens are obliged to register for citizenship under the provisions of the Registration Act, in order to gain access to available state resources. Sloth-Nielson (2004: 25) affirms that "a child's right to registration is a constitutional mandate to ensure that its identity is recognized and that it is able to get access to available resources and institutions. However, in this study, the participants mentioned that it was hard to obtain birth certificates of orphaned children at the Department of Home Affairs. This finding reveals infringement of the participants' constitutional rights.

In this study, the participants stated that they lack suitable housing. This will be discussed in the following theme.

4.7. Housing

Eight participants lived in mud houses. The participants lived under very poor conditions in the old and deteriorating houses, which they explained to be difficult to live in during rainy days. The participants stated that:

We were living in an old rondavel and a shack. I managed to build this two-roomed house and bought furniture (Participant 1).

The family of participant one owns a two-roomed house, which is built with blocks. Their new house is beautiful and strong as compared to the rondavel, which was built with mud. However, they share one bedroom while the shack is still used as a boy's bedroom.

> *I find it difficult because I do not have the money to renovate the house (Participant 2).*

Participant two's family lives in an old four-roomed house, which consists of three bedrooms and a kitchen cum lounge. The house has old furniture, which is not in a good condition.

Participant 4 described her poor living conditions as follows:

> *The house collapsed at night during the heavy rains. We were all fast asleep. Luckily, we were not hurt. The incident was reported to the local councilor. The municipality had promised to build a house for us but up to date nothing has happened (Participant 4).*

> *The house is leaking as you can see the walls are dirty. I am trying to fix the roof. We struggle during the rainy days. If it's raining the floor and the walls become wet and as a result we cannot even sit and watch T.V in this room because everything becomes wet (Participant 5).*

Participant five's family has a three-roomed house, which consists of a bedroom, lounge, and kitchen cum bedroom. The house is not in a good condition and it has old furniture.

> *This is my late grandmother's house. My grandmother passed away a long time ago. My mother did not have her own house. She was renting a room in another township. My uncle and his family decided to give us this house. This is a two-roomed house but we are using this room. We cook and sleep here. We are waiting for RDP house (umxhaso). My mother applied for an RDP house long time ago (Participant 8).*

The participant and her siblings live in an old two roomed house which was built with mud and the floor is dusty. The house consists of two rooms but they only occupy one room. They cook and sleep in one room and this may have a negative impact on the children's health.

Section 26 of the Constitution of South Africa provides that "everyone has the right to access adequate housing" while Section 28(1) (c) states that children have "the right to shelter." Despite the existing legislation, it is evident from the findings that the participants did not have proper housing to accommodate all the family members. The evidence in this study reveals that some of the government policies pertaining to housing at a micro level are not strictly enforced. According to Hall (2007: 86) "children living in informal settlements are more exposed to hazards such as shack fires and paraffin poisoning". However, children's right to adequate shelter means that they should not have to live in informal dwellings at all. Hall (2012: 98) affirms that "among the seven elements of adequate housing of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is that housing must be "habitable"; to be habitable, houses should be built in a way that ensures physical safety and protection from weather." The findings in the General Household Survey (2010) indicate that in 2010, nearly 1.9 million children in South Africa lived in backyard dwellings, and shacks in informal settlements (Hall, 2010: 98).

In the next section, the roles and responsibilities of youth heading households in managing their households will be discussed. The section will present findings in relation to the management and maintenance of the home.

SECTION B: MANAGEMENT OF THE HOUSEHOLD

In order to understand the experiences and challenges of youth heading households, management of the households was explored. According to Evans (2010: 8) household management includes allocating tasks, paying school contributions, organizing school, budgeting, resolving financial problems, future planning, and making decisions.

This section is divided into five parts. The first part will discuss the findings in relation to expenditure of the family income, the second section household responsibilities, and the third section managing children's behavior. The fourth section will discuss findings regarding education of the siblings and the last section will present findings in relation to the social support systems.

4.8 Family Expenditure

All participants in this study used the foster care grant to provide basic needs for their orphaned siblings and other members of the family. Basic needs provided include food, clothing, educational needs, building, and renovating houses, savings for the orphaned siblings and paying for funerals. Sloth–Nielson (2004 cited by Maqoko, 2007) highlighted that child headed households without effective adult caregivers generally operate in the same way as families with adult caregivers: they get food, clothing, and shelter. Bequele (2007: 1) stated, "We witness today throughout the continent the unfolding of an unprecedented phenomenon where siblings bear the awesome responsibility of providing for the material needs of children and ensure family continuity." This was confirmed by participants' responses as they explained as follows:

> *I am the one who is responsible for food, electricity, and school expenses. I do shopping every month* (Participant 1).

> *It is my responsibly to ensure that we have food and money used to buy food (ngiyaphanta). It is also my responsibility to provide clothing and school uniform for my sister* (Participant 4).

> *I provide food, clothing, and school expenses. I am responsible for making decisions on how the money should be spent. I do shopping every month-end. It is my duty to pay electricity bill every month* (participant 5).

The participants indicated that the foster care grant is not enough to meet all the needs of the household. As indicated in Chapter 2 the foster grant is currently R750.00 and it is supposed to be used to care for the fostered child. In reality the money is often used to support other members of the household as well. The reliance on the foster care grant as the main source of income results in a number of problems. This includes food insecurity and insufficient clothing.

4.8.1 Food Insecurity

Seven participants indicated that their food gets finished before month-end but they make alternative plans to make sure that there is food in their homes. In this study, the majority of participants reported that the children in their households have insufficient food even though they are in receipt of a grant. The participants described in detail how difficult it was to live in poverty. They explained their experiences in trying to find food for their siblings and other members of the family. They mentioned that sometimes the children were going to school without having breakfast, as they did not have food to provide the children with. The following responses demonstrate the extent of desperation the youth heading households usually find themselves in:

> *Sometimes we finish food before month-end and we struggle. At present, we do not have sugar. I do not even have money to buy bread. The children did not drink tea in the morning before going to school. It is bad because I know they like tea. I cannot even provide pocket money everyday if they are going to school. They go to school without money. But I warmed food that was left yesterday and I gave them water to drink* (Participant 2).

> *We finish food before the month-end. Sometimes we sleep without food. Sometimes the children go to school without food. They also come back and find the empty pots. I do not afford to provide them with pocket money. I make them understand the situation. They all know that I am not working but I am trying the best to provide for them* (Participant 4).

Sometimes food gets finished before month-end. It is much better now because I have a one-day piece job. I earn R80.00 per day. Sometimes I ask for help from the local tuck-shop. They accept to give me food on credit and I pay towards the month-end (Participant 5).

But sometimes food gets finished before month-end. If we do not have enough food, I make Amahewu (drink made from mealie-meal) *and put it in the bucket. I give them after school in order for them to have something in their stomach. I always make sure that they get food at least every night. They do not eat in the morning. They prefer bread; the problem is that I do not have money to buy bread everyday. Luckily, they eat at school* (Participant 6).

My neighbor who owns a tuck-shop gives me food on credit. Then I pay on payday. Sometimes the children go to school without pocket money. They do understand the conditions we are living in. What I like about them is that they do not worry me. They eat whatever we have in the pots if they are going to school. They eat phuthu, samp or rice. They do not complain. (Participant 8).

Most of the participants mentioned that they spend most of the foster care grant on food, however, the money is not enough to meet the basic needs of the children. This is congruent with the findings of Berry and Hall (2010: 120) who asserted that 3.1 million African children live in households that reported child hunger. Although the South African government has introduced a number of programs to reduce hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity, child hunger continues to be a problem. "The 2009 General Household Survey indicated that South Africa has a very high rate of child poverty. In 2009, nearly two–thirds of children (61%) lived in households with per capita below R552 per month" (Berry and Hall, 2010:120). According to Chennells and Hall (2010: 84), there are substantial differences across provinces. "In both Limpopo and the Eastern Cape almost 80% of children live below the poverty line, compared to the Western Cape (28%) and Gauteng (36%).

Roughly two out of three children living in the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, and Mpumalanga live in households below the poverty line. Over two thirds of African children (68%) lived below the poverty line compared to one-third of Coloured children (33%). Only 6% Indians and 4% White children live in income poverty at this level" (Chennells and Hall 2011: 850).

In addition to lacking enough food to provide their families with, youth heading households mentioned that the children did not have enough clothing. This will be discussed in the following subtheme.

4.8.2 Insufficient Clothing

Four participants indicated that they rarely buy clothing for the children and that they have insufficient clothing and school uniforms. Participants explained their concerns as follows:

In *the past month, there was a terrible storm which lasted almost a week. My sister's uniform was wet and she did not go to school* (Participant1).

The grant that I receive is not enough to buy all the needs of the family. My brother does not have enough clothes. He borrows clothes from his friends. He wears the clothes that I do not know. I bought the takkies with R20 (Omacele), known as gogo shoes as he did not have shoes to wear at home. The school uniform for my young brother is also not in good condition. He wears old shoes and torn trousers (Participant 2).

I do not buy clothes every month. I buy clothes at least twice per year. I buy cheap clothing. My brother does not receive a grant but he likes to complain. He also demands expensive clothes of which I cannot afford. My sister has developed a bad attitude. She believes that I am using the foster care grant for my benefit. She makes comment when we are watching T.V, for example, if there is a clothing advert, she would say, 'I like that jersey but I do not have money' (Participant 5).

I do not have a child but I know how to raise a child. Sometimes I fail to obey all the rules of the social worker concerning foster care grant expenditure. I was told by a social worker that the money must be used on food, clothing, and to pay funeral cover for the children, uniform, and stationery. I cannot afford to buy clothes for the children every month (Participant 7).

Another challenge faced by the youth heading households in caring for their siblings involves providing clothing for their siblings. The findings indicate that the participants experienced challenges as they did not have enough money to cater for all the children's needs. They mentioned that food was regarded as their first priority on the monthly budget. The participants' experiences correspond to the findings of a study conducted by Louw and Joubert (2007: 385) which shows that access to proper clothing including school clothing appears to be a constant source of worry and humiliation among orphaned children.

4.9.   Household responsibilities

All participants reported that they take turns with their siblings in undertaking household chores. The following experiences with household chores were shared by the participants:

I am the one who does the washing and cleaning of the house because I am not working. I spend more time at home. Everyone participates in doing house chores like cooking and fetching water from the river (Participant 4).

I am unemployed and I spend most of the time at home. It is my responsibility to do washing for everybody. We have a roster for cooking and washing dishes. If it is my turn for cooking, my sister washes dishes (Participant 1).

I stay at home; it is my responsibility to clean the house and do laundry for everybody. I cook during the week because the children are going to school. My sister cooks during the weekend (Participant 6).

One participant said that she is the only one who is responsible for doing house chores because her siblings are too young to participate. The following is her experience:

> *The children wake up in the morning and go to school. During the day I am alone, it is my responsibility to clean the house. I cook lunch and dinner for the children. The children are still young, they cannot cook. I do laundry for everybody but I advise them to wash their school socks* (Participant 7).

In this study, the participants discussed their family responsibilities, and how they divided their duties. They reported that they were caring for the young children and that providing care was the right decision since their siblings were still young and needed intensive help. For those who had older siblings, the participants said that they divided home chores amongst them. However, youth heading households were performing more tasks as they were unemployed and spent most of the time in their homes. The participants mentioned that they were responsible for ensuring that everything was in order in their households, such as cleaning, grocery shopping, paying bills, funeral cover, savings, and doing laundry. This finding is congruent with Evans (2010: 9) who defined "household chores as activities which include cooking, washing dishes, sweeping and tiding, fetching water and firewood, laundry, heating water for bathing, cultivating food for consumption and cutting wood".

Besides worrying about doing house chores, youth heading households are also responsible for supervising their orphaned children. The next subsection will describe the roles of youth heading households in caring of the orphaned siblings.

4.9.1   Child Care

Youth heading households fulfill parental roles and tasks such as bathing children, finding schools for the children, helping children with homework, attending parental meetings, and providing guidance to the siblings. In this study, some of the participant's responses on the matter include the following:

Everyone is attending school. No one is allowed to stay at home (Participant 1).

It is my responsibility to find schools for the children and just before this interview, I was returning admission forms for my young brother. He is going to do grade 1 in 2012. I ensure that they go to school everyday. I do attend parents meetings at school. I assist my young brother to do homework (Participant 2).

I wake up at 5 o'clock every morning to prepare the children. It is my responsibility to bath my youngest brother every morning. It is hard. I cannot leave this house in the morning. I cannot even go to town to seek job (Participant 7).

The participants in this study reported that they were doing various care-giving responsibilities in their households. Besides fending for their siblings, ensuring that there is food, and clothing, youth heading households were also supervising their young siblings. It was their responsibility to ensure that the siblings were safe and their needs met adequately. It was also their responsibility to find schools, assist their siblings with homework and to monitor their school progress. According to Evans (2010: 8) "child care involves bathing, dressing and washing siblings clothes, getting siblings ready for school, supervising, giving advise and guidance, resolving arguments and conflict between siblings, helping with school work, health care when siblings are ill and reminding them to take medication".

4.9.2 Decision Making

Eight participants indicated that they make decisions in their homes while two participants sought advice from members of their extended families. Youth heading households stated that they often found themselves in a position where they had to take decisions on behalf of their siblings. The participants shared the following experiences in decision-making:

It is my responsibility to make all the decisions and give guidance to the children. It is my responsibility to talk to the children, as they are both teenagers. We are able to talk together. I created an environment where the children can express their feelings. I ask advice from my social worker (Participant 9).

I am responsible of making all decisions and giving guidance to the children, like giving them house chores and asking them to clean the yard (Participant 3).

The above responses correspond with the findings of a study done by Masondo (2006: 44) which found that orphaned heads of households are often faced with situations where they have to make decisions. In caring for their siblings, the participants are also obliged to deal with the behaviour of their orphaned siblings. The findings will be presented in the following theme.

4.10   Managing the Behaviour of Children

Six participants in this study mentioned that their young siblings present with behavioral problems. As mentioned earlier, some participants care for adolescent siblings. When the young siblings engage in wrong behaviour such as roaming around at night and refusing to do their household chores, there is no adult to discipline them. This often leaves the youth heading households frustrated as they find it difficult to control the behaviour of their siblings. The following sub-subthemes emerged in this study:

4.10.1   Disregard of Family Rules

Six participants caring for adolescent siblings indicated that they were experiencing challenges in disciplining their siblings. The siblings did not respect or obey the family rules such as being home before six o'clock in the evening. On the contrary, their siblings roamed around at night and participants expressed this problem as follows:

My brother does not listen to me. He likes to come home late but he knows that everyone is expected to be in the house at 6 o'clock. He visits his friends and comes home late (Participant 3).

My brother comes home late. Sometimes he comes at 10:00-11:00 at night. At times he does not come back home at all. I do not know where he sleeps. We do not close the main door because we do not know when he is coming home. When we close the door he becomes aggressive and asks why we locked the door when we know that he is outside. He puts our lives in danger (Participant 5).

My youngest brother does not listen to me. He visits his friend and comes home late (Participant 5).

These findings are congruent with the findings in research conducted by Brown *et al.* (2005) who states that some children under the care of youth heading households expressed emotional distress through externalizing or outward behaviors. Such behaviors include delinquency (stealing), aggressive or risky behaviour (drug use, smoking cigarettes, fighting) or becoming ruzerera (someone who wanders aimlessly).

4.10.2   Failing to comply with doing Household Chores

Six participants mentioned that their siblings were unhelpful in doing household chores as is evident by the comments below:

I requested them to assist in cleaning the yard but they do not clean (Participant 3).

I ask my brother to assist in doing house chores such as fetching water from the communal tap. After school he eats and runs away to visit his friends. When I asked him why he did not fetch water he says he forgot (Participant 2).

The above quotes show that the participants divided home chores and their siblings were also responsible to participate in doing household tasks. But their siblings were uncooperative and they did not perform their duties.

4.10.3   Presenting with Behavioral Problems

Three participants mentioned that their adolescent sisters were presenting behavioural problems:

> *The children especially the girls give me problems. They disappear at night. I do talk to them regarding their behaviour. My sisters seem to be uncontrollable. At present one child is missing from home. Her whereabouts are unknown. She left without telling us where she was going. May be she is with her boyfriend* (Participant 4).

> *My sister does not like home. She spends most of the time at her friend's home. She does not report to me if she is going away. She just takes her clothes and leaves. Sometimes she leaves home for a week or a month* (Participant 8).

Participant 8 said she understands her sisters' behaviour to be caused by ancestors (idlozi). She was told by a traditional healer (sangoma) that her sister has 'old people' (ancestors) and that is why she is presenting with behavioral problems.

> *My sister is starting to act strange. In December my step grandmother invited us to a family party and after the party, my sister refused to come back. She wanted to stay there because my grandmother is not strict and she does not have control over the children. Later I discovered that my sister has a boyfriend that's why she wanted to stay there* (Participant 9).

Despite fending for their young siblings and making sure that they are safe and their needs met, the participants were facing challenges in managing their young siblings presenting with behavioral problems. They reported that their siblings were roaming around and particularly one participant said that she understood her sister's behaviour to be caused by 'idlozi' that make her run away from home. Dalen (2009: 195) asserts that "a child for whom the socialization process has become 'infringed' because the

55

significant others have died may develop unwanted behaviour which may be different from what is expected in a particular society".

The youth heading households were facing challenges when it came to disciplining the children. This will be discussed further in the following subtheme.

4.10.4 Methods used to instill discipline

All the participants acknowledged that it was their responsibility to discipline their young siblings. However, many of them felt that they were helpless when it came to instilling discipline in their siblings. They found it difficult to deal with their young siblings' behavioral problems, a sentiment which was evident from participants' statements below:

Before I used to hit them but I decided to stop because they do not change their behavior. I just keep quite. I do not talk to them if I am angry. I do not know what to do anymore. I am unable to control them (Participant 5).

If I am angry, I keep quite. They can see from my facial expression that I am not happy but they do not seem to care (Participant 3).

I am failing to control my sister's behaviour. I do not believe in hitting children. My siblings like to spend most of the time at my auntie's house. I told them that I do not have a problem if they want to stay with my aunt. My sister refused. She cried and she said she wanted to stay with me. I feel that the only reason she wants to stay with me is because she knows that I am polite and I do not hit them (Participant 8).

I do not believe in corporal punishment. I just keep quite. It helps me because I do not know how to discipline the children. Sometimes they change their behaviour but continue with the same attitude after a few days (Participant 4).

The participants assume parental responsibilities at a young age thus lack parental skills to deal with their sibling's behaviour.

The participants mentioned that they keep quiet as they do not know what to do to control their sibling's behavioral problems. According to Richter *et al.* (2004: 18) families take care of affected children; however, this does not mean that they are coping without any challenges. They are usually frustrated by the behavioral problems of children and young people who have been traumatized by the death of their parents. The study revealed the following methods of discipline used by participants:

4.10.4.1 Verbal Discipline

Five participants mentioned that they did not believe in corporal punishment but rather preferred to talk to their young siblings if they misbehaved or need arose. The participants highlighted that the verbal discipline was not helpful because the children changed their behaviour for a few days and reverted to their old unaccepted behaviour. The participants expressed this as follows:

> *I sit with the children and we talk about the issue. I do not believe in corporal punishment. I prefer to talk with the children if they misbehave* (Participant 1).

> *It is very hard when the child does not want to listen. My mother use to hit my brother. I do not believe in corporal punishment. I talk with the child if he misbehaves but he changes his bad behaviour for only two days. After two days he continues to do the same. If I am angry I scold him. I raise my voice tone in order to notify him that I am not happy. I do not know what to do with him anymore* (Participant 2).

> *In the past I used to switch off the T.V. I did not allow them to watch SABC1. Both of them love T.V. and they like to watch generations. Now they have cell phones. I keep their cell phones in my locker and they only access them during weekends. When they misbehave I discipline them by not giving them access to their cell phones during the weekends* (Participant 9).

4.10.4.2 Corporal punishment as a useful Disciplinary Method

Two participants indicated having used corporal punishment, which they believed to be an important tool to discipline the children. They felt corporal punishment was the only method that could be used to control their siblings' misbehavior. This is evident from participants' statement as follows:

> *I do hit them a little bit with a stick on their legs. If they misbehave yes I hit them. I believe this is the only way that makes a child to be more disciplined* (Participant 7).

> *First I talk with the children nicely but if they don't listen I hit them. I do not hit them with the intention of hurting them but I am trying to show them the right way* (Participant 6).

The above responses show that the youth heading households struggled a lot when it came to punishing their siblings. They all mentioned that they punished their siblings using different methods. However, some mentioned that reprimands did not help as their siblings changed their behaviour only for a few days and reverted to their old unaccepted behaviour. The image depicted from this study is that the participants lack parental skills, therefore do not know how to discipline children. Desmond (2009: 101) affirms that "the loss of adults may well negatively affect the stock of human resources in the households. If a new caregiver is needed, they may not have the same skills and knowledge as the lost caregiver". In addition, the younger caregiver may not posses the necessary knowledge and experience.

The participants have a responsibility of ensuring that their young sibling's educational rights are met. This will be discussed further in the following section.

4.11 Education of Siblings

Youth heading households are faced with the need for financial support to meet the school expenses such as school uniform, pocket money, and payments of excursion fees. The participants indicated that part of the foster grant received is used to pay for school expenses. The following sub-subthemes emerged and are discussed as follows:

4.11.1 Exemption from paying for school fees and Stationery

All the participants reported that they do not pay school fees for their orphaned children enrolled in primary and secondary schools and the schools provide children with school stationery. This eases the burden youth heading households have to carry. The participants expressed the following sentiments about education of their siblings:

> *The children do not pay school fees. Education is free. The school provides them with exercise books. The only thing that I buy is school uniform* (Participant 1).

> *All the children are attending school. My younger brother attends a local crèche. I pay forty rand per month. Those who attend primary and high school do not pay for the school fees* (Participant 5).

> *We do not pay school fees. I do not buy school stationery. The school provides stationery in January. I buy school uniforms only* (Participant 4).

The above responses show that their young siblings all attend school. The Department of Education's existing policies allow all children free access to education. Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child recognizes the "right to education" and makes basic education compulsory and free to all. In addition, the South African Constitution under Section 29(1) (a) of the Bill of Rights, provides children with the right to basic education. Through these policies, children are able to attend school without any demands of school fees for admission. This is contrary to the study done by Olivier and Strydom (2010: 413) which found that school going age children were not attending school because they could not afford school fees.

4.11.2 Feeding Scheme

All the participants mentioned that their siblings were provided with lunch at their schools under the school-feeding scheme. The participants mentioned that feeding schemes played an important role in their families because sometimes children went hungry to school due to lack of food at home or money to give them as pocket money. The following are some of the participants' experiences:

> *The children eat at school. The school provides lunch everyday. The feeding scheme helps me a lot. I do not have the money to give them everyday. I send them to school without pocket money* (Participant 1).

> *The children eat at school. The school provides lunch at primary and in high school. They benefit a lot from the feeding scheme because they go to school with no lunch box or no pocket money. My brother complains a lot but I try to make him understand that I do not have money* (Participant 5).

> *Sometimes the children go to school without breakfast. The children eat lunch at school. The school provides them with lunch twice per week. They starve on other days as they go to school without food. They also come back hungry and find the empty pots* (Participant 4).

Two participants mentioned that their school-going siblings thought of their siblings who were not in school by taking home leftovers from the feeding scheme so that their siblings could have something to eat.

> *Before the grant was finalized, the children used to go to school hungry, there was no food. They were only eating at school. They used to ask for food for the young ones who were not in school going age. I used to wait for them to come from school in order to feed the young ones* (Participant 6).

60

The children eat lunch at school. My brother's class teacher knows his background. So if there is bread leftover he gives him. My brother brings fruit for us and sometimes he brings half loaf of the bread (Participant 7).

All the participants reported that schools and teachers were a source of support. According to the findings, schools at a meso level have made a positive contribution to the education of the orphaned siblings. The majority of participants stated that they received support from schools as their siblings were provided lunch at school. School feeding schemes played a huge role in the lives of the orphaned children because the children go to school without having breakfast or pocket money. Chitiyo *et al.* (2008: 389) states that unmet physical needs can affect a child's self-esteem, cause withdrawal from people and reduce participation in classroom activities. However, the provision of food eliminates segregation of children who do not bring food or money to school; this can facilitate mingling with schoolmates.

4.11.3 School Excursions

Participants reported that priority needs in the family included food, school uniforms, and clothes. However, the participants felt bad as they were unable to pay for school excursions for their orphaned siblings because of lack of finances. They expressed their experiences as follows:

I am unable to pay for school excursions. I feel bad about this. I make them understand that I cannot afford to pay. They all understand the situation very well. They understand that I do not have money. It is painful but there is nothing I can do (Participant 1).

The money is not enough to meet all the basic needs. I am not able to pay for the school excursions. The most important thing is food (Participant 5).

One participant mentioned that schools played an important role as they lend them money to pay for school excursions in order for the children to participate. The parents have to refund the school towards the month-end. This was elaborated by participant 6 who stated that:

> *Sometimes I receive letters from the school, informing me about the school excursions. The one thing that I like about the school is that if the child does not have money, they cover all the costs and then the parent pays back towards the end of the month. My sister is a member of Soul Buddies and they are always going.*

The main problem was shortage of income to meet all the educational needs of the orphaned children. Youth heading households lack money to pay for the school excursions, hence, the siblings miss excursions.

4.11.4 School Attendance

Of all participants interviewed, eight mentioned that their siblings were attending school on a regular basis. Two participants related that their siblings were truanting classes:

> *I used to leave home early in the morning as I was going for work. One day I left in the morning and I came back at 8:00 am and discovered that my brother did not go to school. The principal told me that he is always absent from school* (Participant 3).

> *My brother does not go to school everyday. Sometimes he sleeps the whole day. When I ask him why he did not go to school, he says that they are not busy at school. He has bad friends. Sometimes my brother leaves home in school uniform only to find out later that he did not go to school. He stays at his friend's place and comes back home after school hours. His friend is not schooling* (Participant 5).

The above responses indicate that majority of the children attend school on a regular basis. However, few orphaned children did not like to go to school. The picture emerging from this finding is that school fee exemption and feeding schemes play a major role in the lives of orphaned siblings. Those who do not like to go to school might be going through some difficulties in dealing with the death of their parents. Chitiyo *et al.* (2008) affirms that children naturally suffer the grief of seeing their parents struggle with what usually are long illness and subsequent death. This situation makes orphans vulnerable to emotional and behavioral disorders.

4.11.5 School Performance

Nine participants mentioned that their sibling's academic performance was poor and many were repeating classes as is indicated in the responses below:

My brother is a slow, slow learner. He was born in 1996 but he is in grade 6. I assist him with his schoolwork. The problem is that he forgets easily. The class teacher is also complaining about his performance (Participant 1).

My brother is repeating grade 8. He failed all the terms. But I give him enough time to do his homework (Participant 2).

My brother is repeating grade 6, children who of his age are doing grade 8. He is struggling at school (Participant 1).

My sister is repeating classes. She is in grade 8 and yet she is 19 years old. I understand because the sangoma (traditional healer) predicted that she would not finish her matric as she has ancestors. She needs to be trained to be a sangoma (Participant 8).

The above responses correspond with the research conducted by Choung and Operio (2011: 2), which found that death of parents might place a child at risk for educational delays. Educational delay is largely influenced by changes in family support.

63

Subbario and Coury (2003 cited by Richter *et al.,* 2004: 32) state that children are affected emotionally by the loss of their parents. The long-term consequences of children experiencing profound loss, grief, hopelessness, fear, anxiety without assistance include psychosomatic disorder, chronic depression, low self-esteem, low levels of life skills, learning disabilities and disrupted social behaviour.

4.12   Emotional Issues Faced by the Family

All the participants indicated that they and their siblings are still dealing with the death of their parent(s). The trauma related to the deaths of their parents is reflected in the following accounts given by two participants:

> *My mother was brutally murdered in front of us at home. My mother had a fight with my father's girlfriend. The girlfriend was jealous because my father was paying lobola for my mother. She organised people to kill my mother. The family was attacked by unknown people at night* (Participant 1).

> *My mother woke up in the morning and she cooked food for us. She was complaining about her swollen leg but she was not seriously ill. We accompanied her to the bus stop as she was going to the clinic. She phoned later to tell me that she was admitted in hospital and asked for food. After five minutes, while I was busy preparing food, I received a call from the hospital informing me that my mother passed away. It was alleged that the blood moved from her leg and blocked her heart* (Participant 2).

Surprisingly, neither of the above participants, or their siblings, received counseling after the deaths of their mothers. This was also true of other participants in the study who had not received any grief counseling. What is also evident is that the siblings heading household have not been provided with any guidance on how to assist the children under their care. The effect of lacking grief counseling is evident in participants' statements below:

I am experiencing problems as the children keep on talking about my mother. I do not know what to say to them anymore. I just cry. I do not know what to do in order to make them forget. My youngest brother used to ask when my mother is coming back. Yet during the funeral, we showed him the body of my mother in the coffin. He was told that my mother is dead. He is young; he does not understand (Participant 2).

My mother passed away when my sister was four years old. She does not know my mother at all. She has a book where she writes everything about my mother; that hurts me. I talk to her about my mother, I try to give a fully picture of my mother explaining to her on what kind of person she was (Participant 9).

The children keep on talking about my mother. I used to tell them that they must be strong. They ask me what is going to happen to them if I die. They live in fear as they think that I will die and leave them alone. I am going through the same problem. It is not easy to forget about my parents (Participant 3).

I pretend as if everything is fine to the children. I do not want them to see when I am not alright (Participant 7).

According to Richter *et al*. (2004: 32) in many contexts in southern Africa, children's emotional needs are not responded to in a way that can help them cope. For example, children are seldom told about their parent's death in an effort to protect the child. This became evident when one participant was asked how she responds when her brother asks about their parents. She said:

I tell him that my mother is in heaven. He asked me when she is coming back. Well I told him that she will come back when he is old (Participant 2).

It became clear that emotions are not discussed openly with the child nor is the death. The picture emerging from the above responses is that both the participants and their siblings need psychological help.

This is true especially in families where adults do not talk to children about death-related issues and children are not allowed to express their feelings concerning the death of their parents.

As indicated above, participants were not only helping their young siblings to deal with the loss of their parents but they were also dealing with their own loss. The strain of this is evident in the following descriptions.

> *I have a terrible headache caused by stress. I am trying my best but my life is not progressing* (Participant 7).

One participant was treated for depression at the local clinic. This is what she said about her condition:

I was diagnosed with depression. I attended counseling at the hospital that helped me to accept everything and cope with my living condition (Participant 1).

As evident in this section, youth heading households find it challenging to take care of their siblings and meet their various needs. Therefore, they need support systems in order to cope with their responsibilities as the heads of households. This will be discussed in the following section.

4.13   Social Support Systems

In this section the findings on the social support systems of the family are discussed. The subthemes that emerged include relationship with relatives; relationship with neighbours; and relationship with church.

4.13.1 Relationship with Relatives

Seven participants did not receive any support from their relatives as is evident from the comments below:

We do not receive support from the extended family. My mother did not have a good relationship with my aunt. They were not talking to each other. They had their own unresolved issues. My aunt is the only person I know from my father's side. I do not know my grandparents as they passed away a long time ago. However, my aunt was supporting us after the death of my mother. Her assistance made a difference in our lives; we used to have money to buy food. She stopped supporting us because her children were not happy. They were gossiping about us to my neighbours. Other relatives stay in Margate and they do not care. They do not even call to check how we are doing. I have never heard from them since my mother's death (Participant 2).

I used to visit when my grandmother was still alive. They did not have a welcoming attitude in their home. What I noticed was that they kept on scolding the children even if the children did not do anything wrong. I felt isolated. We were forced to wake up early in the morning to do gardening. My sister also used to visit my relatives. She got there with the hope of getting assistance. They do not help us but they are rich. They are both teachers (Participant 1).

We do not get any assistance from the extended family. The last time we saw them was after the death of my parents. My father's brother and his wife also passed away (Participant 6).

We do not get support from the extended family. My uncle is living in the area. His wife does not like people visiting their house. The last time I visited them, my uncle asked his wife to provide us with tea. His wife did not show any interest, she just ignored him (Participant 8).

During the interviews, there were limited narrations of loving relationships and emotional support from the relatives. The participants reported that they were disappointed that they could not depend on their closest family members.

The findings are congruent with the study conducted by Brown *et al*. (2005: 1) which found that "young people are left behind not only by parents and other caregivers who have died, but also by extended families who fail to adequately provide for their protection and care". Multiple studies (Dalen, 2009; Freeman and Nkomo, 2006; Louw and Joubert, 227: 43; Richter, 2007: 722) found that extended family is still the source of orphan care support. However, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has eroded the traditional 'system' of absorbing the orphans due to socio-economic factors (Dalen, 2009: 195).

Nevertheless, three participants mentioned that they had emotional and material support from their relatives. They mentioned that they were getting food assistance from their relatives and commenting on the matter, they said:

> *My aunt had been staying with us since the death of my mother. She left in 2011. She got a new job; she is employed as domestic worker, and she stays in her boss's house. She visits us every month end. She buys food for us* (Participant 10).

> *We do beg for food from one of our relatives. They live closer to us but they do not have much support as they are also struggling. They are dependent on the old age pension as their only source of income* (Participant 4).

Some orphaned children remain in the safety networks of extended family members as revealed in the responses above. Findings of this study show that some participants were receiving assistance from their extended family members. The assistance received at a mezzo level enhanced self-esteem of the youth heading households. They knew that although they were going through difficulties, there were people to support them. The study done by Louw and Joubert (2007) found that relatives are a source of support to orphaned children. The grandmothers, aunts, and uncles were described to be a caring source of emotional support and advice.

4.13.2 Relationship with Neighbours

Six participants indicated that they depended on the kindness of their neighbours for food. They mentioned having received food and clothes from their neighbours. They also mentioned that their neighbours were generous to them as they were giving them food on credit. The participants explained their experiences as follows:

> *My neighbor is a nurse. She helped me find a job at primary health. She is very helpful. She works in the clinic and she gives us amandla pap* (supplementary porridge that mostly given to HIV positive people at the clinic) (Participant 9).

> *We receive help from my neighbor. She provides us with food parcels and clothes. My neighbor attends Swidi church. They have a project for orphaned and vulnerable children. The church provides food parcels and clothes to the needy people in the community* (Participant 5).

> *If I am crying for help my neighbours help me. They also give us their old clothes. Sometimes we finish food before the end of the month. I ask my neighbor who owns a tuck shop to give me food on credit then I pay at the end of the month* (Participant 8).

> *Sometimes I find a piece job in my neighbor's house, doing washing and earn R50 per day. The money is used to buy food* (Participant 4).

On the contrary, four participants indicated that they did not receive any support from their neighbours. They mentioned that they were ill-treated by their neighbours while other participants stated that their neighbours were also youth headed households who were equally struggling. The following are their experiences:

> *We do not have a good relationship with our neighbours. They have bad hearts. They are jealous because my siblings behave well* (Participant 6).

I do not have a good relationship with my neighbours. They like to talk about other people. They like to gossip about me. I am a taxi driver so according to them everyone who is sitting next to me in the front seat is my girlfriend. Whenever they saw me with a woman, they told my fiancée. As a result I ended up separating from my fiancée because she listens to them (Participant 3).

Richter (2010: 82) states that extended kin and neighbours, faith-based organizations and other community groups, are the first port of call for desperate families. However, the above responses show that some participants do not receive any support form their neighbours. The participants reported about the conflictual relationships and complained about jealousy and gossip by their neighbors.

4.13.3 Relationship with Church

Four participants indicated that they attend church every Sunday and that they received spiritual and material support from their churches. The participants stated that church members provided them with food:

The members of the church visit us. My grandmother was an active leader in the church. We receive emotional and spiritual support from the church. Sometimes they conduct Tuesday prayers in our home. Prayer is important to us (Participant 1).

I receive emotional and spiritual support from church. Sometimes they donate money for us. I told them that my sister is not well and they were here last Sunday to pray for her. I also have a good relationship with the Bishop (Participant 6).

During my engagement party, the members of the church offered us groceries that lasted for three months. The high priest and his family invite the children to visit them. My brother visited them one day and he was given many gifts. During my mothers funeral they gave us grocery and money. I am still receiving emotional support from church (participant 2).

70

The above responses show that the youth heading households received spiritual and material support from their churches. The support received played a significant role in their lives as they regarded prayer as important to their families. Maqoko (2007: 728) affirms that "religious communities have a major role to play in nurturing HIV/AIDS orphans who are also heads of households. Therefore, all churches should embark on building a supportive environment where HIV/AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children feel accepted and supported".

SECTION C: SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

All the participants in this study received social work services from Child Welfare with regards placement of the children and supervision of the placement. It is social workers' responsibility to ensure that the needs of the children are met, that the foster care grant is used in the best interest of the child and to monitor the school progress of the children. The following sub-themes emerged in relation to participants' experiences of social work services: setting appointments; irregular contacts with social workers; longing for social workers support; food parcels; parenting skills; staff turnover; and poor communication.

4.14 Setting Appointments

Nine participants explained that they were discouraged to get in touch with social workers to discuss the progress of the placement because of the processes which had to be followed:

> *The social worker is seen by appointment. You have to go to town and make an appointment and comeback without seeing a social worker. I think the social workers must be available everyday because sometimes you spend the last money just to make an appointment. During the day of appointment sometimes I do not have money to go to town* (Participant1).

We are not allowed to see a social worker without appointments. That is a problem because I do not have money to go to the office to make an appointment. I fail to keep my appointments due to financial problems (Participant 5).

It is very hard because you cannot see a social worker if you do not have an appointment. Previously, I used to go to the office not knowing that the social workers could only be seen by appointment. However, the receptionist told me that I must make the appointment. Sometimes I do not have money to go there on the appointment date (Participant 6).

I was advised to see a social worker by appointment. I am not able to do that because I am working. I make appointments only to find that I am busy at the taxi rank transporting passengers (Participant 3).

This finding shows that the support system at the exo level was weak because the participants experience challenges with regards to accessing social services. The above responses also show dissatisfaction of the participants with child welfare services. Their challenge was the distance and costs involved in getting to the child welfare office. The participants mentioned that the child welfare office is located in town and they have to travel if they need social work services. In addition, the child welfare policy of making appointments before seeing a social worker makes it even more difficult to see social workers. This is due to lack of money for transport to go and make appointments and later for the appointment with social workers. One participant who was employed on a 'no work no pay' basis mentioned that he was always busy at the taxi rank which made it difficult for him to make it for appointments.

4.15 Irregular Contacts with Social Workers

The participants reported that their social workers did not visit them at their homes. The following are some of the concerns they shared:

The social worker does not visit us. She never visits us. I think she is busy at the office (Participant 3).

The social worker visits us. She had been here twice; however, she does not have time as she is always in a hurry. I think she is busy (Participant 5).

The magistrate informed us that a social worker will visit us at home to check on how we spend the money and to check on the progress of the children. The social worker has not visited yet (Participant 2).

The social worker does not visit us. She has never been here. I think they have a lot to do in the office. I do consult if I want to report something. In the office the social worker does not have time as she has many clients waiting to see her (Participant 9).

One participant mentioned that the social worker visits them but she does not like the inspection done by a social worker because she is forced to show her the children's clothes and furniture. According to the participant, this shows that the social worker does not trust that she is responsible in taking care of her siblings. The participant expressed this by stating that:

When she visits us she wants me to show her the children's clothes and furniture. That shows me that she does not trust me. The social worker told me that the grant must be used to buy children's clothes and uniform and that during birthdays I must buy gifts for the children. I do not believe in spoiling children. The social worker said I must not use money to buy clothes for myself. That implies that since I am not working, I must look shabby, and not do my hair (Participant 7).

The above response shows that the participants perceive the social workers at child welfare as being rude and did not have time and were not concerned about the emotions of youth heading households.

The participants were not happy about social workers approach, as they were asked to show the social workers food, clothes, and furniture during visitation.

4.15.1 Longing for Social Workers' Support

The participants long for social workers' support. They felt that they needed professional help as they were unable to deal with their siblings' behavioral problems alone. This is congruent with the findings of Richer *et al*. (2004: 15) who affirm that youth headed families need support, not only to deal with the stress of poverty and loss, but also to cope with the possibility of children developing behavioral problems associated with the loss and stress. The participants shared their experiences as follows:

> *The social worker must avail herself to check the progress of the children at school and she must visit us. I believe the social workers' voice will make a difference. The children tend to be disrespectful to me. I believe that the social workers' support will ease my burden because I will know that I have someone who is supportive* (Participant 5).

> *It would be much better if the social worker availed herself to talk with the children. I need more emotional support from the social worker. We give all the love to children. There is no one who is taking care of us as we are staying with children and experience a lot of stress as heads of the households* (Participant 9).

> *The social worker does not have time. I need social workers' help because I do not know how to discipline the children. I am experiencing lot of challenges in the upbringing of the children. The social workers' support will make things easier for me* (Participant 2).

Drawing from above, the child welfare is not coping with meeting the needs of orphaned children. The participants felt that they needed social workers to provide guidance useful in the upbringing of their orphaned siblings. The participants also needed someone to talk to as they were experiencing a lot of stress as heads of the households.

September (2006: 57) stated that in all the provinces, social work caseloads averaged between 150-300 cases. Social workers are overloaded with child abuse, neglect and poverty related cases and placements, which involve the courts. Evidence from this study reveals that this impacts on social workers' quality of supervision to clients.

4.15.2 Food Parcels

Six participants expressed their appreciation to Child Welfare because they provided social relief during tough times. They mentioned that assistance from child welfare played a huge role when they did not have food to feed their orphaned siblings. During times when there is no money to buy school uniforms, the child welfare rescues them by providing their needs. This was evident from participants' experiences expressed as follows:

> *The social worker provided us with R100.00 worth food voucher. It helped me a lot because I did not have money to buy food as the grant stopped. I used the voucher to buy maize meal, peanut butter and eggs and it made a big difference* (Participant 9).

> *I received a food voucher for R300.00 and it made a huge difference. Child welfare provides food vouchers to needy clients* (Participant 7).

> *The social worker provides us with food parcels if we request for assistance. The children are provided with school uniforms at the beginning of the year. Their assistance is very useful. I just finished soup that we had received last time* (Participant 2).

Sloth Nielson (2004) asserts that in response to the orphan crisis in sub–Saharan Africa countries in the region have launched a variety of strategies and interventions. These strategies aim to support orphaned children and the households caring for them.

The participants expressed their gratitude to the child welfare offices for providing food parcels, which played a huge role in their lives when they had no food or money to buy food. Stover *et al.* (2007: 21) have the same opinion that some form of public assistance is required to provide orphaned children with adequate food, clothes, education and psychological support.

4.15.3 Parenting Skills

Six participants felt that they needed to be equipped with parenting skills. They also felt that they needed to form a support group that will help sharing experiences in taking care of their younger siblings. However, the youth heading households were not trained on how to raise children. The following are some of their experiences:

> *I wish to be involved in parenting skills programme as I told you that I am not able to control the children's behaviour. I do not even know how to discipline the children* (Participant 8).

> *I would like to be involved in parenting skills programme and support groups would be very helpful. I do not have friends so in the support group I will be able to talk about my experiences and also share ideas with other foster parents* (Participant 6).

> *I wish to be involved in a support group for youth heading households which can help me to share and to get advice from other people on how they deal with children especially those who are staying with the teenagers. I will also love to be involved in a parenting skills programme. I am still young and I need to get information on how to handle children as they are growing up* (Participant 1).

Two participants reported that they attended a parenting skills programme. They mentioned that they benefited a lot from the programme as they learnt different skills on how to deal and discipline children. The following are some of their experiences:

I attended parenting skills programme last year. I gained a lot from the programme. The workshop gave me skills on how to deal with the children. We learnt different methods on how to discipline the child. We learned that children need to be loved and listened to (Participant 9).

I attended parenting skills training which helped me very much as I learned how to raise children (Participant 7).

The participants stated that they needed parenting skills in order to cope with their parental role. Evans (2010: 14) affirms that many young people heading households saw themselves as parents to their younger siblings. However, some of them got overwhelmed and felt that they lacked adult advice and guidance. Parenting skills are recommended as an important tool to equip youths to cope with their parental duties which Delport (2007: 84) reinforces. According to Delport (2007: 84 cited by Roux *et al.,* 2010: 48) foster parents need help in different aspects of parenting such as communicating with children, handling conflict, and disciplining foster children. Foster parents could not be expected to undertake such demanding tasks without preparation, training, post placement support and continued training (Triseliotis *et al.*, 1995: 44 cited by Roux, *et al*., 2010: 48).

The participants raised their concern regarding the staff turnover. This will be discussed further in the following sub theme.

4.15.4 Staff Turnover

Three participants explained that they experienced delays during their application because there were no social workers in their area. Staff turnover had an impact on the application process as they were told that the social workers had resigned and at that time, the participants were struggling to meet the children's needs. Some of the participants shared the following experiences:

During the application process I waited more than one year because the office did not have a social worker. We were told that the social worker had resigned.

At that time, we were struggling a lot at home. We were begging for food from the neighbours. On some days, we were sleeping on empty stomachs. The social worker was employed towards the end of 2010. She said she had many people before she could attend to my application (Participant 8).

I waited more than a year. There was no social worker. I was told that my social worker had resigned and that hurt me a lot because the social worker did not inform me that she is leaving. She promised that she would visit me at home (Participant 5).

Despite the mentioned challenges faced by participants, two participants mentioned that they did not experience any challenges. Their application process was very quick which was surprising because they heard that foster care grant application takes long before finalization. This concern was expressed in the following statements:

My application took less than a year to be finalized. The social worker attended to my case urgently. I was told by many people in the community that foster care grant application takes more than a year before finalization. They were talking from their experience. My neighbor is still waiting. The social worker informed her that she will visit their home but up to date she has not visited (Participant 2).

Anon (2007: 8 cited by Roux *et al.,* 2010: 51) mentioned that the minister of Social Development faces a general shortage of skilled social workers. This was evident in this study when eight out of ten participants complained about staff turnover, which led to dissatisfaction because social workers did not have proper closure with their clients. It is believed that salaries can affect staff turnover to which Roux (2010: 54) recommends market competitive salaries. According to Roux (2010: 54) the salaries and working conditions of social workers employed by the Department of Social Development have to compare with salaries in the private sector, because an increasing number of social workers are leaving the profession.

Besides staff turnover, the participants mentioned that there was poor communication between the prospective foster parents and the social workers. This will be discussed in the following subtheme.

4.15.5 Poor Communication

Poor communication with social workers is another challenge participant's face and this was expressed by two participants. One participant mentioned that the social worker did not tell her that she was going on maternity leave and was surprised when she met the new social worker. This participant expressed the following regarding her encounter:

> *I nearly gave up. I was discouraged the other day when I was at the Child Welfare to ask about the progress of the application, as I was not aware that the social worker was on maternity leave. I found a new social worker. She did not know anything about me. It was hard for me to accept a new social worker as she was not familiar with the case* (Participant 6).

Another participant mentioned that the social worker resigned without informing her of the new developments. As evident from the above quotations, participants find it hard to adjust to new staff after their social workers leave because it implies that the new staff member has to learn the participants cases from the beginning. This takes time and would mean that the application processes is delayed further.

SECTION D: THE IMPACT OF RESPONSIBILITIES ON YOUTH HEADING HOUSEHOLDS

In understanding the impact of responsibilities on youth heading households the following themes emerged: lost dreams, lost friends, social clubs, and role model.

4.16 Lost Dreams

Four participants reflected on their lost their dreams and saw themselves as failures. Two participants expressed themselves as follows:

> *One day I want to own a security company. But I did not managed to complete an armed response course due to poor concentration to my studies. I am a failure in life. I had big dreams; all my dreams were unsuccessful* (Participant 3).

> *It is not easy. Sometimes I ask myself why this is happening to me. Sometimes I become angry but I hide my feelings from the children* (Participant 7).

The statements reveal elements of anger, frustration, and hopelessness because of their lost aspirations. In a similar study conducted by Brown *et al,* (2005) findings showed that "73% of youth who headed households felt that they were not good as other people, 65% feeling that everything was an effort, 55% feeling sad, 35% having poor concentration, 33% feeling depressed and 25% feeling that their lives were a failure".

4.17 Social Relationships

According to eight participants, it was hard to maintain friendships with their peers after assuming parental roles. The following sub-themes emerged with respect to social relationships including lost friends, social clubs, and role models.

4.17.1 Lost Friends

Eight participants in the study stated that after the death of their parents they lost their friends. This sentiment is elaborated in the following comments:

> *My life is totally changed. When my grandmother was still alive I used to go around with friends. Heading the household changed my life. As a result I no longer have a strong relationship with friends. We do not speak the same language. I am always thinking about my family commitments as a caregiver.*

My friends are free in their homes because they live with their parents (Participant 1).

I used to go around like all other girls of my age. After the death of my grandmother, I changed my behaviour. Now I stay at home everyday. I no longer have friends (Participant 4).

Youth heading households are affected by the fact that they assume adult roles at a younger age and are isolated from their friends. Young people found it difficult to spend time with friends because of their responsibilities, leading to isolation and loss of their childhood, as evident from their responses. A study conducted by Evan (2010) found that some young people articulated their anxieties about their changed position in the family with the eldest siblings having to take on a full time parenting caring role while they were still young.

4.17.2 Social Clubs

In this study, three participants stated that they stopped attending parties and going to night clubs with their friends. They isolate themselves from their friends as they feel that they no longer fit in the same category because their younger siblings tag along. Participant 7 expressed this concern by stating that:

It is not nice; children who are my age are free and are partying. I cannot go to the parties because I have children to look after (Participant 7).

I no longer have friends. I decided to stop our relationship. I knew I might be getting tempted if I spend more time with them. They are still partying and go to the night clubs (Participant 4).

I lost all my freedom. I do not attend parties and nightclub because I am taking care of the children. I cannot leave the children alone especially at night (Participant 3).

As shown from the comments above, assuming parental responsibility resulted in loss of liberty. The participants explained how painful it was that they were no longer socializing with their peers at parties and clubs, as they cannot leave the children alone. The findings of this study are different from those of Evans (2010), Louw, and Joubert (2007) who found that friends are a source of support. They found that young people developed strong social ties with their peers. In this case, friendship appears to be significant in helping them adapt to their changed role within the households and provided advice and encouragements.

4.18   Role Models

Findings of this study reveal that the participants saw themselves as role models to their young siblings, a finding similar to that of Evans (2010: 15) which revealed that many siblings heading households saw themselves as parents to their younger siblings. The eldest siblings felt a moral responsibility to care for their siblings and thought that they had become more mature and independent because of their responsibilities. By taking on 'adult' roles whilst they were children, the boundaries between 'childhood' and 'adulthood' became blurred. This finding was expressed as follows:

> *Heading a household has changed my life as a result children always come first. They are both teenagers so I make sure that I behave well so as to gain respect from them* (Participant 9).

> *My boyfriend stays in Durban. I do not visit him. I cannot bring my boyfriend home either. The children will not respect me. I decided to be a strict parent* (Participant 6).

The above responses indicate that adopting the role of parent is not easy. The participants mentioned that as head of the households and primary caregivers they were required to show good behaviour towards their youngest siblings in order to gain respect.

Although the participants have difficulties in rearing their orphaned siblings, they displayed a positive view of themselves and strength to overcome their challenges. This will be further discussed in the following section.

4.19 Positive Impact of Fostering

Not all participants were discouraged by their present living circumstances. The following sub-themes emerged and include adjusting to a new life, acceptance and believing that God will give them wisdom, value the importance of education and preventing the family from being split.

4.19.1 Adjusted to a New Life

In this study, five participants stated that although they found it difficult to take care of their orphaned siblings they are coping with their roles as the head of the households. The participants related their experiences as follows:

> *I found it very difficult to head the household and to look after the children but my children are very cooperative and respectful. They do not just respect me alone but they also respect all the elders* (Participant 1).

> *I learned to stay with the children. I am able to guide them. It is difficult but I am managing* (Participant 2).

> *I am able to stay with the children. It is not easy as it comes with lot of challenges. But I am enjoying taking care of them* (Participant 5).

The above responses show that despite their poor living conditions the participants are positive and seem to be coping with their living situation. They accepted their roles, which makes it easier for them to cope with their responsibilities.

4.19.2   Acceptance and Believing that God will Give them Wisdom

According to five participants, they have accepted their responsibilities as the head of the households and their responses indicate that they trust that God gives them strength and courage in bringing up their orphaned siblings. This was evident from the participants' expressions highlighted below:

> *I do enjoy staying with my siblings. I believe that God will guide and keep me. I accepted my role as a parent; I do not have a choice as there is no one else who can take care of my siblings* (Participant 2).

> *Sometimes I console myself by saying that may be God has reserved my blessings. He has reasons for letting me go through this* (Participant 7).

> *I wish God can keep me in order to raise my siblings. My wish for them is a bright future. They are promising to do good things for me once they grow up* (Participant 1).

The above responses indicate that the participants had faith in God. The participants knew that no matter what happened to them God was on their side.

Youth heading households had dreams about their future. They knew what they wanted to become in future but they gave up due to lack of finances and the burden of taking care of their siblings. However, they valued education in such a way that they wish for their siblings to have a bright and successful future. This will be discussed in the following sub-theme.

4.19.3   Valued the Importance of Education

From the participants' responses it is clear that they know and value the importance of education. The following are some of their comments regarding the matter:

I wish a bright future for my siblings. I wish that they complete grade 12 and find bursaries to further their studies. I do not wish for them to suffer as I did (Participant 1).

I wish they continue with school so that they will be able to find jobs. I do not want them to experience what I am going through right now (Participant 3).

Participant 3 stated that he talks with his siblings regarding their dreams and this is what he said about their responses:

My eldest brother wants to be a social worker. My younger brother wants to own a butchery. He wants to be a business man (Participant 3).

The above responses show that the participants valued the importance of education despite the fact that they did not complete their studies. They recommend education as key to success. Therefore, the participants wished that their siblings would complete their high school, further their studies and find better job opportunities. They did not want to see their siblings go through the same hardships.

4.19.4 Preventing the Family From Being Split

All participants indicated that they enjoyed staying with their siblings. Eight out of ten participants mentioned that they have relatives, but they decided to stay together in their parent's house. This decision has had a positive impact on the children's development as they grow up within their families. The research conducted by Dalen (2009: 196) found that some children had promised their parents to stay together and to take care of their belongings and this keeps the siblings together. In this study, the participants had the following to say about staying together:

Before my mother passed away she told us that my youngest brother must be taken by social workers. She thought that I will not be able to take care of my brother as he is young and needed intensive care. She did not trust that I would cope with the needs of my youngest brother.

I learned to stay with the children. I can see that my brothers are growing up very well (Participant 2).

The above response shows that the participant is happy that she is able to stay with her siblings and that her brother was not removed from her care. Mc Kerrow and Verbeek (1995 cited by Richter *et al.,* 2004: 46) assert that family care is the best choice for all children. It offers the best opportunities for positive psychological development. Institutional care is not recommended for young children because children may be separated from their community, families, cultures, and traditions and may find it difficult to re-integrate into society.

4.20   Conclusion

All the participants described the experiences they went through before and after the death of their parents. They also presented the challenges of assuming parental responsibilities at a younger age. Although they had experienced hardship in rearing their orphaned siblings they developed a positive view of themselves and strength to overcome their challenges. This chapter revealed a need to initiate a comprehensive set of actions including physical, educational, psychological and information support significant to ease the burden and challenges experienced by youth heading households.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings and conclusions of this study and recommendations. The study aimed to explore the experiences of youth who are fostering their siblings and heading households in Port Shepstone. The objectives of this study included describing experiences and challenges of youth heading households, identifying current psychosocial and economic support systems and ascertaining what assistance, services, and programs are required by youth heading households. The study was guided by the ecological systems theory while the study was qualitative in nature. In-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of ten participants guided by a semi-structured interview guide and data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The overall results show that youth heading households assumed parental responsibilities at a young age. Two participants indicated that they started heading households before the death of their parents and eight after the death of their parents.

This study was based on three assumptions. The first assumption was that youth heading households were experiencing a shortage of income to fulfill basic needs such as food and clothing. The second assumption was that youth heading households were experiencing emotional challenges and lack of support from extended family members and neighbours. The third assumption was that youth heading households felt inadequately equipped to provide parental guidance and discipline to their siblings. All these assumptions have been confirmed true by the findings of this study.

This chapter is presented in two sections: conclusions and main findings, and, recommendations of the study.

5.2   CONCLUSIONS

This section presents the main findings and conclusions of this study. It presents the challenges faced by youth heading households as well as the support systems available to help them cope with their responsibilities.

5.2.1   Challenges faced by Youth Heading Households

The study revealed that youth heading households faced many challenges in their role as parents to their siblings. The main findings are presented as follows:

5.2.1.1 Educational challenges

The youth heading households experienced educational challenges in several ways. Firstly, while still enrolled in school, the participants did not have sufficient time to do their schoolwork at home, and they were unable to concentrate in class due to poor health conditions of their parents. Consequently, some of the participants dropped out of school in order to nurse their terminally ill and bedridden parents. Secondly, other participants dropped out of school in order to care for their orphaned siblings. They did this because there was no one else to assume parental responsibility after the death of their parents. Thirdly, four participants completed their grade 12 and despite this, they did not pursue tertiary education because they took up the fostering responsibility. In addition, the participants failed to pursue tertiary education due to lack of funds. In conclusion, the youth heading households have faced educational challenges, which led to their dropping out of school or inability to pursue their tertiary education.

5.2.1.2 Challenges in obtaining employment

Seven participants were unemployed and were seeking job opportunities. Three participants stated that they had casual jobs, which did not provide reliable income because their wages were based on the concept of 'no work no pay'. Consequently, the foster care grant is the only reliable source of income on which all the participants relied

to provide the basic needs for their orphaned siblings. However, the foster grant, which is currently at R 750, is not sufficient to meet the needs of the youth heading households: which is usually composed of more than two members all dependent on one person's foster grant. In conclusion, the participants face a number of financial challenges including lack of access to jobs to earn a living.

5.2.1.3 Challenges in managing the behavior of the children

The participants were experiencing difficulties in disciplining their siblings. All the participants' fostering teenage siblings expressed that they could not manage their behavior. Thus, youth heading households face challenges in managing the behaviour of their siblings.

5.2.1.4 Challenges in meeting the educational needs of their siblings

All the participants reported that they did not pay school fees for their siblings because their siblings were granted fee exemption, both in primary and secondary school. In addition, the participants stated that the school feeding scheme played a huge role in the lives of their siblings especially when there is no food in their homes.

The findings show that the main challenge faced by participants was money to buy school uniforms and to pay for school excursions.

5.2.1.5 Emotional challenges faced by families

The participants were dealing with the death of their parents and they voluntarily disclosed the illnesses, which led to their parents' death. Some participants stated that their parents had AIDS, two participants reported that their parents were murdered, and, three reported that their parents died of natural causes. Some of the participants' parents passed away in the past five years but the participants still remembered the causes of their parents' death as if it happened at the time of the interview. The participants are responsible for providing emotional support to their siblings while dealing with their own

grief. Therefore, the challenge faced by the participants is that they have to deal with their own loss while supporting and helping their siblings deal with their loss too, often with no external support.

5.2.1.6 Challenges in maintaining social relationships

The death of the parents had an impact on youth heading households' social relationships. The participants stated that they were unable to maintain friendships with their peers after assuming the parental role. This is so because it was difficult for the participants to spend time or go to social clubs with friends because of their responsibilities. They therefore had a challenge in maintaining social relationships.

5.2.3   Social Support Systems

Seven participants lacked adult support and care from their relatives. Some participants had no contact with their relatives while others stated that their relatives were not in a position to help as they have their own children to look after. In some cases, the participants' relatives were unable to help due to their low economic status. Nevertheless, three stated that they had full support from the extended family. Their relatives visit the households from time to time to check if they are managing with the children.

Six participants received support from their neighbours while four did not. The four participants stated that they did not receive any support from their neighbours because they are also struggling financially. Two participants stated that their neighbours were also youth headed households who are equally struggling. However, some of the participants mentioned that they were ill-treated by their neighbours.

The churches provided support to youth heading households. Four participants in the study stated that they attend church every Sunday and receive emotional and material support from the church.

All participants knew about resources available in their communities but they had problems in accessing certain services offered by the government. Eight participants lived

in mud houses while others lived under very poor conditions in old and deteriorating houses, which they explained to be difficult to live in during rainy days. There was poor infrastructure service delivery in this community.

5.2.4 Social work services

The study revealed that even though all participants received social work services such as placement and supervision of the placement from Child Welfare South Africa in Port Shepstone, the participants still found it difficult to access the services. The participants stated that they experienced delays when applying for foster care grants citing staff turnover as one of the causes of the delays. There was poor communication between the social workers and the clients.

For the participants already receiving foster care grants, the study revealed that there was irregular contact with social workers. Nine participants stated that they were discouraged to get in touch with the social workers because they were advised to make an appointment prior to the consultation date. The majority of the participants were unemployed, and therefore it was financially difficult to travel to town to make an appointment and then later go back on the appointment date. Despite this, the study revealed that the participants needed professional help. Youth heading households needed to be equipped with parenting skills and to be attached to support groups.

5.2.5   Impact of fostering on Youth Heading Households

Despite the challenges that come with fostering, the participants displayed a positive view of themselves and strengths to overcome their challenges. The participants have accepted their responsibilities by being positive and trying to survive with their families. The participants assumed full parental responsibilities, which include running the household, caring, and meeting the needs of their siblings. The participants fulfill parental roles and tasks such as bathing, finding schools, helping with homework, attending school parent meetings, and providing guidance to their siblings. Nine

participants' responses showed that they take turns with their siblings in undertaking household chores.

5.2.6   Recommendations

The ecological systems theory provided the framework for this study. It provided a platform for understanding how youth heading households interrelate with different persons within their environment.   In this study, each layer of the environment was perceived to have an impact on youth heading households. It is upon the constructs of this theory and the conclusions of this study that the recommendations are made to assist youth heading households cope with the physical and emotional needs of their orphaned siblings.

The research findings indicate that some participants assume responsibilities before the death of their parents and therefore are more likely to drop out of school in order to care for their terminally ill and bedridden parents. To this end, it is recommended that the Department of Health ensure availability of resources such as hospices and home-based workers to care for the terminally ill and bedridden patients. This would relieve the pressure off children so that they can continue with their education. Hospices provide palliative care to patients, and psychological and bereavement support to families and children (www.schospice.co.za).

The research findings show that participants are more likely to drop out of school after the death of their parents in order to take care of their young siblings. It is therefore recommended that the Department of Education strengthen pre-school facilities in order to eliminate the need for baby-sitting young siblings thereby giving older siblings a chance to go to school. It is also suggested that the Department of Social Development establish and support community drop in centers in this community. Drop in centers are the immediate solution needed by youth heading households and their siblings. They will provide food after school and assist children with homework in order to ease the burden from the youth heading households.

Drop in centers' serve as an important resource for orphans and fostering households (Adato *et al.,* 2005). It will promote early childhood development programmes supporting children's own families before they have to enter the more formalized child protection service system. It will reduce the burden on social workers as it aims to strengthen and preserve families (September, 2008).

Four participants completed their high school but did not go to tertiary institutions because of financial constraints. This is despite that some participants valued education and had big dreams about their future. The participants did not have knowledge about available bursaries and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, which could assist further their studies. Therefore, there is need to engage the Department of Education (DOE) to provide access to bursaries and NSFAS to needy youths and communities. NSFAS can make a difference in communities by providing a sustainable financial aid system as study loans and bursaries, allowing academically deserving and financially needy youths to realize their potential and hopes for their future (www.nsfas.org.za). A Report of the Proceedings of the first National Congress of South African Union of Student (SAUS) held at the University of Bloemfontein in 2007 recommended free education for all, from early childhood to tertiary education, especially for the poor who can not afford it. The parameters used by NSFAS on affordability should be used to provide free education for those students.

Seven participants were unemployed and were seeking job opportunities. Those who had jobs were involved in unskilled labour such as domestic work where wage earning was not reliable. For example, one of the participants who could not work on rainy days did not earn any wages on such days. It is therefore suggested that the government ensure that the resources such as Umsobomvu Youth Fund (UYF) and the Small Enterprise development Agency (Seda) are available and accessible to disadvantaged and needy people.

The participants face a number of physical challenges including, lack of access to food, clothing and suitable accommodation. The participants stated that the grant is not enough to meet all the needs of the households as it is often used to support the household as a whole. The constitution and policies indicate that the government has a mandate to provide children growing in youth headed households with their basic needs. Therefore, the state should develop a food security policy that would ensure that the rights of children living in youth headed households are upheld. Brown *et al.* (2005) assert that youth heading households must have the basic needs of life and that they need more material support to cope with the challenges that they face in meeting the needs of their young siblings.

All the participants received social work services from the Child Welfare Port Shepstone office concerning placement and supervision of placements. The participants stated that there were delays during the application process, poor staff turnover, and communication. Concerning delays during applications, I support the recommendation made by the Department of Social Development to create a kinship grant (Jamieson *et al.,* 2012). This will reduce delays and decrease case loads on social workers. In addition, to improve poor communication it is recommended that all the social service professionals be trained on the Bathopele principles.

The youth heading households experience various challenges in caring for their orphaned siblings. The participants indicated that they and their siblings are still dealing with the death of their parent(s). Both the participants and their siblings had never received counseling after the deaths of their parents. In addition, the participants revealed that they were experiencing challenges regarding disciplining their siblings who were presenting with behavioral problems. Furthermore, the findings reveal that the social workers spend more time in foster care placement (statutory work) rather than focusing on the early prevention programmes as stated in the Children's Act No.38 of 2005. Lastly, the youth heading households wanted more social workers' support, as social workers rarely visited the youth headed households to check on the progress of the placements.

To overcome all these challenges, I support the recommendation made by the Department of Social Development as it recently announced an intention to create a kinship grant (Jamieson *et al.,* 2012). This will decrease the workload of social workers so that they can attend to other therapeutic programmes such as support groups, bereavement counseling, education of foster parents (parenting skills), and close foster care supervision.

The participants felt that they loved and supported their young siblings while there was no one to take care of them. In addition, most of the participants in this study lacked adult supervision and care as most of them had no contact with their relatives. To this end, it is recommended that the government develop a mentorship programme to help youths with relevant skills for their role as parents. Brown *et al.* (2005: 8) assert that in the mentorship intervention model, adult volunteers from the local community are trained and supported to develop a stable, caring relationship with children and youth living without an adult caregiver. Through regular home visits, they monitor the well-being of the children and youths, provide guidance and transfer life skills, give love, attention, and encouragement to youths. The findings of this study show that the church played a significant role in the lives of youth heading households and their families. It is recommended that the social workers recruit mentors from churches to offer support to youth heading households in their communities.

5.4   Recommendations for further research

The study was done on youth heading households and therefore did not incorporate interviews with other people (neighbors, relatives, and siblings) to confirm the experiences of youth heading households. There is a need to conduct research with other people to obtain a more holistic perspective.

The sample of this study was limited to youth fostering their siblings and heading their households under the supervision of Child Welfare Shepstone. Further research needs to be undertaken in other areas to confirm these findings.

REFERENCES

Adato, M., Kadiyala, S., Roopnaraire, T., Biermayr-Jenzano, P. and Norman, A., (2005). *Children in the shadow of AIDS: Studies of vulnerable children and orphans in three provinces in South Africa.* International food Policy Research Institute: sustainable solution for ending hunger and poverty. Georgetown University: Washington. www. Ifpri.org/renewal (Accessed on the 06/08/2012)

Alpaslan, H. and Mabutho, S., (2005). Caring for AIDS orphans: The experiences of elderly grandmother caregivers and orphans. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk.* Vol. 41, No. 3, p. 276-295.

Ayieko, M., (2003). *From single parent to child headed households: the case of children orphaned by AIDS in Kisumu and Siaya Districts*. Http: //www.undp.org/publications/study/english/spie.htm (Accessed on the 28.08.2012)

Babbie, E and Mouton, J., (2001). *The practice of social research.* Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Berk, L., (2000). *Child Development.* (5th edition). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Berry, L., Hall, K. and Hendricks, M., (2010). Child health nutrition. In: Kibel M., Lake, L., Pendlebury, S. and Smith, C. *South African Child Gauge 2009/2010.* Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Bequele, S., (2007). *The emerging challenge of Children heading households: The African Child Policy Forum.* http:// www.africanchildforum.org/site (Accessed on 20.06.2011)

Bezuidenhout, F., (2004). *A reader on selected social issues*, (3rd edition). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Bronfenbrenner, U., (1994). *Ecological model of human development:* In International Encyclopaedia of Education, Vol., 3 (2nd edition). Oxford: Elsevier.

Brown. L., Thurman, T. and Snider, L., (2005). *Strengthen the psychosocial well being of youth-headed households in Rwanda: Baseline findings from an intervention trail.* Horizons Research update. Washington, DC Population Council .

Chauke, M., Human, S., van Rensburg, G., van der Wal, D., de Kock, D., de Beer, F., Magwaza, S., Kotze, D., Cornwell, L., Roets, D., Bezuidenhout, M. and Mochaki, N., (2008). *A situational analysis of child headed-household in South Africa.* South Africa: University of South Africa.

Chuong, C. and Operario, D., (2011). *Challenging household dynamics: Impact of orphanhood, parental absence, and children living arrangements on education in South Africa.* London: Routledge.

Conway, T,. and Hutson, R., (2007). *Is Kinship care good for kids.* Clasp center for law and Social Policy. http:// www.clasp.org (Accessed on the 12.06.2012).

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 151 & 195 of 1996. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative and mixed methods approaches.* (3rd eds). United State America: SAGE Publication Ltd

Crosson-Tower, C., (2001). *Exploring child welfare: A practical perspective.* London: Allyn and Bacon. Country analysis South Africa: http:// www.sarpn.org.za (Accessed on the 12.06.2011).

Dalen, N, (2009). *Challenges for orphans in sibling headed households. Assessment of interventions to reduce stigma in Rakai District.* Norway: University College and Centre for International Health.

Dawes, A., van der Merve, A. and Brandt, R., (2007). A monitoring dilemma: orphans and children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS: In Dawes, A, Bray, R. and van der Merwe (Eds). *Monitoring child well-being: A South African right based approach*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Demmer, C., (2011). Experiences of families caring for an HIV- infected child in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: an exploratory study. *AIDS Care: Psychological and socio medical aspect of HIV/AIDS Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 7, p. 837-879.

Department of Social Development, (1997). *The White Paper for Social Welfare: principles, guidelines and recommendation, proposed policies and programmes for developmental social welfare.* Transvaal Printers: Pretoria.

De Vos, A. (2005). Qualitative data analysis and interpretation: In: De Vos, A. (3rd eds). *Research at grassroots: for the social sciences and human service profession.* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Durrheim, K., (2006). Research design. **In:** Terre Blanche, T. Durrheim, K. and Painter, D. (eds). *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences.* Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press (Pty) Ltd.

Du Toit, R., (2003). Unemployed youth in South Africa: The distressed generation? *Paper presented as the Minnesota International Counseling Institute* (MICI), 27 July-1 August 2003 http://www. intranet.hsrc.hsrc.ac.za/research/output/ output document/2286-duToit-unemployment youth in South Africa (Accessed on 23.08.2012).

Dutchke, M., (2007). Developmental social welfare policies and children's rights to social service. In: Proudlock, P., Dutchke, M., Jamieson, L., Monson, J. and Smith, C. *South African Child Gauge 2007/2008.* Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Dutchke, M., and Monson, J., (2007). Children's constitutional right to social services. In Proudlock, P., Dutchke, M., Jamieson, L., Monson, J. and Smith, C., (Eds). *South African Child Gauge 2007/2008.* Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Eley, B., (2010). HIV, TB and child health: In Kibel, M, Lake, L, Pendlebury, S. and Smith, C. (Eds), South *African Child Gauge 2009/2010*. Children's Institute: University of Cape Town.

Evans, R., (2010). *The experiences and priorities of young people who care for their young siblings in Tanzania and Uganda.* University of Reading, School of Human and Environmental Science, Department of Geography and Environmental Science. http:// centaur. Reading .ac.uk/6609 (Accessed on 02.08.2012).

Foster, G., and Williamson, J., (2000). A review of current literature of the impact of HIV/AIDS on children in sub-Saharan Africa. Zimbabwe: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins.

Freeman, M., and Nkomo, N., (2001). Guardianship of orphans and vulnerable children: A survey of current and prospective South African caregivers. *AIDS Care,* Vol. 18, p. 302-310.

Freeman, M. and Nkomo, N., (2006). Assistance needed for the integration of orphaned and vulnerable children: views of South African family and community members. *Journal of Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS*, Vol. 3, p. 503-509.

Gow, J. and Desmond, C., (2002). *Impact and interventions: The HIV/AIDS Epidemic and the Children of South Africa.* Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.

Greeff, M., (2005). Information collection: Interviewing. In: De Vos, A. (3rd edition). *Research at grassroots: for the social sciences and human service professions.* Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Gruskin, S. and Tarantola, D., (2005). Human Rights and Children Affected by HIV/AIDS. In Foster, G., Levine, C. and Williamson, J., (Eds). *The global impact of HIV/AIDS on orphans and vulnerable children.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Guidelines for Alternative Care: The Human Right Council Report, (2009). *Promotion and protecting of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social, cultural rights including the right to development.* United Nation General Assembly http:// www.guidelinesforalternativecare.org (Accessed on 20.06.2011).

Hall, K., (2009). Children access to housing. In Kibel, M., Lake, L., Pendlebury, S. and Smith, C. (Eds), South *African Child Gauge 2009/2010*. Children's Institute: University of Cape Town.

Hall, K., (2010). Income poverty, unemployment and social grants. In Kibel, M., Lake, L., Pendlebury, S. and Smith, C. (Eds), South *African Child Gauge 2009/2010*. Children's Institute: University of Cape Town.

Hall, K. and de Lannoy, A., (2010). Children's access to education. *South African Child Gauge 2009/2010.* In Kibel, M., Lake, L., Pendlebury, S. and Smith, C. (Eds), South *African Child Gauge 2009/2010*. Children's Institute: University of Cape Town.

Hall, K. and Proudlock, P., (2011). Orphaning and the Foster Child Grant: A return to the "care or cash" debate. *Children's Court Brief*. Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Hall, K., (2012). *Children access to housing.* South African Child Gauge 2011/2012. Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Human Rights Council, (2009). Promoting and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights of

development. Guidelines for alternative care of children. United Nations General Assembly.

Jamieson, L., Proudlock, P. and Waterhouse, S., (2007). Key legislative development affecting children in 2007. In Proudlock, P., Dutchke, M., Jamieson, L., Monson, J. and Smith, C. (Eds). *South African Child Gauge 2007/2008*. Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Jini, L., Roby, J., (2011). Children in informal alternative care. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Child Protection Section. New York.

Langba, J., Marera, D. and Berry, L., (2007). Children's access to social assistance. In Proudlock, P., Dutchke, M., Jamieson, L., Monson, J. and Smith, C. (Eds). *South African Child Gauge 2007/2008*. Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Louw, L. and Joubert, J., (2007). The experiences of adolescents orphaned by HIV/AIDS related conditions. *Social Work Maatskaplike Werk,* Vol. 43, No. 4, p. 377-391.

Mahery, P. Jamieson, L., and Scott, K., (2011). Children's Act Guide for child and youth care worker. (Eds). Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Masondo, G., (2006). *The lived –experiences of orphans in child headed households in the Bronkhorst Spruit area: Psycho-educational approach.* Mini dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master education in faculty of education, University of Johannesburg.

Matthias, C.R. and Zaal, F.N., (2009). Supporting familial and community care for children: legislative reform and implementation challenges in South Africa. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, Vol. 18, No. 3, p. 291-298.

Matthias, C. R. (2010). Alternative care options in new children's legislation: A big step forward or pie in the sky? *The Social Work Practitioner Researcher*, Vol. 22, No.2, p.171-187

Mayer, M., (2011). Towards a youth employment strategy for South Africa. *Developmental planning division working paper series* No. 28. South Africa: Developmental Bank Southern Africa Limited.

Maqoko, Z., (2006). *Children headed household because of the trauma surrounding HIV/AIDS.* Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

Meintjes, H. and Giese, S., (2006). *Spinning the epidemic: The making of mythologies of orpharnhood in the context of AIDS.* London: SAGE Publication.

Meintjes, H. and Hall, K., (2012). *Demography of South Africa's Children.* South African Child Gauge 2011/2012. Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Mokgathe-Nthabu, M., van der Westhuizen, G., and Fritz, E., (2011). Interpretation of well-being in youth headed households in rural South Africa: a grounded theory study. *Child abuse Research.* 2011, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 66-76.

Msomi, Z., (2009). *A description of kinship care placements in Ekukhanyeni, Nkandla Local Municipality.* Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Social Wok in the faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

National Treasury, (2011). Confronting youth unemployment: Policy option for South Africa. *Discussion Paper for public comment.* http://www.stepsa.org/resources/shaved-document/confronting-youth-unemployed-policy-option (Accessed on 17.07.2011).

National Youth Policy, 2008-2013. The Presidency. *Government Gazette,* No. 31728.

Ndinga-Mavumba, A. and Pharoah R., (2008). *HIV/AIDS and society in South Africa.* South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Nelson Mandela Children's Fund Report, (2001). A Study into the situation and special
    needs of children in Child-Headed Households.
    www.nelsonmandelachildrenfund.com (Accessed on the 06/04/2011)

Oliver, K., and Strydom, H., (2010). A profile of adolescents in households infected or
    affected by, HIV and AIDS. *Social Work /Maatskaplike Werk,* Vol. 46, No. 4, p.
    409-419.

Ramsden, N. Vawda, C. Shevil, S. Ngcobo, S. Fakir, R. and Gumede, N., (2002).
    *Community Help for Children living in an HIV+ World: Bringing Hope to
    Orphaned Children.* Durban: The Press Gang.

Republic of South Africa, Children's Act No. 38 of 2005, *Government Gazette*, Vol. 492
    No. 28944 (19 June). Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa. The Constitution of Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996.

Republic of South Africa. Social Assistance Act of 2004. *Government Gazette*, Vol. 468
    No. 26446 (10 June). Cape Town.

Richter, L., Manegold, J. and Pather, R., (2004). *Family and community interventions for
    children affected by AIDS*. Cape Town: HSRC Publisher.

Richter, L., (2010). Social cash transfers to support children and families affected by
    HIV/AIDS. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 81-91.

Roux, A., Bungane, X., and Strydom, C., (2010). Circumstances of foster children and
    their foster parents affected by HIV and AIDS. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk,*
    Vol. 46, No. 1, p. 45-55.

Rosa, S. and Lehnert, W., (2003). Children without adult and access to social assistance.
    Cape Town: Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Save the Children, (2007). *Kinship Care: Providing positive and safe care for children living away from home.* London: Greenaways Ltd.

September, R., (2006). A review of child protection in South Africa: State of the Art policies in need of implementation. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, Vol. 42, No. 1

Shetty, A. and Powell, G., (2003). *Children Orphaned by AIDS: A global perspective*. Vol. 14, p. 25-31.

Sloth-Nielson, J., (2004). *Realizing the rights of children growing up in child headed households: A guide to laws, policies and social advocacy.* South Africa: Community Law Centre, University of Western Cape.

Social Assistance Act, 2004. Vol. 468 No. 26446. Government Gazette. Cape Town.

Smith, C., (2007). Making the link between social services and social assistance. In Proudlock, P., Dutchke, M., Jamieson, L., Monson, J. and Smith, C. (Eds). *South African Child Gauge 2007/2008*. Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Stover, J., Bollinger, L., Walker, N. and Monasch, R., (2007). *Resource needs to support orphans and vulnerable children in sub-Saharan Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.

Strydom, H., (2005). Ethical aspects of research in the social sciences and human service professions. In: De Vos, A. (3rd edition). *Research at grassroots: for the social sciences and human service professions.* Pretoria: Van Schalk Publishers.

Taylor, V., (2005). *South Africa: Transformation for Human Development*. Pretoria, United Nations Development Programme.

Terre Blanche, T., Durrheim, K. and Kelly, K., (2006). First steps in qualitative data analysis. In Terre Blanche, T., Durrheim, K. and Painter, D. (eds). *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences.* Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press (Pty) Ltd.

Thurman, T, Snider, L, Boris, N, Kalisa, E,Magaria E, Ntagania,J and Brown, L. (2006). *Psychosocial support and marginalization of youth headed households in Rwanda, AIDS Care*, Vol. 18, No. 3, p. 220-229.

Triegaardt, J., (2005). The Child support Grant in South Africa: a social policy for poverty alleviation? *International Journal of Social Welfare.* Vol. 14, p. 249-255.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2003). *Africa's orphaned generations.* New York http://www.unicef.org (Accessed on 02.08.2012).

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), (2004). *Child Protection: A handbook for parliamentarians No.7. Switzerland: Inter Parliamentary Union*: http:// www.unicef.org/publications/files/Guide_Enfants (Accessed on 10.06.2012).

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), (2005).Strengthening National responses to children affected by HIV/AIDS: What is the role of the state and social welfare in Africa. *Background Paper for Wilton Park Conference* Nov 14th -16 2005. http:// www.hsrc.ac.za (Accessed on 23.09.2012).

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), (2007). *The State of the world's children: women and children-the double dividend of gender equality.* New York: UNICEF House.

UNICEF Report, (2009). *Situational Analysis of Children in South Africa.* Pretoria: Republic of South Africa Union Building.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), (2006). *African orphans and vulnerable generation: Children affected by AIDS.* Accessed on line http:// www.unicef.og (Accessed on 22.08.2012).

WHO, UNAIDS and UNICEF, (2008). *Epidemiological fact sheet on HIV and AIDS South Africa 2008:* Available on line: http://apps.who.int.globalatlas/predefined Reports accessed on 20 June 2011.

Annexure 1 – Informed consent with youth heading households

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Dear Sir/Madam

Research Topic: Experiences and challenges of youth heading households in Port Shepstone

I am a social work master's student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting this study as part of the requirements for the degree. The study will be conducted under the supervision of the School of Applied Human Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My supervisor is Professor C R Matthias (0312607922).

Purpose of the study

As a social worker at Child Welfare I have noted an increasing number of youth fostering their siblings. The purpose of this research study is to explore the experiences and challenges of youth heading households in Port Shepstone.

Participation

Your participation in this research is highly appreciated. You will be required to participate in an individual interview. The interviews will be conducted in your home. The interview should last approximately 2 hours. Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Your details will not be disclosed in this study and all the information that will be given during the interviews will be treated in a confidential manner. There will be no payment for participating in this study. The interviews will be audio recorded. The tapes and other written information will be destroyed after five years. The information obtained during the interview will be not used against you.

Thank you for your participation

Sincerely

_____

T Ndaleni

Port Shepstone Child Welfare: P.O. Box 58, Port Shepstone, 4240

Declaration:

I …………………………………………………….. (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   **DATE**

………………………………………   …………………………

Annexure 2: **Interview themes**

1. <u>Family demography</u>

   - Number of people living in the household

   - Ages of people living in the household

   - Family background (death of the parents)

   - When did you assume full parental responsibility?

   - Roles and responsibilities of youth heading household and siblings

2. <u>Impact of responsibilities on the youth heading the household</u>

   - How has life been affected by being the head of the household (probe: schooling, social aspects, emotional and health aspect)

   - Feeling about role as a head of household and a primary care giver (choice or obliged)

   - What would youth heading households like to see as an ideal for care of children after parental death?

3. <u>Management of household</u>

   - Problems/ challenges encountered in taking care of orphaned siblings.

   - Available support systems (probe: extended family, neighbours, community members, religion, other)

   - Decision making in the household (co operation of siblings)

   - Positive experiences of being the head of household

4. <u>Financial aspects</u>

   - Source/s of income

   - Family expenditure

   - Foster care grant (waiting periods, accessing, extension procedures)

5. Psychological and emotional aspects

- Feelings about being the head of the household

- Frequency of contact with the social worker (home visits and office consultation)

6. Health aspects

- Health problems/ concerns of the family

7. Socio-cultural aspects

- Family norms (the rules of the family for example in some families children are not allowed to be out after six, some families wants to eat dinner together, in some families children are not allowed to watch television).

- Disciplinary methods

8. Educational aspects

- School expenses (uniforms, stationery, prescribed text books)

- School attendance

- Siblings behaviour at school

- Performance

- Assistance and support received from the school

9. Programs and services

- Assistance received from Child Welfare

- Services and assistance required