



Critical analysis of foster care services: Relationship between foster care drift and transitioning out of foster care (adulthood)

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DECLARATION

I, Nolusindiso Mhlauli, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work. I also declare that in this thesis, except where indicated through sources in-text and bibliography, does not contain other person's data, pictures, or other information. The study has not been previously submitted for examination to any university or institution.

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DEDICATION

This achievement is dedicated to my late son, Kwakhanya Ntshontsho Mhlawuli, whose departure was tragic and sudden. He was such a blessing; though he left at such a young and tender age, as a family we appreciate each day we spent with him. Knowing that he is at peace, in a place where there is no more sorrow, no more pain and in the arms of the Lord, gives us comfort. In this time of grief, each day is a struggle but through Christ who is our strength, we are learning to live without him. He left a void that can never be filled, our lives will never be the same without him and he is sadly missed daily. He will forever have a special place in my heart.

May your soul rest in eternal peace son.

Love you, always

Mom

ABSTRACT

Foster care provides substitute care for children in need of care and protection. This category of children mainly involves those who cannot be cared for within their families and who are not available for adoption. While foster care is meant to be a temporary service aimed at providing permanency, most children in foster care are often not removed from the system and linger in care without permanency. This study examined the influence of foster care drift on transitioning out of foster care. Its ultimate goal is to contribute to bridging the gap in practice and literature on foster care around lack of insight and reporting on the extent of foster care drift and transitioning into adulthood. The need for this study was based on the observation and reporting that a number of foster care children cycle through various temporal placements, drifting in care until they age out. In this study, foster care service is viewed as developing through various stages of life-span development. The quantitative research method was used to collect and analyse data, with a descriptive cross-sectional design used as a specific design to study the influence foster care drift on transitioning out of foster care. Questionnaires were used to collect data from youth who aged out of foster care. The sample was applied to select 167 respondents from six child welfare organisations responsible for administration of foster care in Ugu District Municipality. The findings revealed that the welfare system is overburdened with orphans who are unable to exit the system; as a result, they find themselves drifting in care until they age out. Adequate social support from the family of origin, foster family and romantic relationships, did not buffer the respondents from foster care drift and negative transition outcomes. As a result of the deficiency in the system, majority experienced negative transition outcomes and they were not equipped or skilled to effectively navigate the transition passage. Therefore, during the transition out of care the majority struggled to cope with realities of adulthood and to live independently as the majority experienced negative transition outcomes. Exit strategies should be developed, regulated and appropriate funding be made available for the implementation of such strategies to aid the young people to effectively transition from care. To ease the overburdened foster care system, the implementation of the kinship grant is recommended as previously proposed by the child's rights organizations.

Key terms: Adolescence; Ageing out of foster care; Age of maturity; Child; Foster Care; Foster Care Drift; Youth; Transition

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The premise of this study is that foster care services is viewed as existing within the broad context of child protection, and key in this regard is that children deserve a safe, stable and nurturing family environment. Youth in foster care placement and those that exit the foster care system are viewed as vulnerable due to the challenging journeys they go through in their childhood (Pecora, Whittaker, Maluccio & Barth, 2000; Daining & DePanfilis, 2007). Most foster care children are reported to enter the foster care system because of social ills like abuse, neglect, exposure to and or involvement in violence and other traumatic experiences. Pecora et al., (2000) also regard foster care children as those that have lived in numerous out-of-home placements or have been returned home and removed repeatedly. Children in foster care, who experience multiple placements during the out-of-home placement, are likely to experience foster care drift and face greater risk of aging out of care without obtaining permanent placement (Leve, Harold, Chamberlain, Landsverk, Fisher & Volstanis, 2012; Curry & Abrams, 2015). Atkinson (2008) defines foster care drift as the practice of youth in the foster care system that often spend years “moving” through temporary foster home placements.

Ward (2009) points out that exposure to multiple placements is one of the recent research related developments regarding children’s transition out of state care. During the transition period, young people contend with multiple opportunities and challenges that can have significant implications over their life course (Keller, Cusick & Courtney, 2007). Traditionally, the transition from adolescence to adulthood is regarded as a period that follows a linear process, with maturity coming with the expectations of taking responsibility for their selves, making independent decisions, and becoming self-sufficient (Arnett, 2000). In contrast, Arnett (2000) came up with the phenomenon referred to as emerging adulthood, which provides for unique transitions prevailing in industrialised countries. Depicted in the conception of this stage, is the notion that emerging adulthood stage is distinguished by relative independence from social roles and from normative expectations. The existence of the developmental variation paths, the foster care backlog challenge in the country, amongst other issue prompted the researcher to undertake a quantitative descriptive cross-sectional design study. This was more appropriate to examine the influence of foster care drift on transitioning out of foster care system.

This chapter introduces the background, the rationale of the study, the preliminary literature review, the theoretical framework and the problem statement. This is followed by presentation of the location of study as well as the aims and objectives of the study. Lastly, it provides the synopsis of the research methodology adopted to elicit data for the study.

1.2 Background and rationale of the study

This study stemmed from the observation in practice, where there was a noticeable increase in the number of children being placed in foster care. Ngwenya and Botha (2012) regard foster care as one of the areas of demand in the South African government, which has contributed to the foster care system's inability to cope with the related demand. The struggle to cope with the foster care backlog has been witnessed through numerous court interventions (Smith, 2020 & Beren, 2015; Hall, Skelton & Sibanda, 2016). Irrespective of the numerous foster care moratoriums in 2019, it was found that there were still 41000 foster care backlog cases, of which the biggest number emanated from Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal (Venter, 2019).

The vulnerability of children may be a result of neglect and abuse or exploitation perpetuated within their families and from individuals they come across in their day-to-day lives (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018). Hence the need for child protection. The underpinnings for child protection measures are mainly found in sections 28(1) (d) to (g) of the Constitution (RSA, 1996). These sections spell out the children's rights to protection from abuse, neglect, premature or exploitative employment, unnecessary detention and, if detention is unavoidable, exposure to conditions which are unsuitable for children. When children are believed to be at risk, vulnerable, exposed to abuse and neglect, the Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005) mandates that children be removed from parental care and be placed in foster care as a form of alternative care.

Foster care is a measure of child care in situations where it becomes necessary to separate children from their families to ensure their best interests, particularly where their safety is threatened as a result of abuse, among other challenges. López, del Valle, Montserrat & Bravo, (2011:112) state that "children are placed with another family that voluntarily agrees to care for and educate them for a certain period of time, normally until they can return to their families or

be placed with an adoptive family”. Foster care is a temporal placement, whilst parents are assisted with re-unification efforts (Atkinson, 2008; McNamara-Barry & Steffe, 2012).

Gauthier, Fortin and Jeliu, (2004:3) add that “a fostered child should normally keep contact with the biological parents to whom she or he should return as soon as possible, except when contraindications due to serious concerns about the child’s safety”. Ideally, this temporal nature of foster care means that children can only be returned to parental care when the circumstances at home have been assessed and found to be suitable and conducive for the upbringing of the child. The parents, therefore need to be prepared for the return of a child, through re-unification services. Whether these aspects are undertaken or not in practice, are beyond the scope of this study. What is significant in relation to possible lack of proper interventions, is the notion in its original development, foster care services were meant to be a temporary intervention (Hall, et al., 2016).

The removal of children from parental care to foster care is viewed as a transition. Their care and protection become the responsibility of the state as the state has authority over them. Wallis (2014) states that when the child is in state’s care, the state has jurisdiction over a minor. Wallis (2014) further elaborates that, through the courts, it is decided whether (i) the child should be returned to his or her parents; (ii) parents’ rights should be terminated and the minor be placed for adoption; (iii) another person should obtain legal guardianship; or (iv) the child should be placed with a family member or in another arrangement that is in the minor’s best interests.

1.3 Preliminary literature review

In line with the objectives of the study, the literature review mainly focuses on the foster care system and the related phenomena, that are categorized in line with the objectives, namely foster care services, foster care drift, and transitioning out of foster care (adulthood). These aspects are summarised in this section and are expatiated in chapter two.

1.3.1 Foster care

1.3.1.1 Foster care system in South Africa Post 1994

As a result of the apartheid system prior to 1994, the South African Welfare system was built on racial inequalities. Ntjana (2014) asserts that the transition from the apartheid era to democracy

stipulated that policies should be aligned with the new dispensation, hence the adoption of the welfare approach. The political transition post 1994 marked an era of the inclusion of children in need of care and protection who were previously disadvantaged. Loffel (2008) states that the social welfare approach adopted by government post 1994 saw the use of court-ordered foster care as the chief means of support for the spiralling numbers of orphans and vulnerable children who are in the long-term care of relatives. Most literature concur with the view that most of these children were often placed in foster care due to death or incapacitation of parents, resulting from the HIV and AIDS pandemic and that, in the process, they experienced adversities such as physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, parental psychopathology and family breakdown (Simms, Dubowitz & Szilagyi, 2000; Birneanu, 2013). Furthermore, foster care has been instrumental in mitigating the plight of hundreds of thousands of children who would otherwise have been exposed to the worst ravages of poverty. While this approach had positive intentions, the child protection system became swamped as a result. The Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005) underpins social welfare approach, and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) stipulates that every child has a right to have his or her basic needs met.

1.3.1.2 Foster care drift

As a social work practitioner and, later on, as a social work supervisor in the employ of the Department of Social Development, most of my responsibilities involved provision of statutory services (foster care). Between 2006 and 2012, observations were made that children in foster care are seldom returned to the parental care. Whilst in the care of the state, foster care children tend to drift in care until they age out. Foster care drift refers to the number of children in care without a permanent placement and the tendency for them to grow up moving from home to home.

As stipulated in section 187 of the Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005), social work services are fundamental in ensuring that children are promptly returned to the family of origin. However, in practice this is not true as children often spend their entire childhood cycling through various temporary foster care placements before aging out, without ever being reunified with their families of origin or finding an adoptive home (Atkinson, 2008). As such foster care drift undermines the purpose of the foster care legislation (Zwas, 1993), in such that the short-term measure had become the long-term solution (Avery, 2010) and the view that young children in

foster care experience a relatively normal upbringing is challenged (Atkinson, 2008). When children in foster care are released from the provisions of the Children's Act (38 of 2005), they are referred to as ageing out of the foster care system. As children transition in foster care, they tend to drift within the child welfare system. The focus of this study revolves around the effect that the movement of children from one temporal placement to the next has in their transitioning from state's care into independent living or adulthood, as the case may be.

1.3.1.3 Transitioning out of foster care system

The researcher is concerned with the notion that when the children have reached the age of 18 years, which is the age of maturity as determined by the Children's Act, they tend to age out of foster care with limited preparation or direction. Atkinson (2008) concurs with the notion that youth in foster care receive little or no formal preparation from the state to exit the foster care system. As children age out of foster care, closing their files is regarded as an achievement to the system, with social workers regarding that as minus one case from their caseloads. Ageing out of foster care means that children are no longer legally dependent on the state as a result they lose their entitlements, namely state-provided housing, medical care, and supervision and that they must find a way to support themselves on their own (Kimberlin, Lemley & Byrnes, 2008). Seldom do social workers worry themselves about the exposure that these children go through from transitioning from the care of the state to emerging adulthood. Critical in this study, is the notion that most of the time foster care children find themselves having to drift in the system, as they move from one placement to another. In the process, the issue of attachment could also be viewed to feature as the sense of belonging is affected because of drifting from one temporary placement to another.

1.3.1.4 Transitioning and adolescence stage

Anderson, Goodman and Schlossberg (2012) describe transition as an event that creates disruption of roles, routines and relationships. For a young person, the period of transitioning out of foster care coincides with the period of exiting the adolescent stage. The transition from adolescence to adulthood is considered a significant developmental stage in a young person's growth, a time when special risks and opportunities exclusive to that period surface (Greenson, 2013). Children in foster care age out of the system during the adolescent stage, hence they

experience transition out of state care and adolescence stage simultaneously. Greenson (2013) makes further assertion that transition do not end in adolescence stage, furthermore they transition to emerging adulthood. Adolescence stage is regarded as a difficult passage for any child, but that challenge is doubled for children ageing out of foster care as they might be without any support structure and safety net (Atkinson, 2008). Given the importance of the family home in these transition experiences, the family safety net for young people aging out of care may be non-existent, problematic, or at best, capable of limited and sporadic support (Collins, 2001).

1.3.1.5 Foster care placement

Children in foster care are a vulnerable population because they face various challenges (Avery, 2010). The vast majority of children are placed in foster care as a result of neglect, physical abuse, parental substance abuse or abandonment (Sims et al., 2000). When parents or close family members fail to protect children, the state ought to intervene, hence the protection of children is the responsibility of the state. They are then removed from parental care and placed in foster care as a form of alternative placement. Foster care refers to the “substitute family care for children who cannot be adequately cared for at their home of origin” (Fortune, 2016:12).

1.3.2 Legislative mandates on child protection

This section highlights the legislative mandates on child protection that are relevant in foster care. These aspects are briefly highlighted here and elaborated further in second chapter.

Fortune (2016) describes the South Africa’s legislative framework as, in general, protective of children and their rights and that there have been significant developments since South Africa ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 2000.

Children’s Act (Act 38 of 2005) mandates child protection in South Africa. Therefore, child protection is provided within the parameters of the national, international laws, and instruments. The Children’s Act (Act 38 of 2005) is in line with section 28(2) of the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996). Section 150 (1) of the Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005), identifies different instances in which a child is said to be in need of care and protection. The policies on child protection are determined by social welfare approach, White Paper for Social Welfare (1996) amongst other instruments.

1.4 Theoretical framework of the study

This study is underpinned within both, Life Course theory and Transition theory. This section provides the highlight of these two theories, considering that these are expatiated in chapter two. Life Course theory provides a framework from which it is understood that human development is embedded in the life course stages, relationships and historical times. Life course theory provides a framework of studying phenomena at the nexus of social pathways, developmental trajectories, and social change (Heins & Marshal, 2003).

Transition theory is intended to make provision for explaining the personal and social aspects of transition that may be manifested as a result of effective transition. Schlossberg's transition theory provided a systematic framework that would facilitate an understanding of adults in transition and direct them to the help they needed to cope with the "ordinary and extraordinary" process of living (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). In relation to transition theory, different domains such as educational attainment, positive relationships (Reid & Dudding, 2006) and employment (Keller et al., 2007; Berzin, 2008) are viewed as critical and useful in developing a measure to successful transition to adulthood. It is worth noting that the diverse nature of life development stages makes it difficult to reach a universal measure for a successful transition. Neuman (2014) warns against dogmatic use of standardised measures that often do not fit the target population. Whilst such measures are valued, researchers are encouraged to adapt and or develop measures in line with their target population and studies. The process of developing a measure was undertaken with due consideration of this view, as well as the recognition of the unique kind of transition, referred to as emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). When children placed in foster care reach the age of maturity, they are referred to as aging out of foster. When they age out of foster care, they transition from being cared for by the state to be independent and self-reliant. It is therefore crucial to determine if this stage arise as a vulnerability or emancipation on these incumbents.

Age is the relevant aspect of normative development throughout life stages and in the process of transitioning out of care to adulthood (Greenon, 2013). At the age of 18 years, children in foster care reach the age of maturity (Children's Act; Zetlin et al., 2010), and they age out of foster care. The transition from adolescence to adulthood is considered a significant

developmental stage in a young person's growth, a time when special risks and opportunities exclusive to that period surface (Greenon, 2013).

1.5 Problem statement

This study acknowledges the contribution in literature that has been made thus far in the area of child protection and care, and more especially on foster care. Noted, in this regard is the ongoing empirical studies on ageing out of foster care (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007; Atkinson, 2008; McNamara-Barry & Steffe, 2012) and more so the recent focus on such transition within the South African context (Botes & Ryke, 2011; van Breda, 2013). The gap in practice and literature on foster care appears to be mainly around lack of insight on the nature and extent of foster care drift and lack of acknowledgement of emerging adulthood as the key phase for those transitioning out of foster care. In the first part, is the gap in respect of the acknowledgement and explanation on how the challenges emanating from foster care placement impact on the children transitioning out of foster care. The latter part focuses on the lack of acknowledgement of emerging adulthood as the transitioning phase between childhood and adulthood. This study argues that children exposed to foster care drift are likely to experience negative transition outcomes, as a result of foster care drift influencing the transition outcomes and interrupting different domains in the children's circumstances, relationships and identity. It is along this notion that a study investigating the influence of foster care drift on transitioning out of care as a result of adulthood, was found to be appropriate. What makes this study to be significant is that it was conducted from the perspectives of the affected individuals and within the South African context. It therefore becomes paramount that individuals who have been through the foster care system are provided a voice on issues that affect them.

1.6 Location of the Study

The respondents that were involved in this study have been placed under the six child welfare organizations located in Ugu District Municipality. These organisations comprised of Umzinto Child Welfare, which is situated in Umzinto urban area, Vulamehlo Child Welfare in Vulamehlo, Umzumbe Child Welfare at Umfazazana, Ekubusiweni Child Welfare at Mgayi, Izingolweni Child Welfare at Nkulu, and lastly, Margate Child Welfare at Margate urban area. Ugu District Municipality consists of eighty-one (81) municipal wards, which culminate into local

municipalities, namely Ray Nkonyeni, Umzumbe, Umdoni and Umuziwabantu Local Municipality. The district extends inland to more rural areas, many of which are under the leadership of more than forty tribal authorities (Jamieson, Sambu & Matthews, 2017). The total population of the Ugu District Municipality area of jurisdiction is 753 336 (IDP, 2019/2020). This district is further reported as comprising of a relatively young population, with children and youth making up 38.7% of total population. Ugu District is predominantly characterised by the scourge of gender-based violence and substance abuse.

1.7 Aim and objectives of the Study

1.7.1 Aim

To investigate the influence of foster care drift on foster care children's transitioning out of foster care into adulthood.

1.7.2 Objectives

1.7.2.1 To examine the nature and extent of foster care in Ugu District Municipality.

1.7.2.2 To examine the extent of foster care drift in Ugu District Municipality.

1.7.2.3 To ascertain the role of foster care drift on foster care children's transition out of foster care (adulthood).

1.7.2.4 To establish the recommendations on effective transition out of foster care system.

1.8 Research Questions

1.8.1 Main Question

What is the influence of foster care drift on foster care children's transitioning out of foster care into adulthood?

1.8.2 Sub Questions

1.8.2.1 What is the nature and extent of foster care in Ugu District Municipality?

1.8.2.2 What is the extent of foster care drift in Ugu District Municipality?

1.8.2.3 How does foster care drift influence transition into adulthood?

1.8.2.4 What are the recommendations on effective transition out of foster care system?

1.9 Research Methodology

A research methodology can be understood as the selection and the application of scientific research processes or methods or steps undertaken by the researcher when selecting the research approach, research design, research paradigm, sampling strategies, data collection tools and analysis methods relevant to the study (Jonker & Pennink, 2010).

1.9.1 Research Paradigm

Christensen and Johnson (2014) define a research paradigm as a worldview or perspective about research held by a community of researchers that is based on a set of shared assumptions, concepts, values and practices. The quantitative methodology is described as mostly aligned with the post-positivist paradigm, to a less extent (Fekede, 2010). Most quantitative researchers often operate under the assumption of objectivity. It is worth indicating that this study was conceptualised and underpinned within the post-positivism paradigm. Post-positivism paradigm was found relevant in examining the influence of foster care drift on transitioning out of foster care. Researchers working

from post-positivist paradigm follow a critical realist ontology and they believe that reality exists but can never be perfectly understood (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

1.9.2. Research Approach

Quantitative research is regarded as the process that is systematic and objective in its way of using numerical data from only selected subgroup of a population to generalise the findings to the population that is being studied. Mujis (2004) asserts that quantitative research (i) explains phenomena, (ii) data is collected in numerical form and it is analysed using mathematically based methods and (iii) the data has to be in numerical form. Therefore, quantitative research approach was used to examine the influence foster care drift on transitioning out of care using the triangulation of the life course theory and the transition theory.

1.9.3 Research Design

Research design can be described as the plan or strategy that moves from the underlying philosophical assumption to specifying the selection of participants, the data gathering methods to be used and the data analysis to be done (Bless, Higson & Kagee, 2006). Descriptive studies are useful for describing how one phenomenon is related to another in a situation where the researcher has no control over the independent variables, the variables that are believed to be dependent outcomes (Lappe, 2000). Therefore, cross-sectional descriptive design was used in the study to examine the influence of foster care drift on transitioning out of foster care.

1.9.4 Sampling Strategy

Stratified random sampling was used to select the sample of the population of the study. The population of the study was made up of youth who aged out of foster care in the year 2018. Year, 2018 was chosen because the age of 18 years is regarded as the age of maturity as provided by the Children's Act and this is the critical time in their lives as it marks the end of childhood and the beginning of emerging adulthood. It should be noted that, for certain reasons, the Children's Act provides that some of the children

remain in care beyond age 18 and up to 21 years. Using a stratified sampling, 167 respondents were proportionally selected from six child welfare organisations within the Ugu District Municipality: Umzumbe Child Welfare, Ekubusisweni Child Welfare, Umzinto Child Welfare, Vulamehlo Child Welfare, Margate Child Welfare and Izingolweni Child Welfare.

1.9.5 Data Collection Instrument

A survey was applied to collect data, with the questionnaires used as a data collection instrument. Neuman (2014) argues that in a survey study, people often act normally as survey does not manipulate a situation or condition in order to influence people's reactions. During survey, answers are recorded carefully from various people who are asked the same questions. The sample in this study was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The questionnaire was structured into four sections, which covered the biographical data, the nature and extent of foster, the experience of foster care drift and the transition out of foster care.

1.9.6 Methods of Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse data. This tool was viewed as relevant because it is user-friendly and that it allows various statistical tests to be conducted. In this regard, the basic statistical analysis, involving both frequency distribution and cross tabulation were used. They were considered relevant in determining the influence of the foster care drift on transitioning out of foster care.

1.10. Potential Value of the Study

- Awareness and insight on the influence of foster care drift on transition, is essential in preparing practitioners to assist foster care children to effectively transition to adulthood.
- The study aims to contribute towards influencing policies, interventions and guidelines on the preparation of children who exit foster care and to improve the outcomes of foster care children.

- The study further intended to contribute towards bridging the gap between theory and practice, with the focus literature on foster care around lack of insight on the extent of foster care drift and transition to adulthood. This involves acknowledgement and explanation on emerging adulthood as the transition phase between childhood and adulthood, and how the challenges experienced during foster care impact on the transition of children into adulthood.
- The study involved the perspectives of individuals who have been through the foster care system within the South African context. By so doing, the individuals who were affected by the phenomenon were provided a voice on issues affecting them.

1.11 Limitations of the study

- The study primarily focused on youth who aged out of foster care in 2018 irrespective of age. While the majority aged out at 19 years, there were cases of those who aged out up to age 21 years, these were different from one organisation to another. Those who aged out before 2018 yet still experiencing emerging adulthood stage and out of the system longer were not considered. Their inclusion could have provided a different perspective on transition trajectory out of care as their circumstances might have changed for the better or gotten worse.
- Those who were serviced by the Child and Youth Care Centres (CYCC) were not considered in this study, since CYCC are residential facilities. The exclusion of the youth in CYCC is a limitation in such that this is another category of the care leavers who are often forced out of care as a result of reaching the age of maturity. Their inclusion in the study could have provided diverse views on the foster care drift and transitioning out of care.
- The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional research design, therefore the underlying contributory factors as well as the intervention measures in mitigating the influence of foster care drift on transitioning to adulthood were not explored as they were beyond the scope of the study.

- The non-availability and use of the scale measuring effective transition posed a limitation on the study. The study was limited such that it relied on the developed questionnaire and the use of basic statistical analysis involving the frequency distribution and cross tabulation. As a result, no dominant statistical tests were conducted to confirm or disconfirm the significant statistical relationship between foster care drift and transitioning out of care.

1.12 Definition of concepts

- Foster care drift - is defined as the extended stay in foster care of a child without attaining family re-unification or permanency during the out of home placement after parental rights have been terminated (Freitas, Freitas & Bourmil, 2004).
- Foster care - is a social service program that provides temporary, substitute, outof-home care to children whose families cannot provide them with a safe and nurturing environment (Fortune, 2016).
- Emerging adulthood - the age of possibilities when many different plans remain possible and when little about person's future has been decided for certain (Arnett, 2000).
- Kinship – is any living arrangement in which children do not live with either of their parents and are instead cared for by a relative someone with whom they had prior relation (Green, 2004).
- Ageing out of care - generally refers to young people leaving care because they have reached the age of maturity (Dinisman, 2014).

1.13 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter one: Introduction

The chapter introduces the study, provides the background of the study, and outlines the aims and objectives of the study to give an overview of the study.

Chapter two: Literature review

This section focuses on literature review on the current knowledge determined through research projects. Gaps in literature on what has been written on topic and what has not been written were identified. The theoretical framework, comprised of two theories, that underpin the study are discussed as well.

Chapter three: Research methodology data collection

This chapter focuses on the research methods, designs, strategies and tools used in the study, to collect data and data analysis methods. Issues of validity and ethical considerations, which are critical in social science research, are addressed.

Chapter four: Presentation and analysis of findings

In this chapter, the findings of the study undertaken are presented and interpreted.

Chapter five: Discussions

In this chapter, the discussions of the findings emanating from the previous chapter are presented. The findings are supported by literature and the relevant theories underpinning the study.

Chapter six: Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter presents the conclusion and the recommendations that emerged from the study.

1.14 Conclusion

This chapter provides the overview of the entire study and it provides a general orientation of the study. The rationale, research problem, goals and objectives of the study are presented. The research questions, objectives as well as the research methodology are presented.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the relevant literature, other empirical studies that are related to this study and the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The literature review focuses on three areas, namely: foster care system and process, foster care drift and transition. Lastly, the theoretical framework underpinning the study is presented and the gaps in literature are identified.

2.2 Foster care system and process

2.2.1 Background of the South African foster care system post 1994

South Africa has the largest social grant system in Southern Africa (Hall & Proudlock, 2011). Due to the impact of HIV and AIDS, South Africa has the largest number of orphans in the care of extended family members as compared to other countries. It is argued that between 2002-2006 the number of orphans had exponentially increased by 750,000 (Mentjes, JohnLangban & Berry, 2008). South Africa witnessed a decline in the number of orphans as it is estimated that in 2017, there were 2.8 million orphans in South Africa (Winter, 2018), where one in five had lost one or both parents (Gelders, 2011). 19 579,000 of those orphans were placed in foster care (Winter, 2018). Hall et al., (2016) assert that prior to the era of HIV and AIDS pandemic in South Africa the number of children in foster care remained below 50,000 for decades. However, as a result of the influence of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, the number of orphans grew rapidly (Halket, 2003) and this number had increased by 750,000 between 2002-2006 (Mentjes, JohnLangba & Berry, 2008). Hall et al., (2016) provide clarity that it was around year 2000 when South Africa witnessed the sharp increase in the number of orphans as a result of HIV and AIDS. This sharp increase is credited to the government failure to roll out the antiretroviral treatment. This position created a concern about the stance of orphans. Furthermore, the number of maternal orphans doubled.

The stance of orphans created a continued need for substitute care for children who require protection (Halkett, 2003). Between 2002 and 2009, the number of orphans increased from half a million to over a million, after which the trends were reversed as a result of the access to antiretroviral treatment (Witter, 2018). As a result of HIV and AIDS and the political transition after 1994, the South African child protection experienced transformations with the introduction of the new policies and attempts to adapt a Western model of intervention (Schmid, 2012). The transition from the post-colonial South Africa paved way for the adoption and the implementation of the welfare approach. Strydom, Schiller and Orme (2020) assert that the White Paper of 1997 and Integrated Service Delivery Model were instrumental in the development and adoption of the welfare approach. The welfare approach was aimed at addressing the social inequalities created by the apartheid system. In 2002, an era characterized by an increase in the number of orphans, the then Minister of Social Development, Dr. Zola Sikweyiya, championed for the welfare approach, which was also adopted and supported by politicians and policy makers (Hall et al., 2016). The welfare approach became the means for orphans who were in the long-term care of relatives to access foster care grant. Due to the approach, the welfare system came under pressure as it saw the influx of orphans who were in the long-term care of relatives (Pretorius & Ross, 2010; Lofell, 2008). Hall et al., (2016) points out that by 2010, more than 500,000 children were in foster care, 80% of those were orphans. This number was ten times the number that the system had previously accommodated. Hall et al., (2016:71) observed that “this overwhelmed the welfare system and therefore social workers did not have the capacity to deal with hundreds of thousands of foster care placements as well as other social work-related services”. Zulu et al., (2017) claim that the welfare system has crushed because it is not an appropriate vehicle to support family care of orphans. Zulu et al., (2017) point out that the decision to place orphans in foster care was ad hoc and unplanned as it was attached to the existing under resourced system.

2.2.2. Foster care placement

Children in foster care are a vulnerable population because they face various challenges (Avery, 2010). The vulnerability of children may be a result of neglect and abuse or exploitation perpetuated within their families and from individuals they come across in their day-to-day lives (Working

Together to Safeguard Children, 2018). Children found to be in need of care and protection are placed in foster care (Hall et al., 2016; Sims et al., 2000). Literature seems to concur on the notion that children and adolescents living in foster care often experience adversities such as physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, parental psychopathology and family breakdown (Sims et al., 2000; Birneanu, 2013). Every year, millions of children are abused or neglected; approximately 300,000 are removed from their homes by the state and placed in foster care (Bass, Behrman & Shields, 2004). According to Hall et al., (2016:68), when children are placed in foster care, they are “placed with substitute families because family home contexts are considered preferable to institutions as alternative care environments for children”. Bass et al., (2004) concur with the notion that children do best when they live in safe, stable, and nurturing families. Birneanu (2013) argues that the best interest of a child at the beginning of his or her life is to have a family able to satisfy the most basic needs for a healthy development, a family able to love and respect him or her. Bass et al., (2004) supports this notion and further argue that although a family provides fundamental foundation in a child’s life, it is however, disappointing to find that far too many children lack this fundamental foundation. Hence, children are at risk of abuse and maltreatment.

When parents or close family members fail to protect children, the state ought to intervene, hence protection of children is the responsibility of the state. Child protection is provided within the parameters of the national, international laws, and instruments. The Children’s Act (Act 38 of 2005) is in line with section 28(2) of the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996). When children are vulnerable and or exposed to risk they are then removed from parental care and placed in foster care as a form of alternative placement as mandated by the Children’s Act. Their care and protection becomes the responsibility of the state as the state has authority over them (Hall et al., 2016). Wallis (2014) asserts that when the child is in state care, the state has jurisdiction over a minor. According to Bass, et al., (2004:8), “when the state assumes custody of a child, in effect the government is stating that it can do a better job of protecting and providing for this child than his or her birth parents”. When children are removed from their homes either by voluntary agreement or by court order the state child welfare agencies are charged with providing board and maintenance (Duncan & Argys, 2007). Wallis (2014) further asserts that through the courts, decisions are made on whether (i) the child should be returned to his or her parents; (ii) parents’ rights should be terminated and the minor be placed for

adoption; (iii) another person should obtain legal guardianship; or (iv) the child should be placed with a family member or in another arrangement that is in the minor's best interests.

Fortune (2016:12) states that “foster care embraces a statutory process. It is a social service program that provides temporary, substitute, out-of-home care to children whose families cannot provide them with a safe and nurturing environment”. Foster care seeks to ensure the protection of vulnerable children (Chipungu & Bent-Godley, 2004), until a permanent home can be re-established (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2009). Foster care is the substitute family care for children who cannot be adequately cared for at their home of origin (Fortune, 2016) and who are not available for adoption (Children's Institute, 2000). Children are placed with another family that voluntarily agrees to care for and educate them for a certain period, normally until they can return to their families or be placed with an adoptive family (López et al., 2011). Foster care is temporal placement whilst parents are assisted with re-unification efforts (Atkinson, 2008; McNamara-Barry & Steffe, 2012). Thus, “for children in foster care, reunification with birth parents is often the goal to permanency and most likely the reason the child to leave the placement” (Wulczyn, 2004:96). Fernandes-Alcantara (2009) brings forth the notion that family re-unification is not always possible or feasible for some children. Fernandes-Alcantara (2009) further elaborates that in instances where re-unification is not possible or appropriate as determined by the children's court, a new permanent home for the child should be sought. Bass et al., (2004) concur that in those instances where family reunification is not possible the state is not required to pursue re-unification. In such circumstances, alternative permanency options such as adoption or legal guardianship are the goal for these children. However, for children placed in kinship care, family re-unification, adoption or legal guardianship are not feasible, hence, they linger in care until they age out. Children's Institute, (2000) gives clarity that these options are not possible only because orphans are placed in foster care merely because of the economic benefit. Therefore, orphans placed in kinship care often drift in care without stability nor permanency until they age out. A child in foster care should be returned to the parental care as soon as possible. Therefore, the child should keep contact with the biological parents except when there are serious concerns about the child's safety (Gauthier et al., 2004). The parents, therefore, need to be prepared for the return of a child, through re-unification services. Social work services are crucial in ensuring the facilitation of re-unification services (Section 187 of

the Children's Act). Children can only be returned to parental care when the circumstances have been assessed and have been found to be suitable and conducive for the upbringing of the child. Based on the circumstances of the child's removal and the characteristics of the family and child, the agency may determine whether reunification is the primary goal (Duncan & Argys, 2007).

Children placed in foster care do not only deal with traumatic conditions or events that resulted in their placement in foster care. For example, chronic trauma involves prolonged physical or sexual abuse, exposure to family violence, or war (Schiller, 2015). "Childhood traumatic stress resulting from this type of exposure may include intense feelings of distrust, fear for personal safety, guilt, and shame" (Fortune, 2016:12). Furthermore, the children that go through traumatic experiences have to cope with adjustment to life in alternative care (Child Welfare Report, 2013). Children who have suffered trauma generally present with cognitive, social, physical, and emotional vulnerabilities (Berardi & Morton, 2017).

Due to these traumatic experiences, they have increased susceptibility for further wounds from unstable environments created in foster care that continue to increase the vulnerability of this already fragile population (Harden, 2004). When children are removed, they are separated from parents and significant others. The loss of a parent is arguably one of the most distressing experiences for a child especially when the loss is through state intervention. It creates a "divorce" scenario in which children are removed from their family, friends, and environments with no sense of closure. This can lead to an irreparable sense of loss that can stunt development and lead to behavioral problems (Schiller, 2015).

Provision of foster care is underpinned under the Social welfare approach. Loffel (2008) states that the Social welfare approach adopted by the South African government post 1994 saw the use of court-ordered foster care as the chief means of support for the spiraling numbers of orphans and vulnerable children who are in the long-term care of relatives. These children are often placed in foster care due to death or incapacitation of parents due to HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, hundreds of thousands of children who would otherwise be exposed to the worst ravages of poverty have gained access to financial support in the form of the state Foster Care Grant. This approach has swamped the child protection system.

The Children's Act (38 of 2005), section 150(1) (a) regards the orphaned, abandoned and children without any visible means of support as the children in need of care and protection. Furthermore, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa stipulates that every child has a right to have his or her basic needs met. Pretorius and Ross (2010) view foster care in South Africa as predominantly based on kinship foster care where the foster care system is overburdened with relatives and grandparents being expected to support the increasing numbers of OVCs. Furthermore, kinship care is mostly formalized through court order as a way of accessing foster care grants as most families care for orphaned and vulnerable children and families are poverty-stricken. Consequently, more children are unnecessarily removed from their families and placed into strangers' foster care because of poverty related issues rather than intentional maltreatment that is typically associated with abuse and neglect (Wallis, 2014).

2.2.3 Legislative Mandates on child protection

Fortune (2016:1) describes South Africa's legislative framework as, "in general, protective of children and their rights and that there have been significant developments, since South Africa ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 2000". In child protection, the principle of the best interests of the child is fundamental and as such it is one of the four pillars of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Centre of Child Law, 2014). Non-discrimination (article 2), survival and development (article 6), child participation (article 12) and article 3(1) provides that whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration (Convention on the Rights of the Child). The best interest of the child's principle is also included in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). In the ACRWC, the best interest of the child is not only paramount, but also the primary consideration setting a higher standard than the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In the South African context child protection is provided within the parameters of the national, international laws, and instruments. The Children's Act is in line with section 28(2) of the Constitution of South Africa (1996). The policies on child protection are determined by social welfare approach, White Paper for Social Welfare (1996) amongst other instruments. The

Children's Act (Act 38/2005) mandates child protection in South Africa. Section 150 (1) of the Children's Act (Act 38/2005), identifies different instances in which a child is said to be in need of care and protection. These range from being abandoned or orphaned and being without visible means of support to being maltreated or deliberately neglected or degraded by a parent, care giver, person who has the parental responsibilities and the rights, or a family member or by a person under whose control the child is. Section 110 of the Children's Act provides for the enforcement of child protection in South Africa and mandatory reporting of child abuse. Foster care is rendered in terms of section 180 of the Act and the child is released from the provisions of the Act in terms of Section 175 of the Act (Act 38/2005). The principle of the best interest of the child and the child participation are the cornerstone of the provision of child protection services. The principle 'the best interest of the child' is captured in both the Constitution and the section seven of the Children's Act. The Act states that when the child is placed in foster care the need for a child to be brought up within a stable family environment and where not possible, in an environment resembling, as closely as possible a caring family environment must be considered. The Act also states that in all matters concerning the care, protection, and wellbeing of the child the standard that the child's best interest is paramount, must be applied. The Act further identifies a number of factors that must be considered in determining the best interest of the child. These factors range from the nature of personal relationship between the child and the parent or the caregiver to action or decision that would avoid or minimize harm and further legal or administrative proceedings in relation to the child. The aspect of the age of the child, level of maturity and stage of development are critical in determining the best interest of the child.

Foster care is temporary and the court order placing a child in foster in terms of section 156 is issued for not more than two years. Foster care is temporal in nature in such that children must be effectively removed from the system (Zwas, 1993). This order maybe extended for a period not exceeding two years in terms of Section 159. Section 159 (1) makes provision for the child to remain in the system when the circumstances are not conducive or do not allow for the removal of the child from the system. Hence Hall et al., (2016:68) affirm that "this requires a reconsideration of the placement, involving a home visit by a social worker, and the social worker must present a written report at the children's court where the order is extended". In the

event that the child reached the age of maturity as determined by the Act but still in need of care and protection, the Act makes the provision for the young person to remain in foster care beyond the age of 18 up until the age of 21 years. The existing court order may be extended for the period not exceeding one year in terms of section 176. Section 175 of the Act provides for the release of the child from the provisions of the Act and the state is no longer legally obliged to take any further responsibility towards the child. When the young person ages out of foster care, all the foster care related services are terminated.

2.3 Foster care drift

Amongst other social ills, children are placed in foster care as a result of abuse or neglect (Zetlin et al., 2010; Hall et al., 2016) and loss of one or both parents (Hall et al., 2016; Winter, 2018). In South Africa, the vast majority of children are placed in foster care because of the loss of one or both parents (Hall et al., 2016; Winter, 2018). Foster care aspires to realise safety, permanency and well-being of children in need of care and protection (Chipungu & BentGoodley, 2008). Evidence from other studies demonstrate that for the majority of children in foster care, foster care is not a safe haven (Doyle, 2007). Foster children are invisible population, and they are shuffled through life as they are moved from one foster care placement to another (Berardi & Morton, 2017) and linger in care while awaiting a permanent placement (Bass et al., 2004). Therefore, foster care does not equal stability for all children. Some children experience quite complex placement courses, consisting of many shorter placements (Andersen, 2014). Foster care placement itself can have a traumatic effect on children, causing them to feel a sense of loss, fear, abandonment, isolation, helplessness, and confusion (Finkelstein, 2002).

Unrau, Seita, & Putney (2010) defines foster care drift as the number and patterns of placement moves in foster care without reaching permanency. Zwas (1993); McNamara-Barry and Steffe (2012) concur by stating that during their long stay in foster care system, children tend to experience multiple placements as they often move from one temporary placement to another. It is said that the foster care drift has two dimensions, namely physical move, and a psychological move. When children pack their belongings and move from one foster home to the next, they are moving physically. Psychological move happens when children adapt to the

new environment, form new relationships with the new foster family, and make new friends in their new school.

Anderson et al., (2012) assert that psychological move necessitates the abandonment of one's set of assumptions and the development of a fresh set to enable the individual to cope with the new altered life space. For the foster child that moves from one place to another, earlier social relations are lost. Moving to another place involves adapting to a different social and physical environment: learning new house rules, adapting to new residents, often going to a new school, and developing a new social network. Adaptation is challenging to any young person and the constant move negatively affects the stability of the child, sense of belonging and attachment to the primary caregiver (Strijker et al., 2008).

Although foster care is meant to be temporary, it has become a permanent solution, as children are not effectively removed from the system. Prior to ageing out of care children spend substantial part of their lives being raised in foster care which is a system that was designed to be temporal (McNamara-Berry & Steffe, 2012; Propp, Ortega & NewHeart, 2005). The temporal nature of foster care implies that children must be effectively removed from the system and be re-unified with family of origin (Zwas, 1993). Foster care often fails to provide children in foster care with stability and continuity they need (McNamara- Berry & Steffe, 2012). Social work services aimed at facilitating re-unification services are crucial to ensure that children are returned to their family of origin as soon as possible (Section 187 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005). However, children may spend their entire childhood cycling through various temporary foster care placements before aging out, without ever being reunified with their families of origin or finding an adoptive home (Atkinson, 2008). When a child repeatedly changes from one environment to another, it may have great consequences for the child's well-being and functioning (Berardi & Morton, 2017). Children with a high number of placements are known to experience decreased likelihood of reunification (Trivedi, 2019) and their vulnerability to foster care drift increases (Usher, Randolph & Gogan, 1999).

Re-unification, adoption and or legal guardianship are not feasible or possible for orphans as they access foster care system because of economic benefit (Hall et al., 2017). Therefore, the nonavailability of these options exacerbate the probabilities of foster care drift and diminishes the

chances of them exiting the system. Therefore, orphans placed in kinship care often drift in care without stability or permanency until they age out. Zwas (1993) argues that the purpose of foster care legislation is undermined when children stay longer in foster care system, and are not effectively removed. When children are removed from their homes and placed in foster care as a result of abuse or neglect or at the request of the parent, state child welfare agencies are charged with developing a foster care case plan that is in the best interests of the child (Duncan & Argys, 2007). The welfare agencies are required to develop and implement the legal permanency plan to prevent children from languishing in out of home care (Waid, Kothari, Bank & McBeath, 2016; Bass et al., 2004). Children who experience foster care placement change are at greater risk of experiencing lengthy stays in care (Webster, Barth & Needell, 2000), and the implications for wellbeing can be substantial (Waid et al., 2016). Unnecessary placement change is therefore a serious issue for child welfare organizations, and the implications for child well-being are significant (Waid et al., 2016). Atkinson (2008) argues that foster care drift defeats the purpose of the foster care because the short-term measure had become the long-term solution. The temporary nature of foster care is based on the child's welfare's fundamental assumption that children grow and function best in nurturing, stable and lifelong families (Atkinson, 2008).

Foster care drift challenges the view that young children in foster care experience a relatively normal upbringing (McNamara-Berry & Steffe, 2012). Literature seems to concur with the notion that the longer the child remains in foster care, the greater the probabilities of foster care drift (McNamara- Barry & Steffe, 2012; Doyle, 2007; Trivedi, 2019; Atkinson, 2008; Bass et al., 2004). Through these empirical studies, it is critical to note that foster care brings forth the notion of instability and attachment issues as results of drifting from one temporal foster care to the next. For children in foster care, the number of placements can impact the daily functioning and adjustment of the child as well as the child welfare agency's ability to move the child to permanent placement in a timely manner (Sudol, 2010). In the South African context, foster care drift is the unintended consequence of welfare approach. This is based on the view that foster care is temporal in nature (Atkinson, 2008; McNamara-Berry & Steffe, 2012); as such the system was not designed for orphans rather for children, who were abused, abandoned, and neglected (Zulu et al., 2017). As a result of the welfare approach, orphans accessed the system and stayed longer in care as they could not be effectively removed from

the system. The socio– economic circumstances surrounding their placement in care did not allow the attainment of permanency goal. The long stay was regulated in terms of section of 159 and 176 of the Children’s Act, which made them vulnerable to foster care disruptions or interruptions. As a result, orphans often remain in foster care system until they age out. Empirical studies also revealed that children who experience initial instability have higher rates of further instability and are less likely to find permanent homes or to be reunified with their biological families (Trived, 2019; Andersen, 2014). Trived (2019) argues that instability in foster homes result in a vicious cycle wherein those who begin with foster home instability are unable to recover from it and continue to face disruptions throughout their time in care. Multiple placements may intensify existing trauma and make it difficult for children to develop relationships with primary caregivers or significant others in their lives (Doyle, 2007). “Once removed from one dangerous or neglectful environment, a child confronting further disruption through numerous placement failures is likely to experience difficulties trusting adults or forming attachments with adults and children” (Newton, Litrownik & Landsverk, 2000:1364).

According to Simms et al. (2000:911), “a child’s experience before placement plays a significant role in determining how he or she will fare emotionally in foster care”. The previous psychological experience negatively affects the child’s ability to form healthy attachments to others and long-term relationships are negatively affected (Strijker et al., 2008). Multiple placements produce unstable relationships that can negatively affect the ability of children to attach to significant others (Usher et al., 1999). Finkelstein, Wamsley and Miranda (2002) assert that the previous research shows that instability manifests in children in long-term foster care as they were doubtful about the stability of their placements.

Research brings to the fore the realisation of the negative long-term effects of foster care drift. Trived, (2019) notes that the frequent moves where children are passed from one foster home to another with no steadfastness of love, trust or discipline have tangible negative consequences and result in worse outcomes for child leading to long-term negative effects of foster care drift. Since many experience multiple placements, each school transfer brings a completely new set of adjustments that may impede both academic progress and social relations (Finkelstein et al., 2002).

2.4 Transition Process

2.4.1 Transition to adulthood

Backlay (2017) explains transition is a process that takes place over time rather than at one point in time and that every transition begins with an ending. Juarez and Gayet (2015) state that as results of the dynamic nature of transition in the developing and developed countries, scholars have proposed uniform criteria to define transition to adulthood. Therefore, transition to adulthood is defined by the “change in status within a group of life spheres among which education, work, residency and family formation are of particular importance” (Juarez & Gayet, 2015:522). It is worth noting that the definition by Backlay (2017) highlights that transition ‘begins with an ending’ whilst Juarez and Gayet (2015) highlight the ‘change in status’. This means that change is the predominant aspect during transition. Hall (2012:4) notes that “transitioning from out of home care to adult life is a change process involving a number of phased or staged series of events. The most obvious transition point is that young person reaches the age of maturity where the legal landscape alters dramatically, and he or she is expected to assume adult legal rights and responsibilities”. The “legal landscape” aspect raised by Hall (2012) could be dissected as referring to transition out of care to adulthood (discharged from the provisions of the Children’s Act) and transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood (attaining the status of adulthood) respectively. Therefore, it can be argued that legal implications are paramount in determining the transition trajectory and cannot be disregarded.

Youth transitioning out of care is referred to as the population that was legally separated or disconnected from the family of origin and habitually invisible in the child welfare system (Propp et al., 2005). For the majority of people, transition to adulthood takes place during the late teens to the 20s. It is critical to note that during this period transition does not only take place as an incident but is more skewed to the sense of one reaching adulthood (Arnett, 1998, 2001, 2003 cited in Arnett, 2007). When children are placed in foster as a result of removal from parental care or the loss of one or both parent(s) they are viewed as transitioning. Mnisi & Botha (2005:227) point out that “the placement of children in alternative care has an entry and an exit point”. As determined by Mnisi and Botha (2005), the removal of children from family of origin or the loss of a parent (s) is regarded as the entry point as it denotes the end of

parental care and the beginning of the state care. Schiller (2015) asserts that when children are removed, they are separated from parents and significant others. Removal of children from parental care exposes them to trauma (Schiller, 2015), even when the family was abusive (Simms et al., 2000). Foster care transition is unplanned and can be abrupt (Simms et al., 2000; Backlay, 2017).

During the transition passage, young people compete with multiple opportunities and challenges that can have important implications over the life course (Keller et al., 2007). Osgood, Foster and Courtney (2010) point to how an adolescent fare during the transition to adulthood as having long-term repercussions. The period of emerging adulthood presents challenges and opportunities that have the potential to affect one's adjustment not only during the transition period but also later in the development as well (Cook - Fong, 2000).

When foster youth age out of the child welfare system, they are confronted with challenges associated with this developmental stage and are at risk of having to transition without family support (Greenson, 2013). Literature seem to concur with the notion that the age of maturity is a challenging time for children in foster. More often, they navigate transition out of foster care into adulthood and forced to face this time alone with relatively little or no support as compared to other children in the general population (Greenson, 2013; Courtney & Dworsky, 2006; Osgood et al., 2010).

The challenges they confront and the multiple public systems that provide services whilst in care should be taken into consideration when describing this vulnerable population. These challenges often constrain their opportunities before and during transition to adulthood (Osgood et al., 2010). The lack of services for children placed in foster care puts them in jeopardy. This jeopardy is aggravated by the problems in the biological families and or poor adjustment to the disruption of being moved into or out of home care (Cook –Fong, 2000). Atkinson (2008) asserts that no one expects childhood to occur overnight but that is exactly what happens to youth exiting foster care system.

To a youth in foster care, reaching the age of maturity at the age of eighteen is determined by the state (Juarez & Gayet, 2015). The age of maturity means that the young person losses

everything. The youth no longer has housing, health care, financial assistance or a social worker to call during emergencies (Atkinson, 2008). Kimberlin et al., (2008) confirm that reaching the age of eighteen or twenty-one may end eligibility for services, sometimes abruptly. Osgood et al., (2010) assert that the eligibility cut offs are increasingly problematic because most other young people their age continue to depend on others and need support and training, often for many years. Furthermore, the ‘cut off’ means that youth leave systems customized for clients their age. In the event that they need more services, they are eligible to systems that serve much older people. These services are not tailored towards addressing the special needs of young adults (Osgood et al., 2010). Sadly, overnight the youth ageing out of foster care is abandoned or on his own without a safety net and with little preparation for adulthood. However, for the youth in the general population transition is a slow gradual process with plenty of room for mistakes (Furstenberg, Sheela; McLoyd, Rumbaut & Settersten, 2004).

The sad truth about adolescence who age out foster care is that this tricky situation happens quickly and one false move could potentially trap them into a dangerous and detrimental lifestyle (Martin, 2015). It is argued that transition occurs over time (Backlay, 2017) and entails change and adaptation for example situational, societal, or environmental change (Martin, 2015). Youth ageing out of foster care spent most of their lives in foster care and generally comes from families with multiple problems, rarely have access to the sustained support provided by means of biological families (Martin, 2015). The family safety net for young people ageing out of foster care may be either problematic or non-existent or best capable of episodic support (Collins, 2001).

Schlossberg’s transition theory identifies elements of transition as moving in, moving through, and moving out. Children ageing out of foster care go through and or are exposed to these elements from the moment they are removed from parental care until they age out of foster care. When children are removed from parental care and placed in foster care they are transitioning, and are regarded as ‘moving in’. Transition begins with an ending (Backlay, 2017), therefore removal of children from parental care and placing them in foster care means that their care and protection is no longer the responsibility of the parents (the end) but that of the state. The result of removing these children from their birth families and having public agencies assume parental rights of this population means that these public agencies have

responsibility for the well-being of this population (Zetlin et al., 2010). Child welfare agencies assume responsibility when foster youth are removed from their biological families (Havlicek, 2011). Furthermore, Zetlin et al., (2010), ascertain that when they reach the age maturity, they are no longer the responsibility of the state (end). Kimberlin et al., (2008) state that when they become legal adults, at age 18 years in most states, these young people “emancipate” or “age out” of the foster care system. Attaining adulthood status means that they are no longer legal dependents of the state; they lose their entitlement to state-provided housing, board, medical care and supervision and must find a way to support themselves on their own. The services these vulnerable populations received as children and adolescents often end during the transition to adulthood, even if the need for them continues and even if current life circumstances present obvious difficulties (Osgood et al., 2010).

Youth transitioning out of care, do not only face many challenges, they also face drastic change from being cared for under the state care to being on their own (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013). Youth leaving care do not have a choice of whether they can remain in care or not, age of maturity forces them out of the system (Hall, 2012). This indicates the end of the state care and the beginning of self-reliance and independent living. Transition is regarded as an unplanned and unanticipated event or non-event and that child often change roles (Barklays, 2017). Therefore, children in foster care could be viewed as moving in when they are removed from parental care and placed in foster care. Nevertheless, Propp et al., (2005) dispute the notion that transition out of care is “unexpected”. The argument is based on the elementary assertion that youth transitioning of out foster care are an overlooked population in the welfare system. The argument is founded on the notion that prior to ageing out, the welfare system should recognise relationship deficit with either family of origin or foster family. This vigilantism is crucial in identifying social support that is likely to be problematic and consider other options in preparing adolescents to transition. Argued is the fact that the age of maturity is regulated with predictable legal landscape and ramifications. This means that the year upon exiting foster care system is well known and in advance, yet the deficiency in the system renders it unexpected. The unexpected notion seems to validate and normalise the failure of the system to prepare for the exit out of the system.

Moving through transition demands that foster care children constantly adapt to the new and unfamiliar environment (Sims et al, 2000). Barth (1999) argues that individuals placed in the foster care are in jeopardy because of service they may not have received in foster care, problems in their biological family or poor adjustments to the disruptions of being moved into or out of home care. Living in foster care system can be trying for both the foster parent and children. It is argued that foster care experience from the child's perspective can be emotionally traumatic, and it is associated with detrimental developmental outcomes and lower educational achievement.

Schulenberg, Sameroff and Cicchetti (2004:799) note, "transition from adolescence to adulthood is one of the most critical normative life transitions because it typically involves pervasive and often simultaneous contextual and social role changes". It is normative in such that it is based on the stages of development. Ageing out of foster care refers to children who were in the foster care system when they reached the age of maturity. However, those who are still schooling and still in need of care and protection may remain in foster care until they reach the age of 21 years. In South Africa, children ageing out of foster care are released from the provision of Children's Act in terms of section 175. Atkinson (2008) agrees that youth in foster care reaching the age of maturity, typically rest at the age of 18 and means loss of everything. The youth has no housing anymore, no health care, no financial assistance or a social worker to call during emergencies. This means that the youth is abandoned overnight without safety nets and with little preparation for adulthood (Atkinson, 2008). Furthermore, Zetlin et al., (2010) ascertain that when they reach the age maturity, they are no longer the responsibility of the state (end). This means the end of the state care and the beginning of self-reliance and independent living. Emancipation, also called "aging out" is defined as the age at which the formal relationship of the state to the child under guardianship is ended (Berzin, Singer & Kimberly, 2014).

Atkinson (2008) argues that for former foster care youth, exiting foster care system is often a distressing time when they find themselves unprepared for the hard realities of adulthood. Literature seem to concur on the notion that the transitioning passage is characterised with challenges hence youth who age out of foster care are more likely than their than their peers to suffer from homelessness, or be involved in criminal activities, be uneducated, be unemployed,

experience poverty and lack of proper health care (Atkinson, 2008; Hall, 2012; McNamaraBarry & Steffe, 2012). Youth receive little or no formal preparation from the state. Furthermore, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, the state cut out of all services, after which foster care youth is no longer eligible for any services (Atkinson, 2008). In the South African context, this is the stage where the young person is released from the provisions of the Children's Act in terms of Section 175. The foster parent is relieved from further responsibilities in relation to the child in terms of section 175(3) of the Children's Act.

“Emancipation, therefore, represents a definitive end to a child's time in care and the end of services” (Berzin et al., 2014:618). This means that the young person is on his/her own with limited, or no support from either the foster family or the state (Hall, 2012). Propp et al., (2005:259) assert that “as the youth involved in the child welfare system reach adolescence, and it becomes apparent that some birth families are not going to provide consistent support to them, the case plan becomes an independent living. As the goal of independent living emerges, the focus on fostering connections falls aside, and new focus begins.” This implies that the social worker should be vigilant in recognising deficiency in connections with birth and or foster family and be prudent in devising effective exit strategies. As compared to some European countries, the South African welfare approach was futile in providing exit strategies on how the practitioners must prepare and equip youth to transition from the welfare system to emerging adulthood. The welfare approach – Section 150(1) (a) of the Children's Act (38/2005) regulated entry into the welfare system. Section 175(2) (a) (b) regulated exit for children placed in non-kinship care through family re-unification services. However, in the process the exit out of the system for children in kinship care and or those who will age out of the system was overlooked. The Act failed to make provisions and guidelines as to how and at what age should this young person be prepared to transition from the welfare system to adulthood. Furthermore, there are no systems in place to assist the young person to navigate the exit out of care passage and to facilitate effective transition.

Simms et al., (2000:926) argue that “as adolescents turn 18, they are generally no longer eligible for services through the foster care system, and their foster families may no longer accept responsibility for them. Clearly, this can result in a very difficult transition to independent

living”. The few research studies on substitute care outcomes suggest that many young people leaving care have poor prospects. A recent synthesis of studies concludes the few available studies that track youths who have exited foster care reveal that many have a difficult time making the transition to living on their own. The studies found that a substantial portion of these youths have not attained basic education goals, such as completing high school, and are dependent on public assistance (Collin, 2001). For youth transitioning out of foster care system the world can be a scary place. Youth ageing out of foster care are vulnerable and are with little or no support during the transition period to adulthood (Prettyman, 2016). This author further argues that some youth transitioning out of foster care have negative experiences, while some get great support from the foster families and others are left on their own without a job or adequate skills or opportunities for further education and for meaningful employment. However, Daining and DePanfilis (2007) argue that there is little evidence available to explain factors that may contribute to positive outcomes as most studies focused on transitioning youth have described vulnerability of youth to poor outcomes.

2.4.2 Transition pitfalls

Adult support, financial instability, poor education or vocational opportunities are amongst the hardships facing youth transitioning out of care (Gonzales, 2015). As such, this population transitioning out of care is regarded as the vulnerable population. Copps and Keen (2009) assert that this vulnerability is attributed to the wide range of backgrounds and characteristics of young people. It is critical to note that socio-economic factors are interrelated factors that could exacerbate this vulnerability and impede the transition passage.

Youth transitioning out of care often experience chronic levels of unemployment and they are often not in education nor training. Not in Employment, Education or Training is often used to describe their circumstances (Stats SA, 2020). This conception identifies education, employment and training as significant factors in determining the effective transition into adulthood. “The NEETs are defined, internationally, as young people aged 15-24 years who are not employed and who are not in education or training” (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2017:2). In the South African context, Van Breda and Dickens (2017) concur with the concept of NEET, as the South African youth are no exception to being NEET. This means that

the majority of youth in South Africa are not in employment, not in education nor in training. Kraak (2013) elaborates that NEET is used to highlight the acute levels of unemployment experienced in a particular country. For youth transitioning out of foster care the NEET can be viewed at the transition pitfall and as a result of being NEET, youth transitioning out of foster care do not effectively navigate the transition passage.

Transition can be viewed as the passage from dependence to economic independence. Yet it is argued that successful transition to adulthood is a key challenge facing youth with the socioeconomic background and cultural norms likely to play a significant role in determining successful transition to adulthood (Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). Employment is critical for the realisation of a successful transition to independency and into adulthood. Economic emancipation or lack thereof diminishes the chances of successful transition. The youth unemployment rate is high globally and South Africa is no exception. For the meaningful economic development, young people need a range of skills to succeed in adult world. It is critical to note that transition to adulthood comes with the expectation that they will become self-independent and self-reliant, yet the chronic levels of unemployment for youth poses a great threat to their independence as it continues to hinder the effective transition to independency and self-sufficiency. Mlatsheni and Ranchhod (2017) point out that as a results of long-term unemployment, young people from social and ethnic minorities with high exposure to poverty are at greater risk of social exclusion and or marginalisation. Youth transitioning out of care falls in this category. It is along this notion that employment is regarded as a key area to be considered in servicing youth ageing out of foster care. Stern and Nakamura (2012) assert that it is through preparedness for employment, that they not only benefit financially but also develop important work and relationship skills.

Stern and Nakamura (2012:5) note that “educational attainment is not only a positive outcome on its own but also serves as a valuable resource that supports better outcomes across the number of domains such as employment and economic security”. Stern and Nakamura (2012) are of the view that education alone does not envisage successful transition but rather improves transition chances into adulthood. It worth noting that because of multiple movements and school changes whilst in care, foster care alumni are likely to quit their studies and enter the labour market prematurely (Salazar, 2013). These constant abrupt changes have significant negative impact.

Therefore, children in foster care are likely drop out of school as a result of instability brought about by the abrupt changes. Stern and Nakamura (2012) point out that strategies aimed to minimise changes of school are critical in ensuring uninterrupted schooling and disruptions to learning and are critical for academic success. Foster care alumni enter adulthood with a history of challenges that are likely to contribute to the hardship and jeopardize the chances of effective transition into adulthood. Being out of education, employment or training is often a consequence of these events (Coppes & Keen, 2009). This argument is founded on the basis that many foster youth struggle academically (Casey Family Program, 2008). As a result, many continue to struggle to be self-sufficient and are likely to experience extreme hardships and are likely to receive government benefits (Stern & Nakamura, 2012).

Higher education is associated with substantial adult life benefits including higher income and improved quality of life (Salazar, 2013). “Given the disconcerting employment outcomes for youth after exiting foster care, independent living programs that provide effective career development, employment training and job placement services for youth in care as well as those who have transitioned out are especially important” (Elderstein & Lowenstein, 2014: 3). It is critical to note that the significance of college education has not diminished as it increases one’s chances of security employment. Nevertheless, for foster care alumni, this goal seems out of reach. This is so because although many have educational aspirations, this deficiency continues through emerging adulthood with foster care alumni having lower post-secondary education enrolment and completion thereof (Stern & Nakamura, 2012). This could be attributed to problematic social support, challenges experienced before and in care. Argued is the notion that extended foster care for youth who remained in care beyond the age of 18 until 21 years are prepared for employment through participation in programs that promote employment (Stern & Nakamura, 2012). These employment programs are considered critical in preparing young people exiting foster care for employment. Nonetheless, it is critical to note that not all countries have strategies and opportunities that expose youth exiting foster care to such programs. South Africa is amongst such countries, where such programs are non-existent. The significance of such programs cannot be disputed, as they are deemed helpful in removing employment barriers. This deficiency is apparent in the legislation. Hence, successful transition of these young people is questionable.

2.4.3 Successful transition and emerging adulthood

Transition from adolescents to adulthood is considered a significant stage in a young person's development. This time is distinguished by special risks and opportunities restricted to that period. The age of maturity for many is characterised with privileges and responsibilities to leave home, enter workforce and or higher education and enter long-term romantic relationships (Roisman, Mastern, Coatsworth & Tellegen, 2004). Transition process is considered critical as it is the juncture in the course of psychopathology and mental health, meaning it is a make-or-break stage (Schulenberg et al., 2004). Critical to this is the dynamic scenery of this period and the probability that the majority of the young people navigating this passage might not do so efficiently. According to Wright, Mastern and Narayan (2013), both the core and adaptive resources are viewed as significant factors that predict successful transition to adulthood.

Resilience could be viewed as the crucial ingredient in determining the successful navigation of the transition passage. Wright et al., (2013), further argue that youth in transition who have no access to these resources are at risk of elevated risks of failing to negotiate transition successfully. Furthermore, youth who grow up amid severe and ongoing diversity including those who age out of foster care are especially at risk of poor outcomes during this developmental stage.

That suffices to indicate that the adolescents in most societies are often characterised by development of a set of skills and acquiring certain characteristics in order to become successful and productive adults. Although qualities can be broad in scope and should be specific to youth's unique life circumstances, there are three developmental outcomes in particular that are known to have great significance for the adult success of all American adolescents: (1) receipt of high school and postsecondary degrees; (2) the acquisition of employable skills and abilities; and (3) the development of physical and mental health (Fuligni & Hardway, 2004). That being said, it is crucial to remark that the transition between adolescent to adulthood stage, is not without complexities. During emerging adulthood, most youth receive support to help them endure the difficulties associated with transition into independence (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1994; Schoeni & Ross, 2004). Transition to adulthood is a long and multifaceted journey. Critical in the successful navigation are much enhanced, sustained and continued

support from concerned adults and gradual assumption of responsibilities. Their need for continuing assistance from adults is no doubt greater than that of most other youth (Osgood et al., 2010).

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned within both, Life course theory and Transition theory. Life course theory provides a framework from which it is understood that human development is embedded in the life course stages, relationships and historical times. On the other hand, the study desires to make provision for explaining the personal and social aspects of transition that may be manifested as a result of effective transition. In her study, Blythe (2010) found that life course development and transition theories provide a framework for understanding some common themes affecting people through the ages, and individuals through the stages of their lives. It is in relation to this notion that the study does not only view foster care services as existing within the broader context of child protection, but also acknowledge the period of pre-foster care to exit as part of life-span development. The application of both transition theory and life course theory are viewed as relevant lens for explaining the influence of foster care drift on transitioning out of foster care system.

2.5.1 Life Course Theory

The collective efforts of the three pioneering psychologists in the early twentieth century from the University of California, Berkeley pioneered the Oakland Growth Study during 1920- 1930. It was during this period that these pioneers conducted longitudinal studies that resulted in the emergence of child development. The first longitudinal study on children emerged between 1920-1921 under the directorship of the late Harold and Merry Jonnes. The second study on the Berkeley Guidance from 1928-1929 emerged. The late Jean Macfarlane directed the study. The third Berkeley Growth Study: man-aged emerged between 1928-1929. The late Nancy Bayley directed the study. These three studies saw the emergence of the human research developed and prompted more research over a lifetime (Glen & Elder, 1998). The longitudinal studies were designed to follow the developmental patterns of children and did not extend past childhood. However later many studies were extended into the adult years and beyond, collecting information on education, work, marriage, and parenthood. This wealth of data

prompted a new way of thinking about human lives and development—studying life trajectories across multiple stages of life, recognizing that developmental processes extend past childhood, exploring issues of behavioral continuity and change (Elder, 1994). “Out of these developments came greater recognition that lives are influenced by an ever changing historical and biographical context. Yet a variety of conceptual and methodological tools were still needed in order to study life patterns and their dynamics in time. The life course as a theoretical orientation came from this desire to understand social pathways, their developmental effects, and their relation to personal and social-historical conditions” (Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe, 2003:7). Life course theory provides a framework of studying phenomena at the connection of social pathways, developmental trajectories and social change (Heins & Marshal, 2003).

Life Course theory is underpinned by the five principles. These five principles “steer research away from the age specific studies and towards the recognition of individual choice about decision making. They promote awareness of larger social context and history of the timing of events and role change. They also enhance the understanding that human lives cannot be adequately presented when removed from relationships with significant others. Allowing these principles to guide enquiry promotes the holistic understanding of lives over time and across changing social context” (Elder et al., 2004:13). Elder’s theory establishes an approach that integrates an individual’s life into a social system from birth. Through birth an individual is provided with the immediate membership into (i) familial flow of generations and (ii) a security that exist at a given point in history with its surviving but evolving set of institutions, roles and socially defined life passageways (Bornstein & Lamb, 2011).

2.5.1.1 The principle of Life-Span Development

Understanding developmental processes is advanced by taking a long-term perspective. Development does not end at age 18, rather adults can and do experience fundamental changes—biological, psychological, social that are developmentally meaningful (Elder, Jonson & Crosnoe, 2003; 2004). Heins and Marshal (2003) assert that research and following children into adolescence, adulthood and through late life allows linkages to be made between earlier and late life course experiences.

2.5.1.2 The Principle of Agency

Individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstance. Children, adolescents, and adults are not passively acted upon by social influence and structural constraints. Instead, they make choices and compromises based on the alternatives that they perceive before them (Elder et al., 2003). Elder et al., (2004) further elaborate that the planning and choice making of individuals within the particular limitations of their world can have important consequences for the future trajectories. Clausen (1991) argues that adolescent's planful competence furthers their educational and occupational attachments by their self-confidence, intellectual investment and dependability, which together define planfulness. Adolescents can better prepare themselves for adult roles and will select and be selected for opportunities that give them a head start. Shahanan (2000) points out that planful competence is uniquely concerned with the capacity to select social settings that best match an individual's goals, values, and strengths. Planful competence describes the self's ability to negotiate the life course as it represents a socially structured set of age-graded opportunities and limitations.

2.5.1.3 The Principle of Time and Place

Individuals and birth cohorts are influenced by historical context and place (Elder et al., 2003), where a place is comprised of the geographic location, material form or culture of one kind or another and investment with meaning and value (Gieryn, 2000). The developmental experiences and magnitudes of life transitions, events, behavior patterns vary according to their timing in the person's life (Bornstein & Lamb, 2011).

2.5.1.4 The Principle of Timing

The developmental antecedents and consequences of life transitions, events, and behavioral patterns vary according to their timing in a person's life. The same events or experiences may affect individuals in different ways depending on when they occur in the life course. The very meaning of the event can change at different developmental stage (Elder et al., 2003).

According to Elder's work, social phenomena does not have uniform effects across members of the population namely timing. Both the timing (when they occur) and sequencing patterns

(in what order they occur) of the life events conditions the effects that have on the subsequent life course (Heins et al., 2003). This also exerts clear generalized expectations for when certain events should occur, and normative sanctions not following the socially prescribed timetable. Such events as job loss, widowhood are specifically difficult and potentially disruptive when they happen ‘off time’ (Heins et al., 2003). Early transition to adult statuses, like leaving the parental home at a relatively young age, entering marriage or a cohabiting relationship and becoming a parent have detrimental effects on mental health. Moreover, the studies conducted reveal that young people who became parents early and who experienced ‘pile up’ of transition (multiple transition in the same year) experienced poor mental health compared to the young people who experienced the pile up without early parenthood (Harley & Mortimer, 2000).

2.5.1.5 The Principle of Linked Lives

Often, individuals are affected by larger social changes through the impact that such changes have on their interpersonal contexts within more micro-level settings (Elder et al., 2003). The interrelatedness in people’s lives highlights the interdependence and the idea that lives are embedded in social relationships with kin across life space (Elder, 1994). Young adults reach the legal age for many privileges and responsibilities, leave home, enter the workforce and or higher education, and form long-term romantic relationships (Mastern et al., 2004). The initiation of new relationships can shape lives as well by fostering ‘turning points ‘that led to a change in behavior by fostering behavioral (Elder et al., 2003; 2004). Turning points are often associated with major life events such as family formation or unemployment, bodily alterations. Transitions and turning points have the potential to open up new opportunities, alter life goals, and create stress. Their influence on the life course depends on how individuals interpret and respond to them, as well as on the constraints that limit those responses (McLeod & Almazan, 2003). Since their lives are lived interdependently, transition in one’s person life often entails transitions for other people as well (Elder et al., 2004). A study conducted by Keller et al., (2007) on approaching transition to adulthood by adolescence ageing out of welfare found that adolescents in foster care face difficulties when transitioning to adulthood.

2.5.2 Transition Theory

Schlossberg defines transition as, “any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Transition is the process that takes place over time (Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2012) and every transition begins with an ending (Backlay, 2017). Schlossberg (2008) explains that transition allows for a way of viewing and navigating the transition. Transition can be disabling for many whether transition is positive or negative it can be disabling, it disrupts our lives and creates or changes in the way we experience existence. Individuals are forced to formulate new assumptions about themselves and the future. Schlossberg (2008) warns that transition brings about major disturbance that necessitate tremendous amount of adaptation even when the benefits outweighs the deficit. Anderson et al., (2012) points out that, to understand the meaning a transition has for a particular individual, it is necessary to examine the type of transition (anticipated, unanticipated or non-event), the context of the transition (relationship of the person to the transition and setting in which the transition occurs) and the impact of the transition on the individual's life (on relationships, routines, assumptions).

Estrella and Lundberg (2006) credit the development of the transition theory to Nancy K. Schlossberg. Transition theory is categorized as a theory of adult development (Evans, et al., 2010). Schlossberg’s transition theory provided a systematic framework that would facilitate an understanding of adults in transition and direct them to the help they needed to cope with the “ordinary and extraordinary” process of living (Evans et al., 2010). Over the years, Schlossberg’s model has continued to develop as she integrated the ideas of other theorists and researchers as well as the critiques of her own theory (DeVilbiss, 2014).

2.5.2.1 Moving in

It is the stage in any transition; one is either moving in or moving out. When moving into a new situation, people must become familiar with new roles, relationships, and routines. This phase represents as assessment and planning period and moving in prompts anxiety (Backlay, 2017).

2.5.2.2 Moving through

This stage represents a time in transition for achieving much learning about the new roles, relationships, and routines as possible. Moving through characterizes a time of balancing, school, friends, and family focusing on class content and maintaining grades. Moving through requires people to let go of the aspects of self, letting go of the former roles and learning new roles. People moving through transition unavoidably must take stock as they negotiate the changes in their lives and the changes may involve gains as well as losses. Taking stock provides a way to identify the potential resources someone possess to cope with transition. The four S's refer to the self, situation, support, and strategies. Furthermore, no matter what the transition is, one deals with it differently depending on the resources (Anderson et al., 2012).

These four S's have been identified as the factors that influence transition.

2.5.2.3 Moving out

This stage represents the process of completing a smooth-solid transition to the next part of life (Chickering & Schlossberg, 2002). Moving out might signify graduation, applying for a job or looking for a new place to live after graduation. Transition theory is relevant in Social Work Practice. Reid and Pudding (2006) conducted a study on transitioning out of care. The study indicates that youth exiting the child welfare system do not fare well when they transition to adulthood as they face problems and issues associated with the transition to adulthood. However, the study indicates that irrespective of the challenges faced by the youth exiting welfare system, they have the chance to transition successfully given the support and financial resources. This successful transition is pinned on seven pillars of successful transition such as education, housing, relationship, life skills, youth engagement and enabling environment. These pillars can influence positive transition. Winter (2012) conducted a study on supporting children transitioning out of care using the Schlossberg transition framework. The study captures the impact of transition and how their experiences can easily go unnoticed and unresolved. The study explored how practice could become more child-centered to better support young children during transition.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology focusing on the paradigm, approach, design, sample, data collection and analysis method. Research methodology and data collection tools ensure that the findings are scientific, valid and verifiable (Goundar, 2012). The chapter also addresses issues of validity, reliability and ethical considerations that are critical in social science research.

3.2 Research methodology

Research methodology can be understood as the selection and the application of scientific research processes, methods or steps undertaken by the researcher when selecting the research approach, research design, research paradigm, sampling strategies, data collection tools and analysis methods relevant to the study (Jonker & Pennink, 2010).

3.2.1 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is a worldview or perspective about research held by a community of researchers that is based on a set of shared assumptions, concepts, values, and practices. It is an approach to thinking about and doing research (Christensen & Johnson, 2014). Researchers have their own different worldviews about the nature of knowledge and reality that helps them clarify their theoretical frameworks. The quantitative methodology view is described as being realists and belongs to positivism paradigm (Fekede, 2010). Quantitative researchers rely more on positivist principles and use a language of variables and hypotheses (Neuman, 2014). Postpositivist thinkers focus on establishing and searching for evidence that is valid and reliable in terms of existence of phenomena rather than generalisation (Creswell, 2014).

Researchers working from a post-positivism paradigm follow critical realist ontology. They believe that reality does exist external of themselves and the participants (Levers, 2013) and that it can never be perfectly understood (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Objectivity is recognised as an ideal that can never be achieved and research is conducted with a greater awareness of subjectivity (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Post-positivism accepts that as quantitative researchers we cannot observe the world we are part of as totally objective and disinterested outsiders and accept that the natural sciences do not provide the model for all social research (Sukamolson, 2007). The study adopted the post-positivism paradigm as the researcher subscribes to the worldview held by the post-positivists who operate under the assumption of objective reality whilst bearing in mind that our reality is shaped by our subjectivity.

3.2.2 Research Approach

Objectivity, numerical data generalizability are the critical elements in quantitative research (Creswell, Ebersohn, Ellof, Ferreira, Ivankora, Jansen, Nieuwenhuise, Pietersen & Plato, 2016). According to Apuke (2017:40), “quantitative research deals with quantifying data and analysis of variables in order to get results. It involves the utilisation and analysis of numerical data using specific statistical techniques to answer questions like who, how much, what, where, when, how many and how. Quantitative research is concerned with numerical data, generalisation of the findings and that the researcher is objective (Bryman, 2012; Bhawna & Gobind, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2016). The study adopted the quantitative research approach and structured

questionnaire was developed and used as the data collection tool. The responses from the respondents were carefully recorded in line with the codebook. The codebook permitted quantification of data hence codes were assigned to the respondent's responses. Coding of responses generated numeric data and permitted data analysis of the variables. Data was analysed using SPSS as the statistical tool to establish frequency and relationship among different variables.

3.2.3 Research Design

In this study, a cross-sectional descriptive design was used to examine and describe the influence of foster care drift on children transitioning out of foster care. Kerryn and Hassed (2012) assert that non-experimental research designs are used to gather data where there is no manipulation of any variable. Cross-sectional studies are often referred to as observational studies because the investigator does not carry out any interventions, rather the emphasis is on evidence (Mann, (2003), mainly the researcher measures the outcome and the exposure of participants in a study simultaneously (Seita, 2016). Cross-sectional studies are used to determine the prevalence of the phenomena being studied. In quantitative research the phenomena being studied occurs naturally therefore, manipulation of respondents or settings is not feasible (Ravid, 2020 & Metler, 2019). Cross-sectional design is described as the quantitative methodology to establish the prevalence of the phenomena being studied by the researcher (Zangirolami-Raimundo, Echeimberg & Leone, 2018). This research design was used to examine the influence of foster care drift on transitioning out of foster care as the area of interest of the researcher. Furthermore, it was used to describe and interpret the influence of foster care drift on transitioning out of foster care. It is important to outline that this study did not involve the manipulation of variables or provided the intervention, since the interest of the researcher was to scrutinize the influence of foster care drift on transitioning out of foster care and not to introduce intervention nor explore the causal factors as they are beyond the scope of the study.

3.2.4 Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised of youth who aged out of foster care. The population involved those who aged out of foster care in 2018, who were estimated at 286. Age 18 and above was significant because these young people accessed the foster care system post 1994 and

they were not efficiently removed from the system, rather they lingered in care without permanency until they aged out. Their exit out of the foster care system was not planned, rather it was forced by the legal landscape as they reached the age of maturity and aged out of the system. This period was critical as it marked the navigation of the pile up transition passage such as ageing out of foster care to independent living and from adolescence to emerging adulthood. This population therefore covered a number of youth who have aged out of foster care as per identified year, namely 2018 (age from 19 years to 21 years). It will be noted that, due to certain reasons, Section 176 of Children’s Act provides that some of the youth remain in care beyond age 18 and up to 21 years.

The study used stratified sampling to proportionally select 167 respondents from six identified child welfare organisations within Ugu District Municipality. After determining the sample size, a sample ratio was calculated and then the sampling interval was used to select specific cases (Neuman, 2014). Sampling is the technique employed to select a small group (sample) with a view to determining the characteristics of a larger group (Brynard et al., 2014). Brynard et al., (2014) further state that generally the components of the sample are chosen from the larger population by a process known as random selection. Random selection means choosing a sample in such a way that each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. Stratified random sampling was used to select the sample of the population of the study. According to Leedy and Ormrod, (2010:205) “when such a random sample is selected, the researcher can assume that the characteristics of the sample approximate the characteristics of the total population”. To obtain a random (or probability) sample, the first step is to define the target population from which it is to be drawn. This population is known as the sampling frame and can be thought of as a list of all the people relevant to the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

The sample size was calculated in accordance with Yamane’s formula (1967)

$$n = \frac{N_2}{1 \pm N(0.05)}$$

The original population size was 286 and the sample size of 167, which is estimated at 58%, was determined using the Yamane’s 1967 formula. It was calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N_2}{1 \pm N(0.05)}$$

$$n = \frac{286}{1 \pm 286(0.05^2)}$$

$$n = 167$$

Table 3.1 Population distribution per organisations

Name of the organisation	Population distribution per organisation	Sample distribution per organisation n %
Margate Child Welfare	76	44 (26%)
Umzinto Child Welfare	59	35 (21%)
Umzumbe Child Welfare	58	34 (20%)
Vulamehlo Child Welfare	40	23 (14%)
Izingolweni Child Welfare	31	19 (11%)
Ekubusisweni Child Welfare	22	12 (8%)
Total	286	167

Table 3.1 shows that 167 respondents was a minimum eligible sample size for this study. This response rate marked the estimation of 58% of the population.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

The questionnaire was used to collect data. Neuman (2014) argues that in survey research, written questionnaire or formal interview are utilised to gather information on the backgrounds, behaviours, beliefs, or attitudes of a large number of people. In collecting data in this study, the researcher ensured that answers are recorded carefully from different respondents.

Creswell et al., (2016:17) argues that the “questionnaire is designed by the researcher, the researcher must be mindful of the data that will be generated by the questionnaire and the statistical techniques that will be used to analyse it. The designing of the questionnaire requires

the researcher to give attention (i) appearance of the questionnaire, (ii) question sequence, (iii) wording questions and (iv) response categories”. Questionnaires are the mostly used instruments in survey research. Although they are not standardized as they are the product of the scientific creativity of the researcher (de Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2011), they provide a standardised interview across all subjects as questions asked are appropriate and are always asked in the exactly same way (Singh, 2007).

For the purpose of the study, the developed questionnaire was structured into four sections:

- Section A: Biographical Data
- Section B: Nature and extent of Foster Care
- Section C: Experience of foster care drift
- Section D: Transition out of foster care

Table 3.2 Reliability coefficient of the questionnaire

Measure	Items	Cronbach’s alpha
Extent of foster care	10	.416
Experience of foster care drift	4	.858
Transition out of foster care	12	.605
Total	26	$(1.879) / 3 = 0.6$

Table 3.2 shows that the total Cronbach’s alpha value was 0.6; this did not suggest a strong value. Hulin, Netemeyer and Cudeck (2000) and Ursachi, Horodnic and Zait (2015) concur that the reliability of 0.6 to 0.7 falls within the acceptable range. It is noted that among the three subcategories of the instrument, the Cronbach’s alpha score on the sub category, the nature and extent of foster care was found to be lower as compared to the other two sub categories. As results, the instrument indicated a moderate Cronbach’s alpha level. This suggested that two sub scales were more homogenous; even so, the total score of all three sub-categories fell within the accepted level, suggesting the validity of the instrument and the consistency across the three sub-categories of the instrument.

3.4 Data Analysis

In quantitative research, data is collected and analysed quantitatively using mathematical instruments (Bhawana & Gobind, 2015; Bryman, 2012). Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse data. SPSS is viewed as one of the most leading and useful instruments and provides for the use of different statistical procedures with different kinds of data and determine different relationships in data (Babbie et al., 2019). Both, frequency distribution and cross tabulation analysis were used in this study. In this study, the frequency distribution was used to analyse the frequency of the data whilst cross tabulation was used to analyse data and to establish relationship among different variables. Cross tabulation allows for the examination of the frequencies of observation between two variables, identification of relationship between the cross tabulated variables and shows relationship between two or more variables in a tabular format (Miller, Acton, Fullerton & Maltby, 2002; George & Malley, 2019; Lamont & Boduszynski, 2020).

□ Entering Data

Data entry allows researchers to be aware of the nature of the quantitative data (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2010). Once the data was coded and numeric values assigned, the questions were entered into SPSS.

□ Data Coding

According to Neuman (2014:393) “data coding means systematically reorganizing raw data into a format that is easy to analyze using statistics software on computers”. Coding allows researchers to quantify and represent the area under investigation using numbers. To achieve validity in the data coding, researcher coded data in a systematic way, codes were assigned for the respective child welfare organisations. During the data collection, questionnaires were numerically coded under the specific code of the respective child welfare organisations. The coding of questionnaires enabled the researcher to present data in a numerical and systematic form.

□ Data Cleaning

Accuracy is extremely important when coding data. Errors made when coding or entering data into a computer threaten the validity of the measures and cause misleading results (Neuman, 2014). This stage deals with data entry, accuracy and decision making process of how to deal with missing or incorrect data (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2010). Coding must be done and accurately checked to ensure that data is clean. As a form of contingency, cleaning data can be done by cross-classifying two variables looking for unexplained or impossible combination. Data can be modified in a computer, however original categories used to collect data cannot be modified or refined (Neuman, 2014).

3.5. Ethical consideration

The ethical issues are the concerns, dilemmas, and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct research. Ethics are defined as what is or is not legitimate to do or what “moral” research procedure involves (Neuman, 2014). Anyone involved in social science research, needs to be aware of the general agreements shared by researchers about what is proper and improper in the conduct of scientific inquiry (Babbie, 2014). Ethics is an issue that must be considered at every step of the research design and implementation process. Reasons for conducting ethical research are that participants are easily harmed physically or emotionally, and the researcher can lose his or job, reputation, and the respect of family, coworkers, or the community (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012). Below are some of the ethical issues that were observed.

3.5.1 Permission to conduct the study

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZuluNatal is the regulatory committee responsible for approving the ethics applications. Upon being granted the ethical approval, the researcher was ethically obliged to adhere to all ethics relevant to the study as regulated. The researcher also sought and received permission to conduct a study from six organisations, who served as gatekeepers of the study.

3.5.2 Avoidance of harm

The researcher has the ethical obligation to protect participants within all possible reasonable limits from any form of physical discomfort that may emerge from the research project (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This responsibility goes beyond avoiding physical harm as people can be harmed psychologically and emotionally and their reputation can be damaged (Wagner et al., 2012). Social research often requires that respondents reveal personal information that they might be uncomfortable sharing. Reflecting on such sensitive information even if it is not shared with the researcher could trigger psychological emotions. Therefore, the research must guard against the psychological dangers (Babbie, 2014). The researcher conducted debriefing sessions for each and every respondent. There were no instances where the study stimulated negative psychological emotions.

3.5.3 Beneficence and Maleficence

Capenter (2017:7) states that “respect for autonomy of individuals is clearly identified on the principle of beneficence and non-maleficence appear in a form of maximising benefit and minimising harm”. Tangwa (2009:5) adds that “maleficence is considered the most basic of all those cardinal principles of ethics, it lays down the least minimum condition for ethical correctness, as if to say that even if you would not do good at least do no harm. However, it is not enough that we do no harm, sometimes even without doing harm we do wrong”. Hence, Wood (2017:6) argues that “the concept of beneficence demands that the participants not only be protected from harm but also benefit from the research in some way”. Beneficence entails protection from harm before the commencement of the study, during the study and after the study ensuring that the benefits outweighs the risks to participants (Webster, 2011).

3.5.4 Voluntary Participation

Researchers intrude in people’s lives as they knock on people’s doors uninvited, questionnaires sent to mail and those are the activities that the respondents have not required and may require significant time (Babbie, 2010). The principle of voluntary consent is critical in research. Voluntary participation means that no one should be coerced to participate in research (Neuman, 2014). Furthermore, Neuman (2014) points out that it is an ethical rule not to lie to research

participants; however, it is not unethical when one has legitimate research reasons. Social research, moreover, often requires that people reveal personal information about themselves and information that may be unknown to their friends and associates. Social research often requires that such information be revealed (Babbie, 2010). During the study voluntary participation was sought and participants were not forced to participate. Voluntary participation was sought from the respondents in such that the researcher administered the informed consent in person and prior to the research being undertaken. Participation was a matter of choice, and it was explained that participants were free to withdraw at any time without having to provide reasons for withdrawal. The section on voluntary participation requesting respondents to take part in the study was included in the informed consent so that participants do not feel obliged or coerced to participate in the study. It was clearly stated that participation was voluntary, and respondents were not obliged to be part of the study.

3.5.5 Informed Consent

According to Christensen and Johnson (2014:204) “obtaining the informed consent of participants is a vital component of conducting ethical research because this component recognizes the autonomy of research participants”. Neuman (2014) asserts that not coercing people to participate in research is a fundamental principle as participation is voluntary and nobody should be coerced. He stresses that it is not enough to only obtain permission, people need to know what they are being asked to participate on and it is only then can they make an informed decision. Participants can become aware of their rights and what they are getting involved in when they read and sign a statement giving informed consent, a written agreement to participate given by people after they have learned some basic details about the research procedure. Neuman (2014) and Wagner et al., (2012) concur that people should agree to participate without feeling coerced, and that they are fully informed about the purpose, duration, methods and potential use of research. During the study, informed consent was sought from participants. Informed consent form was developed where the purpose, duration, methods and potential use for the study were explained. Furthermore, participants were informed that participation was voluntary. Participants were required to sign informed consent prior to participating in the study. Their freedom of choice was observed and respected and they were

informed that should they wish to terminate during the study that right will be observed and respected.

3.5.6 Deception of respondents

Ethical standards of social research emphasizes that researchers must not deceive participants in any way. Deception is unnecessary and morally unacceptable (Barbie, 2012). According to Wagner et al., (2012), deceit can take various forms. One deceit takes a form of shielding personal feelings to appear neutral another form of deception is when researcher fails to present themselves as researchers in order to facilitate data collection. During the data collection, the researcher was truthful with the respondents as presented herself as the researcher and explained that she was doing research. The aims of the study were explained to the participants.

3.5.7 Confidentiality

It is the researcher's ethical obligation to protect privacy by not disclosing participant's identity after information is gathered. This takes two forms: anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity means that people remain anonymous and ensures the protection of the identity of specific individuals from being known (Neuman, 2014). Anonymity includes safeguarding and protecting identities of respondents (Wagner et al., 2012). Anonymity and confidentiality are equally critical; in writing up findings, the information should never be released in a way that permits linking it to specific individuals. Results are presented publicly only in an aggregate form (Neuman, 2014). Confidentiality means that the names may be attached to the responses but withheld in confidence or kept secret from the public (Neuman, 2014). Additionally, written results about the study, personal information, identifying information about the respondents must be omitted. The researcher must be attentive as to how participants are described and quoted in safeguarding confidentiality (Neuman, 2014). This may mean that descriptions of the community and the individual participants must be left vague or ambiguous (Wagner et al., 2012).

3.5.8 Publication of the findings

The researcher has the ethical responsibility to introduce written findings of the study to the reading public otherwise even highly scientific investigation will mean very little and will not

be viewed as research (de Vos et al., 2011). Publication of the findings propels researchers to adhere to ethics and ensure that credit is given to where it is due, citation of the previous research reviewed is cited properly, and plagiarism is avoided (Webster, 2011). Bless et al., (2006) state that “researchers should never manipulate results in order to confirm hypothesis or point of view and the report should be compiled as accurately and objectively as possible, because the fabrication or falsification of data have serious implications in research”. The final report with the findings and recommendations were done within the parameters of ethics. The findings will be made public as they will be shared with the participants, the Department of Social Development as well as the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

3.6. Reliability and Validity

According to Creswell (2014:49), “validity and reliability are described as measuring instruments that are crucial to scientific research”. Reliability refers to the “accuracy of findings” (Gaus, 2017:100). Validity and reliability can never be attained because they are fluid, not observable and ambiguous. As that may be, researchers still strive towards validity, reliability and to establish the truthfulness, credibility, or believability of findings (Neuman, 2014).

3.6.1 Reliability

Bradford and Cullen (2012:119) state that, “reliability is ensured by consistency in procedures and evidenced by consistency in the reactions of the research participants”. Reliability is concerned with accuracy and consistency of measures. The same instrument must be able to produce the same data at a later stage under the similar condition (Brynard et al., 2014).

3.6.2 Validity

Khorsan and Crawford (2013:2) refers to validity as “the degree in which results from a study are likely to be true and free of bias.” Brynard et al., (2014); Creswell et al., (2016) concur that validity of the instrument refers to the extent to which it measures what it is supposed to measure, and it is concerned with the ‘what’ of data collection procedure and measures. Hence, researchers should be concerned with both external and internal validity (Brynard et al., 2014;

Creswell et al., 2016). Validity thus comprises both external and internal validity (Bradford & Cullen, 2012). Both the internal and external validity are crucial in the interpretation of the findings of the study (Khorsan & Crawford, 2013). External validity refers to the “extent in which the results of the study are generalizable or transferred and concerned with the degree in which the research findings can be applied to the ‘real world’ beyond the controlled setting of research” (Bradford & Cullen, 2012:35).

□ **External Validity**

External validity signifies the extent to which a research study can be generalized to other situations. The questionnaire used was designed in that the content validity and construct validity were taken into account. The design of the questionnaire ensured that all the four objectives of the study were covered. More and above foster care drift and transitioning out of foster care were covered as the two variables of the study.

□ **Face Validity**

Face validity is concerned with “the way an instrument appears to the participants. Face validity refers to validity that establishes the fact that the measure apparently reflects the content of the concept in question and the extent in which the instrument looks valid (Ayode, 2012). A questionnaire was developed as the data collection instrument. The design or appearance of the questionnaire reflected the face validity as it ensured that the contents of the study are covered.

□ **Content Validity**

Content validity usually refers to the correctness and appropriateness of the questions included in a test of questionnaire. It refers to the extent in which the instrument covers the complete content of the particular construct that it is set to measure (Creswell et al., 2016). It is advisable to test the correctness, relevance, lucidity of the questions in the preliminary investigation.

Content validity of the questionnaire ensured both variables of the study were reflected in the questionnaire. A pilot study was conducted and the questionnaire was tested before the actual study was conducted to ensure that it is reliable and valid.

□ **Criterion Validity**

Criterion validity draws an inference from test scores about performance and demonstrates the accuracy of a measure or procedure by comparing it with another standard valid procedure. The researchers use a future criterion measure to assess how well it estimates future events that have not happened yet (Singh, 2007). This type of validity is probably the ultimate test to whether instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. The correlation between the instrument and the criterion is an indication of the criterion validity of the instrument. Creswell et al., (2016:240) argue that “a high correlation indicated a high degree of validity, and a low correlation indicated a low validity”.

□ **Construct Validity**

In construct validity, researchers deduce the hypothesis from an existing and relevant theory to the concept. Convergent validity and discriminate validity are the two sub categories of the construct validity. In the case of convergent validity, validity is gauge by comparing it to measures of the same concept developed through other methods to assess how well the items are together (convergent validity) or distinguish different people on certain behaviors (Singh, 2007). Furthermore, when questions are translated from one language to the other, they should not lose meaning. A questionnaire should be constructed in a manner that respondents understand questions and the wording. Questions should be culturally adjusted and be culturally sensitive (Bradford & Cullen, 2012). A pilot study was conducted with six respondents from the respective Child Welfare Organizations. It was observed that the respondents' level of literacy determined their level of understanding with the questions as some sought clarity, especially where the social work concepts were used. Questionnaires were administered by the researcher and clarity was provided when it was sought. There was no evidence that suggested that the respondents were challenged in filling the questionnaires. The reliability analysis of the questionnaire comprising of three sub categories was carried out. During the analysis, two critical issues were observed on two sub categories. Firstly, the analysis was conducted on sub category: nature and extent of foster care, which comprised of 13 questions. During the analysis, the sum total of the Chronbach's alpha value dropped below the accepted level. The observation suggested the alpha value dropped as a results question 2.8, 2.10 and 2.13. Therefore, the three

questions were discarded. Secondly, the analysis on the subcategory: experience of foster care drift comprised of five questions; the analysis suggested that as a results question 3.5 the alpha value dropped. Therefore, question 3.5 was moved to sub category: nature and extent of foster care, as they seemed to measure the same construct. As a result, the score on sub category two increased. The changes effected on the two subcategories did not affect the study in any form or shape.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided the overview of the research methodology underpinning the study. The research paradigm, research approach and research design were used as the scientific research methodology to guide the research processes. The sampling strategies were employed to select youth who aged out of foster care as the respondents of the study and the questionnaire was used as the data collection tool. SPSS, frequency distribution and cross tabulation techniques or methods were used as the data analysis methods or techniques to analyze data. The observation of ethics underpinning the scientific research methods were observed throughout the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter depicted that questionnaires were used to solicit data from the respondents. Each questionnaire comprised of thirty questions, which were divided into four sections, namely the biographical data, the nature and extent of foster care, the experience of foster care drift and the transition out of foster care. This chapter presents the distribution of data involving various variables as identified in the questionnaire. The findings from each section are presented, interpreted and discussed chronologically as they are presented in the questionnaire. The researcher further provided the findings and used relevant literature and the theoretical framework underpinnings the study in supporting the discussions.

4.2 Respondents' biographical data

Section A: Biographical data

4.2.1 Respondents' current age

Foster care is the age bound statutory child protection service. Children in need of care and protection are eligible for foster care between the ages of 0-17 years.

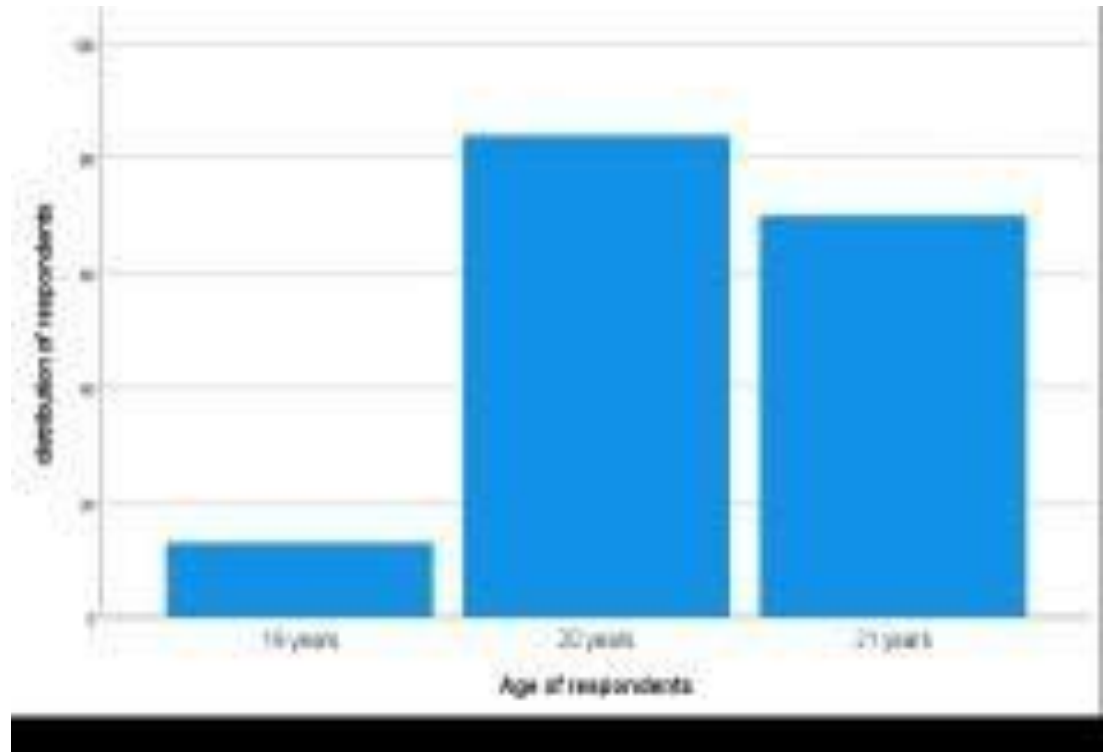


Figure 4.1 Respondents' current age

Figure 4.1 shows that, 7.8% (n=13) of respondents were 19 years old followed by 50.3% (n=84) who were 20 years old and 41.9% (n=70) who were 21 years old.

The findings suggest that the respondents of the study were adolescents between the ages of 19 and 21 years, with a mean age of 20.5.

Cross tabulation was used in the items discussed below. The reason for cross tabulating with age was to determine whether age had any impact on the respective items. This was based on the ongoing literature that depicts age as an element of interest in both development and transition to adulthood and aging out of care (Greenon, 2013).

4.2.2 Respondents' Gender and Age

Manandahar, Hawkes, Puse, Nosrati and Magar (2018) define gender as the roles, behaviour, activities, attributes, and opportunities that any society considers appropriate for boys and girls and men and women. The importance of gender in this study is in line with the socialization of

children in the African culture, which is orientated around gender. Ngubane (2010) asserts that gender determines roles and relationships and, shapes opportunities that one may have.

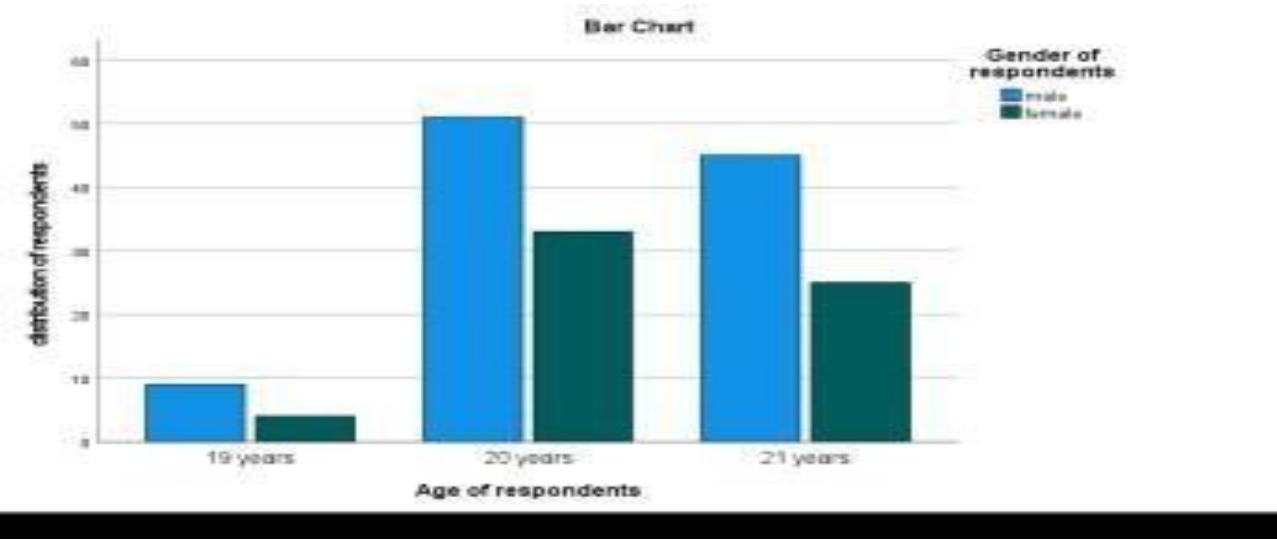


Figure 4.2 Respondents' Gender and Age

Figure 4.2 shows that, 62.9% (n=105) respondents were males followed by 37.1% (n=62) who were females.

The findings demonstrate that across all age categories there were more males who aged out of foster care as compared to females. Gender distribution of the study was informed by gender disparity of children placed in foster care from the respective Child Welfare organisations.

4.2.3 Respondent's Marital status and Age

In this section, it is essential to start by noting that while different societies still regard marriage as one of the milestones of adulthood (Waite & Lehrer, 2003), this study tends to take a slightly different view. While the general view may not be disputed, it suffices to note Arnett's assertion, in relation to marriage. Arnett (2000) argues that the life course of emerging adulthood is not universal, as a result marital status could not be perceived as an achievement.

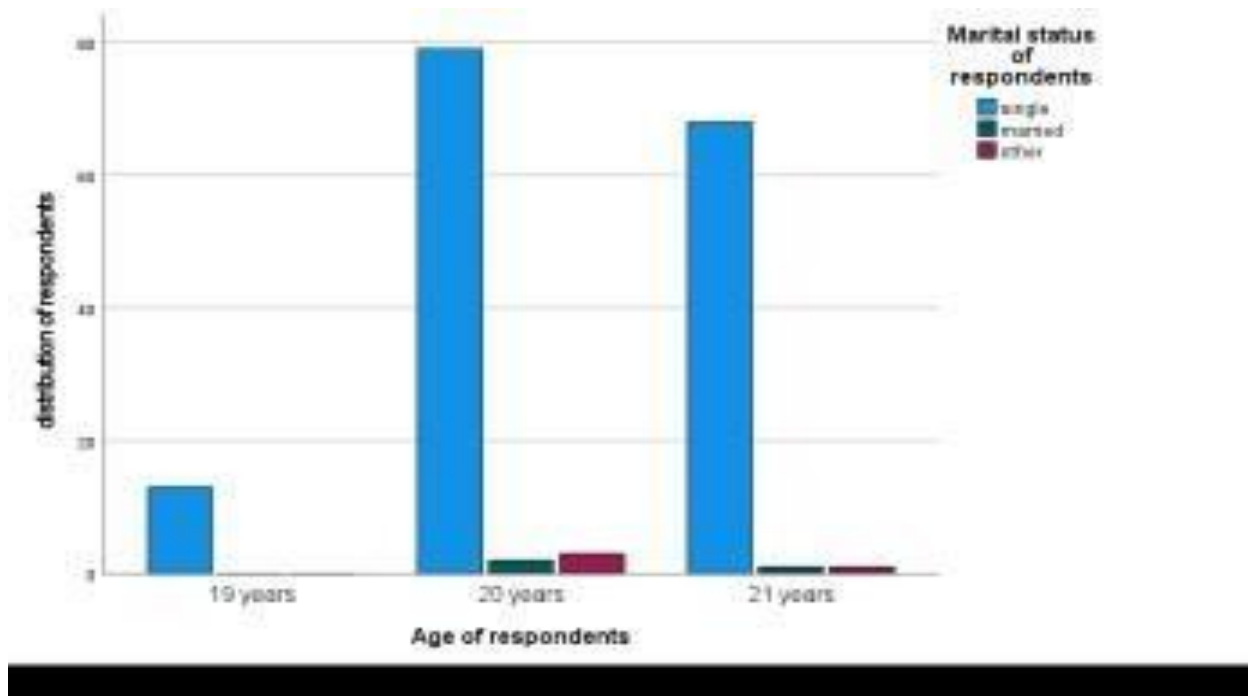


Figure 4.3 Respondents' Marital status and Age

Figure 4.3 shows that, 95.8% (n=160) respondents were single, followed by 1.8% (n=3) who were married and 2.4% (n=4) who were cohabiting. While marriage could not be viewed as certain, it is also not completely rejected as non-existing institution. The low number of married respondents could be attributed to the argument raised by Arnett (2000) about emerging adulthood becoming significant in this regard. Arnett (2000) describes emerging adulthood as a time of life when little about the incumbents' future is decided for certain, and where different directions are pursued.

4.2.4. Respondents' Level of Education and Age

The level of education is significant in determining the effective transition to emerging adulthood. Collins (2001) asserts that the level of education is one of the significant factors in transition to emerging adulthood in determining self-reliance and decreasing the probabilities of re-entering the system.

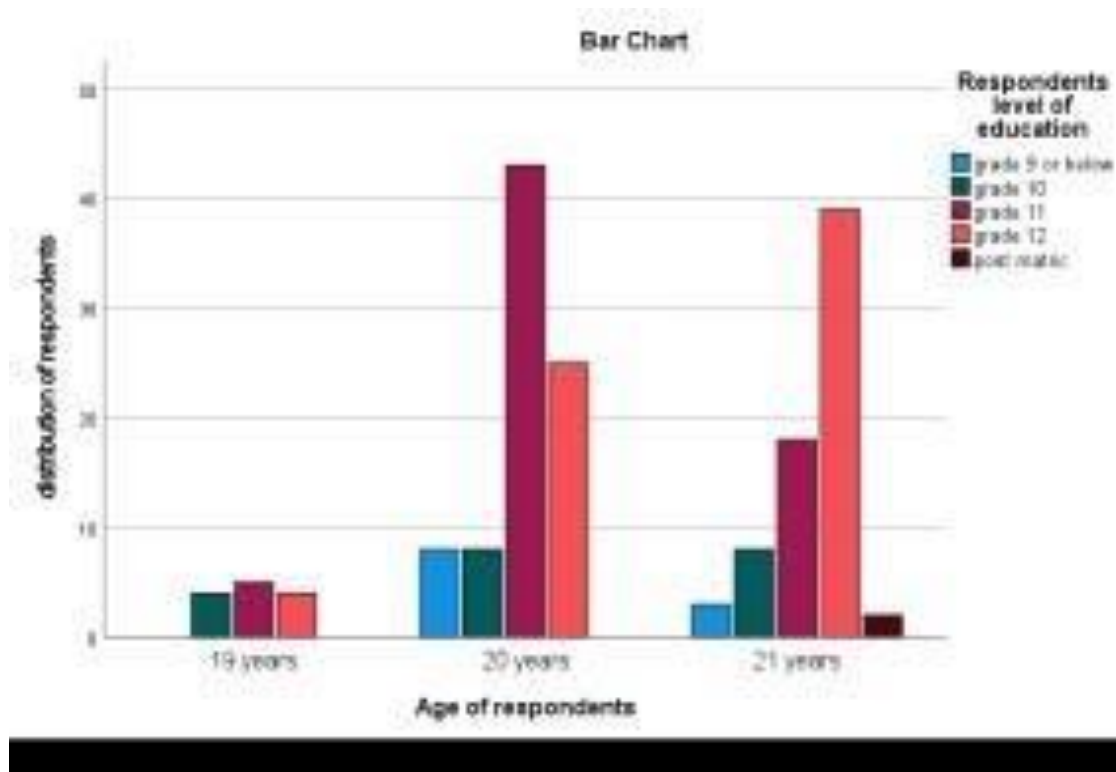


Figure 4.4 Respondents' Level of Education and Age

Figure 4.4 shows that, 40.7% (n=68) respondents had grade 12, followed by 39.5% (n=66) who had grade 11, 12% (n=20) had grade 10, 6.6% (n=11) had grade 9 and below and 1.2% (n=2) had post-matric qualification.

4.3 Nature of foster care

Section B: Nature of foster care

4.3.1 Designated Child welfares organisations responsible for the placement

Child welfare organisations are designated child protection organisations registered in terms of section 107 of the Children's Act (38 of 2005). They are responsible for the provision of child protection services on behalf of government. Child welfare organisations are significant in the study because when the children were found to be in need of care and protection in terms

of Section 150 of the Children’s Act (38 of 2005); designated child welfare organisations were responsible for their placement in foster care.

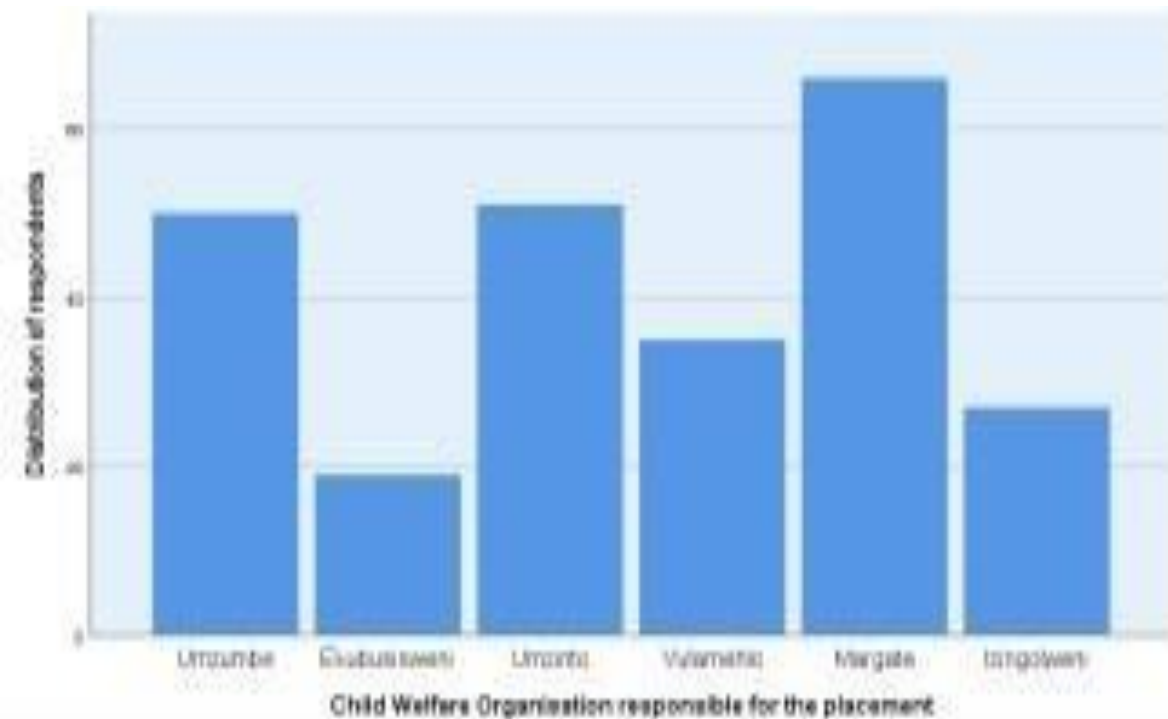


Figure 4.5 Child Welfare Organization responsible for the placement

Figure 4.5 shows that, 26% (n=44) respondents were solicited from Margate Child Welfare, followed by Umzinto Child Welfare with 21% (n=35), Umzumbe Child Welfare 20% (n=34), Vulamehlo Child Welfare 14% (n=23), Izingolweni Child Welfare 11% (n=19), and Ekubusisweni Child Welfare 8% (n=12).

4.3.2 Foster care exit year

The year in which children exit foster care system, is significant because it is the year in which respondents are no longer the legal dependents of the state, as a result the state ceases to assume further responsibility (Kimberlin et al., 2008; Zetlin et al., 2010). In this study, 2018 is the year, which the cross-sectional observation was undertaken. Since the focus was on the respondents that exited the foster care system in 2018, the respondents included only those who aged out in 2018. As depicted in section 4.3.4, it would be noted that their ages ranged from 19 to 21 years.

4.3.3 Foster care entry age

Alongside other factors like death of primary caregivers, negligence and so forth, age remains a critical determining factor in children entering of foster care system. Fernandes-Alcantara (2009) asserts that children may be vulnerable as a result of abuse, neglect, or other reasons such as the death of a parent or child behavior. While HIV and AIDS pandemic may not be the sole factor, it is regarded as one of the main factors that have influenced the vulnerabilities of children (USAID, 2021). This aspect is highlighted in this section for noting, since it is elaborated at the analysis stage in the fifth chapter.

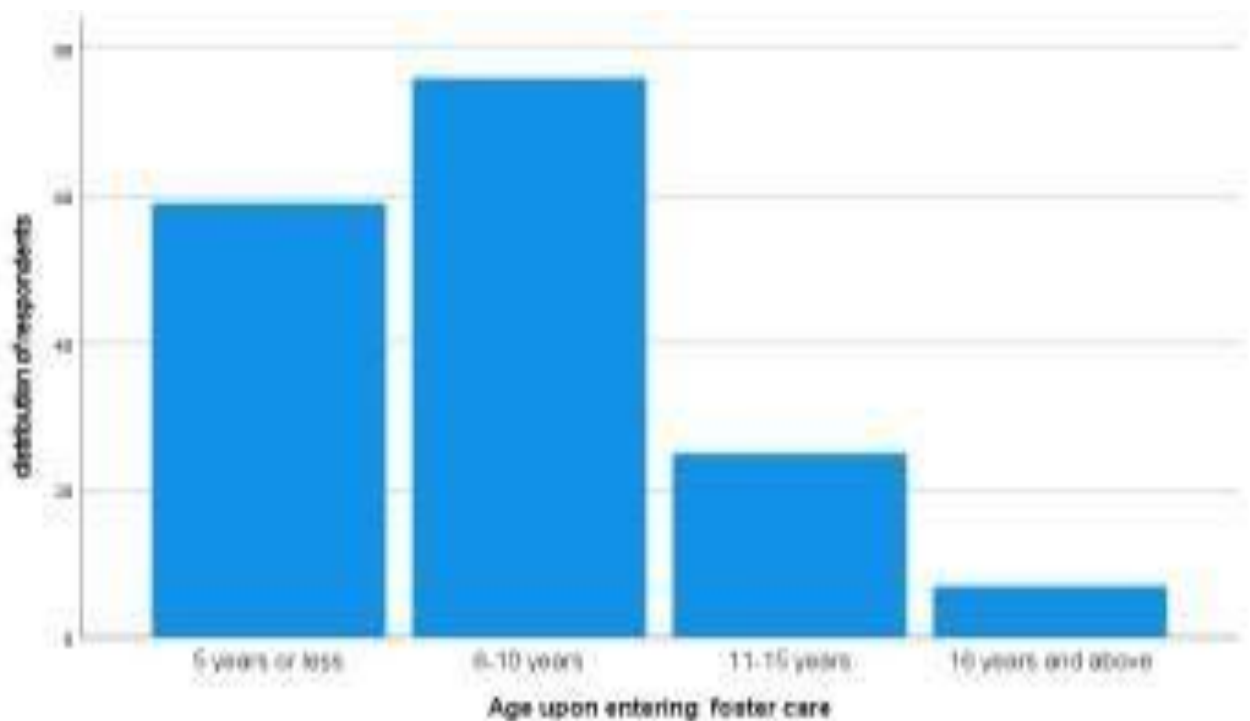


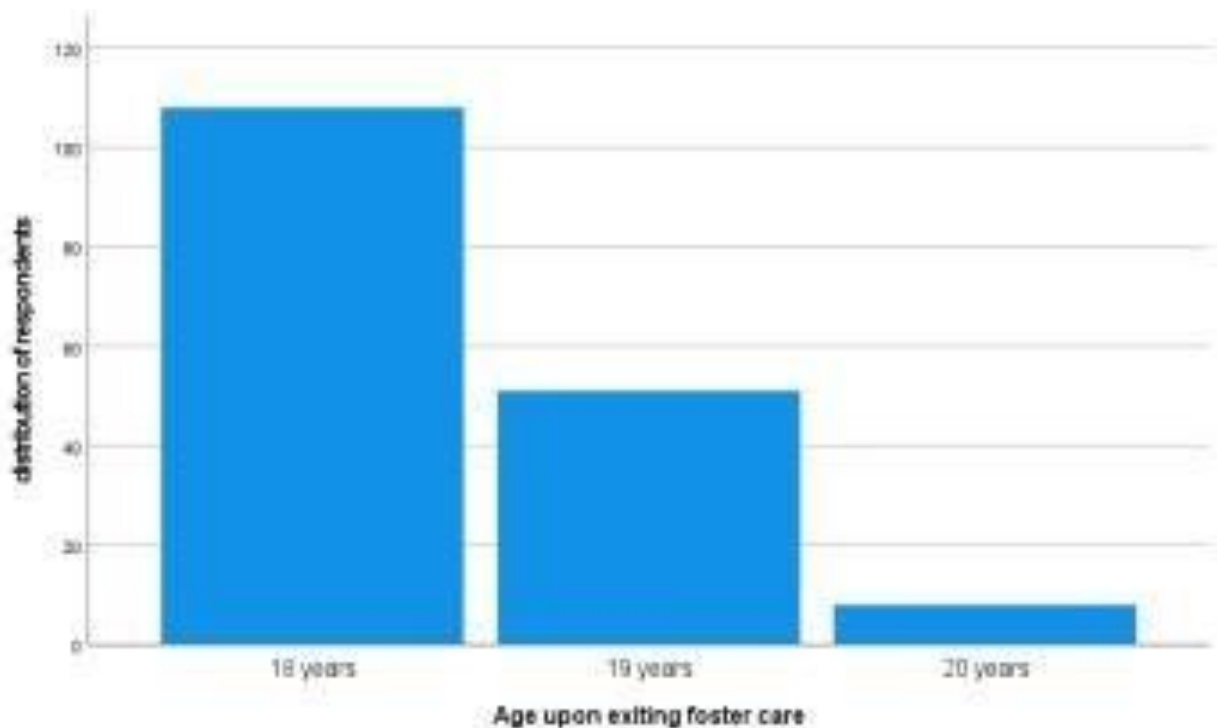
Figure 4.6 Foster care entry age

Figure 4.6 depicts that, 45.5% (n=76) respondents were between 6-10 years when placed in foster care, followed by 35.3% (n=59) who were 5 years or less, 15% (n=25), who were between 11-15 years and 4.2% (n=7) who were 16 years and above.

South Africa witnessed a decline in the number of orphans. Trends were reversed as a result of the access to antiretroviral treatment (Witter, 2018). The reversed trends indicate that the number of children accessing the foster care system decreased.

4.3.4 Foster care exit age

Mnisi and Botha (2005) assert that foster care has an exit point. Exit point signals the end of eligibility. The ages at which respondents exited foster care are crucial since they signal the end of eligibility for foster care services, based on the notion that foster care is an age bound statutory service.



Figur4.7 Foster care exit age

Figure 4.7 shows that, 64% (n=108) respondents aged out of foster care at the age of 18 years, followed by 30.5% (n= 51) who aged out at age 19 and 4.8 % (n= 8) aged out at the age of 20 years.

As Stein (2006) asserts, the majority of care leavers transition from state care to independent living between 16 and 18 years of age, whereas there is still a few of their peers that remain until their twenties.

4.3.5 The activity of the respondents when they were placed in foster care

Access to education for children in foster care is poor because of the adversity experienced precare and in care (Shonkoff, Garner, Siegel, Dobbins, Earls, Garner & Wood, 2012; Stanely, Riodan & Alaszewski, 2005). Vulnerable children have greater probabilities of leaving school in many settings, which also reduce their exposure to protective benefits of schooling (UNICEF, 2004). It is along the notion of vulnerability and poor access to education that the activity at the time of placement is significant in the study.

Table 4.1 Activity at the time of entering foster care

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not of school going age	56	33.5	33.5	33.5
Primary school learner	92	55.1	55.1	88.6
High school learner	19	11.4	11.4	100.0
Total	167	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.1 shows that, 55.1% (n=92) respondents were primary school learners, followed by 33.5% (n=56) were not of school going age and 11.4% (n=19) were high school learners.

4.3.6 Reason for placement in foster care

Fernandes-Alcantara (2009) asserts that children in foster care are vulnerable as a result of abuse, neglect, or other reasons such as the death of a parent or child behavioral problems. It is along this notion of vulnerability that the reasons for the placement in foster care were deemed significant in the study.

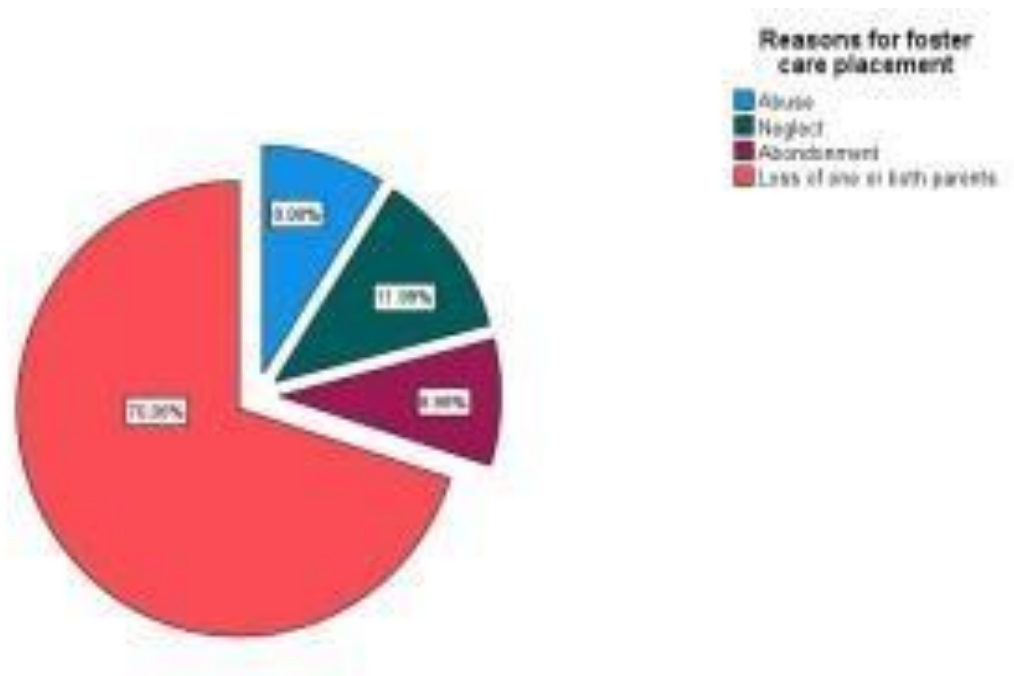


Figure 4.8 Reason for placement in foster care

As depicted in Figure 4.8, 70.6% (n=117) respondents had lost one or both parents, followed by 11.9% (n=20) who were neglected, 8.9% (n=15) abused and 8.9% (n=15) abandoned.

Children in foster care are regarded as a vulnerable population, as a result of abuse, neglect, or other reasons such as the death of a parent or child behavioral problems (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2009; Avery, 2010). Hall et al., (2016) indicate that in 2010, the number of children in foster care was ten times more than the number that the system, with majority being orphans who had lost one or both parents.

4.3.7 The problems experienced in foster care

The problems experienced in foster care are an indication that children in foster care continue to encounter challenges in care. The problems encountered in care might unmask traumatic experiences before care, challenges encountered in care and the influence they might exert on

transition to adulthood (Collins, 2001). It is along this notion that the problems experienced in foster care are regarded as significant in the study.

Table 4.2 Problems experienced during foster placement

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Substance usage/abuse	99	59.3	59.3	59.3
Truancing in school	25	15.0	15.0	74.3
Ill-health	14	8.4	8.4	82.6
Other: Specify	29	17.4	17.4	100.0
Total	167	100.0	100.0	

As depicted in Table 4.2, 59.3% (n=99) respondents reported to have used and or abused the addictive substances, followed by 17.4% (n=29) who experienced other problems such as behavior problems, anger issues and some were slow learners, 15% (n=25) who truanting in school and 8.4% (n=14) who suffered from ill health.

Schiller (2015) asserts that more and above the traumatic conditions or events that resulted in foster care placement, children in foster care encounter additional challenges whilst in care.

4.3.8 Preparation before foster care

Preparation of children before foster care is significant in determining the child’s adaptation because foster care brings about abrupt changes, and it compels children to adapt in care. It is along this notion of adaptation in care that preparation before care is considered significant in the study.

Table 4.3 Preparation before foster care

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Informed before removal	5	3.0	3.0	3.0
informed at the time of removal	3	1.8	1.8	4.8
Informed after removal	14	8.4	8.4	13.2
Never been informed	94	56.3	56.3	69.5
Other : Specify	51	30.5	30.5	100.0
Total	167	100.0	100.0	

As depicted in Table 4.3, 56.3% (n=94) respondents were never informed, followed by 30.5% (n=51) who did not specify, 8.4% (n=14) were informed after removal, 3% (n=5) were informed before removal, 1.8% (n= 3) were informed at the time of removal and 30.5% (n=51) were never removed from the biological families.

Trauma precipitated before care and adjustment in care presents psychological challenges for children moving in care (Marinkovic & Backovic, 2006). Therefore, it can be argued that foster care is traumatic in nature. Sadly, more often children moving in care are not prepared for this transition rather the transition is abrupt, and it marks the significant turning point in the lives of children moving into care. Critically, the child's inner life and the interpersonal world can be significantly affected by this abrupt transition (Mitchell & Kaczynski, 2010).

4.3.9 Familiarity with the foster care family

The familiarity with the foster care family is the significant in the study as it suggests kinship care is the form of foster care that is mostly preferred than the non-kinship care. UNICEF (2004)

confirms the notion that kinship care is significant in the Sub-Saharan Africa where HIV and AIDS is the main concern. It is significant in such that children maintain sense of family belonging; children may remain in the same community and close relatives are likely to provide better care.

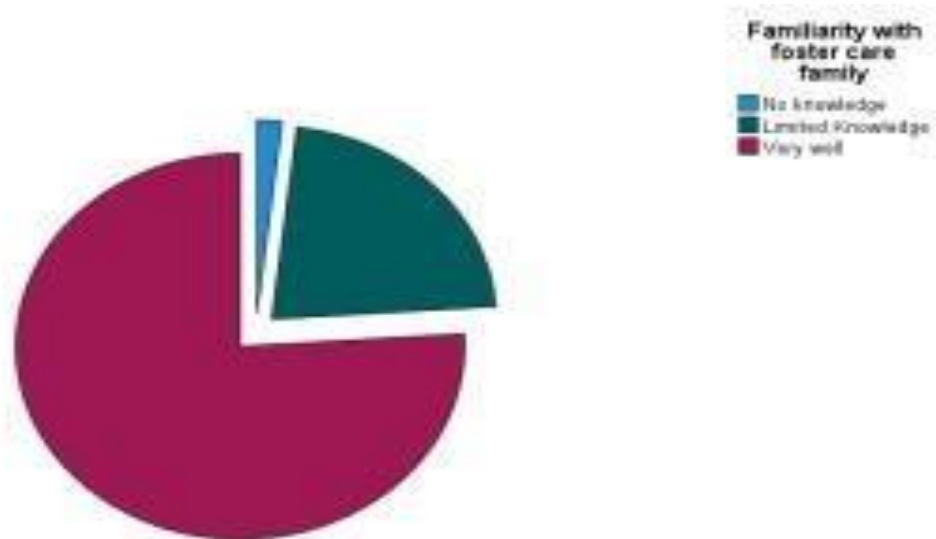


Figure 4.9 Respondents' familiarity with foster care family

As depicted in Figure 4.9, 76% (n=127) respondents placed in foster care knew their foster family very well, followed by 22.2% (n= 37) who had limited knowledge of the foster family and 1.8% (n=3) who had no knowledge of the foster family.

4.3.10 Adaption struggle in foster care due to lack of preparation

Barcklay (2017) summarizes transition as a process that begins with an ending. When children are placed in foster care, they are regarded as transitioning from parental care to state care. Preparation before placement became crucial and significant in the study because it reflected how the children's preparation for the transition to foster care influenced their adaptation in foster care. It also determines if they are likely to struggle to adapt in care.

Table 4.4 Respondents' adaptation struggle in foster care due to lack of preparation

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	107	64.1	64.1	64.1
No	38	22.8	22.8	86.8
<u>Uncertain</u>	22	13.2	13.2	100.0
Total	167	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.4 shows that, 64.1% (n=107) respondents struggled to adapt in foster care due to lack of preparation, followed by 22.8% (n=38) who did not struggle to adapt in foster due to lack of preparation and 13.2% (n=22) who were uncertain.

4.4 Experience of foster care drift

Section C: Experience of foster care drift

The foster care interruptions, foster care extension, movement from foster family to another and the change of placement in more than one occasion were viewed as substantial outcomes that shaped foster care drift. These outcomes are significant in relation to foster care drift, based on the presumption from literature that regard children that have drifted in care to be likely to experience negative outcomes (Jones, 2016; Rubin, O’Reily, Luan & Localio, 2007).

Table 4.5 Outcomes informing foster care drift

Outcome	Age
----------------	------------

		19 years	20 years	21 years
Experience of foster care interruptions	Yes	6% (n=10)	32.3% (n=54)	24% (n=30)
	No	1.2% (n=2)	18% (n=30)	17.4% (n=29)
Experience of foster care extension	Yes	7.2% (n=12)	48.5% (n=81)	39.5% (n=66)
	No	0.6% (n=12)	1.8% (n=3)	2.4% (n=4)
Experience of change of placement in more than one occasion	Yes	6% (n=10)	37.1% (n=62)	28.1% (n=47)
	No	1.8% (n=3)	13.2% (n=22)	13.8% (n=23)
Experience of movement(s) from one foster family to another	Yes	6% (n=10)	36.5% (n=61)	27.5% (n=46)
	No	1.8% (n=3)	13.3% (n=22)	14.4 (n=24)

In Table 4.5, the vertical columns indicate consistency on the four outcomes across all three age categories. Most respondents reported affirmative responses on the four outcomes across all ages as compared to negative responses. The positive responses ranged from 6% to 48.5%. On the other hand, the negative responses ranged from 0.6% to 17.4%.

The horizontal columns indicate that the respondents in age 20 category have higher percentages in all four outcomes compared to the other two age categories (age 19 and 21). This could be attributed to the standard deviation analysis which identified age 20 as the mean age.

Section D: Transition out of care

4.5 Transition out of care

In this section, four indicators that were used to operationalise and measure transition outcomes are presented. Firstly, the NEET framework was used. Secondly, Maintaining contact with friends, Family of origin and Foster family and the Development of romantic relationships as the critical elements were used to operationalize and measure social support. Thirdly, Ability to adapt upon leaving care, Ability to cope with the new changes and Adequacy of coping skills

are the critical elements that were used to operationalise and measure social identity. Fourthly, Beliefs in relation to career choices and aspirations; and Goals and plans about the future were used to operationalise and measure adaptation.

The framework NEET (not in employment, education, and training) is regarded as one of the universal measures of successful transition into adulthood (Dickens & Marx, 2020; Department of Higher Education and Training, 2017). Educational attainment, employment and economic security are critical in such that although they do not envisage successful transition but they rather support better transition outcomes and improve chances to adulthood (Stern & Nakamura, 2012). The second category of elements is based on the view that informal and formal systems of social support are regarded as the prospective and critical sources of support (Jones, 2014). These are critical in that they enhance one's quality of life and provide a buffer against the negative outcomes. However more often, for youth transitioning out of care social support is disrupted. Thirdly, critical it is to note the significance of social identity, especially in foster care children. This view is based on the notion that social identity is likely to be contaminated because of trauma experienced before care, in care and growing up in unstable environment (Haggman-Laitila, Salohekkilä & Karki, 2019).

It is fundamental to note that social identity is associated with mental health resilience, high levels of social well-being, improved coping skills and abilities, lower rates of depression, higher educational levels, and better psychological adjustment (Stafanson, 2019). During the transition out of care period, these elements play a fundamental role in improving the probabilities of successful navigation of the transition passage to emerging adulthood. Fourthly, adaptation upon leaving care is considered a significant factor in determining successful transition to emerging adulthood. Yet the transition to emerging adulthood remains a challenge for the youth transitioning out of care, as it is characterised with negative outcomes in relation to educational outcomes, employment, and financial stability (Haggman-Laitila et. al, 2019). Yet these are critical elements in determining successful transition.

Table 4.6: Outcomes measuring transition out of care

Outcome		Age		
		19 years	20 years	21 years
NEET (not in employment, education or training),	Yes	4.2% (n=6)	22.2% (n=37)	18% (n=30)
	No	3.6% (n=7)	28.2% (n=47)	24% (n=40)
Maintaining contact with friends	Yes	7.2% (n=12)	41.9% (n=70)	34.7% (n=58)
	No	0.6% (n=1)	54.5% (n=12)	5.4% (n=9)
Maintaining contact with family of origin	Yes	5.4% (n=9)	33.5% (n=56)	33.5 (n=56)
	No	1.8% (n=3)	13.8% (n=23)	6% (n=10)
Maintaining contact with foster family	Yes	7.2% (n=12)	48.5% (n=81)	40.1% (n=67)
	No	0.6% (n=1)	1.8% (n=3)	1.8% (n=3)
Development of romantic relationships	Yes	5.4% (n=9)	36.5% (n=61)	32.9% (n=55)
	No	2.4% (n=4)	13.8% (n=13)	7.8% (n=13)
Ability to adapt upon leaving care	Yes	1.2% (n=2)	1.8% (n=3)	8.4% (n=14)
	No	6% (n=10)	47.3% (n=79)	36.5% (n=61)
Ability to cope with the new changes	Yes	1.8% (n=3)	13.3% (n=22)	12.7% (n=21)
	No	4.8%(n=8)	31.3% (n=52)	27.1% (n=41)

Adequacy of coping skills	Ye s	2.5% (n=4)	9.2% (n=15)	8% (n=13)
	No	4.3% (n=7)	19.6% (n=32)	15.3% (n=25)
Beliefs in relation to career choices and aspirations	Ye s	1.2% (n=2)	12% (n=20)	13.9% (n=23)
	No	4.8% (n=8)	30.1% (n=50)	23.5% (n=39)
Goals and plans about the future	Ye s	0.6% (n=1)	7.9%(n=13)	11.5% (n=19)
	No	3% (n=5)	24.8% (n=41)	20.6% (n=34)

Table 4.6 reflects transitional outcomes experienced by the respondents when they transitioned from care to emerging adulthood. Furthermore, this table presents the different interrelated transitional outcomes. To analyse the data, trends in both the vertical and horizontal columns were identified, interpreted and the accumulative percentage in relation to the respective transition outcomes was presented.

□ NEET framework

In relation to the NEET as the transitional outcome, the vertical column illustrates that 28% of the respondents aged 20 years were NEET, followed by 24% of the respondents aged 21 and 3.6% of the respondents aged 19 years. The accumulative percentage of the NEET respondents is 55.6%. The analysis of the trends in the vertical column indicates a slight increase in NEET percentage from respondents aged 19 to 20 years and the decline in percentage was observed in respondents aged 21 years. The vertical column indicates that the respondents aged 20 years were the majority of the respondents who were NEET.

□ Social support

Firstly, in relation to maintaining contact with friends, the trend analysis of the vertical column indicates that 41.9% of the respondents aged 20 years maintained contact with friends, followed by 34.7% of the respondents aged 21 years and 7.2% of the respondents aged 19 years. The trend analysis indicates that the percentage of the respondents who maintained contact with friends increased in respondents aged 19 and 20 years, subsequently a decrease in percentage was observed in respondents aged 21 years. As illustrated by the vertical columns, the accumulative percentage of respondents who maintained contact with friends is 83.8%. The trend analysis of the horizontal column indicates that the respondents aged 20 years were the majority of the respondents who maintained contact with friends.

Secondly, in relation to the respondents who maintained contact with family of origin, 33.5% of the respondents aged 20 years and 21 years respectively maintained contact with family of origin, followed by 5.4% of respondents aged 19 years. The trend analysis of the vertical column indicates that the respondents aged 19 years were the least respondents who maintained contact with the family origin whilst there is no difference between the respondents aged 20 years and 21 years respectively. The accumulative percentage of respondents who maintained contact with family of origin is 41.4%. The horizontal column trend analysis illustrates that the respondents aged 20 years were the majority of those who did not maintain contact with family of origin.

Thirdly, in relation to maintaining contact with the foster family; the vertical column trend analysis illustrates that 48.5% of the respondents aged 20 years maintained contact with foster family, followed by 40.1% of the respondents aged 21 years and 7.2 % of the respondents aged 19 years. The trend analysis indicates an increase in percentage in respondents aged 19 and 20 years, subsequently a decrease in percentage was observed in respondents aged 21 years. The accumulative percentage of the respondents who maintained contact with foster family is 95.8%. The vertical column trend analysis indicate that the respondents aged 20 years, were the majority of the respondents who maintained contact with foster family.

Fourthly, in relation to respondents who development romantic relationships, the trend analysis of the vertical column indicates that 36.5% of the respondents aged 20 years developed romantic relationships, followed by 32.9% of the respondents aged 21 years and 5.4% of the respondents

aged 19 years. This analysis indicates that the involvement in romantic relationships increased between the respondents aged 19 and 20 years, a subsequent decline in respondents aged 21 years was observed. The accumulative percentage of the respondents who developed romantic relationships is 74.1%. The horizontal column trend analysis indicates the respondents aged 20 years are the majority of the respondents who developed romantic relationships.

□ Social Identity

Firstly, in relation to the ability to adapt upon leaving care, the vertical column trend analysis indicates that 47.3% of the respondents aged 20 years were not able to adapt upon leaving care, followed by 36.5% of the respondents aged 21 years and 6% of the respondents aged 19 years. The trends analysis illustrates that the percentage of the respondents who struggled to adapt upon leaving care increased amongst the respondents aged 19 years and 20 years. Furthermore, a subsequent decline was observed in respondents aged 21 years. The accumulative percentage of the respondents who struggled to adapt upon leaving care is 89.5%. The horizontal column trend analysis indicates that the respondents aged 20 years were the majority of the respondents who struggled to adapt upon leaving care.

Secondly, in relation to coping with the new changes, the trend analysis of the vertical column indicates that 31.3% of the respondents aged 20 years did not cope with the new changes, followed by 27.1% of the respondents aged 21 years and 4.8% of the respondents aged 19 years. Trends analysis indicates an increase in percentage between the respondents aged 19 and 20 years and the decline in percentage of the respondents aged 21 years was observed. The accumulative percentage of the respondents who did not cope with the new changes is 63.2%. The horizontal column trend analysis illustrates that the respondents aged 20 years were the majority of the respondents who did not cope with the new changes.

Thirdly, in relation to adequate coping skills, the trend analysis of the vertical column indicates that 19.6% of the respondents aged 20 did not have adequate coping skills, followed by 15.3 % of the respondents aged 21 years and 4.3% of the respondents aged 19 years. Trends analysis indicates an increase in percentage between the respondents aged 19 years and 20 years, with the decline observed in respondents aged 21 years. The accumulate percentage of the

respondents who did not have adequate coping skills is 39.2%. The trend analysis of the horizontal column illustrates that the respondents aged 20 years were the majority of the respondents who were without adequate coping skills.

□ **Adaptation**

Firstly, in relation to beliefs in career choices and aspirations, the vertical column trend analysis illustrates that 30.1% of the respondents aged 20 years did not have beliefs in relation to career choices and aspirations, followed 23.5% of the respondents aged 21 years and 4.8% of the respondents aged 19 years. Trends analysis illustrates an increase in percentage of respondents aged 19 years to 20 years and the decline in percentage of respondents aged 21 years. The accumulative percentage of the respondents who did not have beliefs in relation to career choices and aspiration is 58.4%. The vertical column trend analysis illustrates that the respondents aged 20 years were the majority of the respondents without beliefs in career choices and aspirations.

Secondly, in relation to goals and plans about the future, the trend analysis of the vertical column illustrates that 24.8% of the respondents aged 20 years did not have goals and plans about the future, followed by 20.6% of the respondents aged 21 years and 3% of the respondents aged 19 years. The accumulative percentage of the respondents who did not have goals and plans about the future is 48.4%. The trend analysis illustrates no significant difference in percentage in relation to the respondents aged 20 and 21 years. The trend analysis of the horizontal column illustrates that even so, the respondents aged 20 years were the majority of the respondents who did not have goals and plans about the future.

It is critical to note that across all the different transition outcomes, except for one outcome, the respondents aged 20 years were the majority. This could be attributed to the standard deviation analysis which identified age 20 as the mean age.

4.6 Conclusions

The findings of the study presented in this chapter were divided into four sections, namely: biographical data, nature and extent of foster care, experience of foster care drift and transition

out of foster care. Findings of the study were presented in a chronological order and followed the sequence of the data collection tool. Figures and tables provided the visual presentation of the findings whilst numbers and percentages enabled the aggregation and interpretation of the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The discussions emanate from the findings of the study presented in the previous chapter. In this chapter, the discussions are presented following the findings from the previous chapter. As outlined in chapter one of the study, the objectives are as follows: to examine the nature and extent of foster care in Ugu District Municipality, to examine the extent of foster care drift in Ugu District Municipality, to ascertain the role of foster care drift on foster care children's transition out of foster care (adulthood).and to establish the recommendations on effective transition out of foster care system. The discussions presented are supported by relevant literature and theories used in this study.

5.2 Discussion on findings

The discussion is divided into four sections, namely the biographical data, the nature and extent of foster care, the experience of foster care drift and transition out of foster care.

5.2.1 Biographical data

In summary, this study comprised of majority respondents who were males (62.9%), age 20 years (50.3%), most of whom were not married (95.8%) and had passed grade 12 (40.7%).

5.2.1.1 Respondent's current Age

As indicated in the previous chapter, the age of children eligible for foster care services is prescribed and regulated by the relevant statutory laws. This means that foster care has the entry age as well as the exit age. As a result, age remains one of the critical elements in determining the transition into emerging adulthood and, in relation to this study, transition out of care. At the age of 18 years children in foster care are released from the provision of the Children's Act, with the provision to remain in care beyond the age of 18 until 21 years under certain circumstances (Children's Act 38 of 2005). The age of 18 years is the legal landscape and the critical

developmental stage, which traditionally takes place during the late teens to mid-20's (Arnett, 2007). While traditionally age 18 to 21 years is described as the transition period (Simms, 2000; Dickens & Marx, 2020), characterised by privileges and responsibilities to leave home, enter workforce and or higher education and enter long-term romantic relationships (Roisman et al., 2004), this is not always the case. In fact, in terms of Arnett's assertion, the emerging stage does not necessarily mean self-reliance and independent living (2007). This period of development, brings an expectation that one will assume adult roles, be independent and be self-reliant. Sadly, more often they are unprepared for such hard realities (Atkinson, 2008).

5.2.1.2 Respondent's Gender and Age

The findings of the study revealed gender disparities, with males found to be slightly more than females. Evidence from other empirical studies concur that there were more males than females in foster care (Akin, 2010; Vadapalli, Diwakal, Hanna, Vigene & Passini, 2014; Butter, Gale & Marquitta, 2019). This finding could be attributed to the circumstances that prevailed in South Africa between year 2002 to 2006 and 2011 to 2016, respectively, which depicted a gender disparity, where there were more male children than female children (Mentjes et al., 2008; Maluleka, 2018). Research findings show that; universally male children are consistently regarded as lower than females. This assertion was essential considering the distribution of gender at a young age, which is likely to influence the population at a later stage, in this case at emerging adulthood.

5.2.1.3 Respondent's Marital status and Age

The study revealed that the majority of respondents were not married. Against the popular view that marriage is one of the indicators of achievements among young adults (Waite & Lehrer, 2003), Arnett's conception of emerging adulthood provides a different picture (Arnett, 2000). Katamar (2016) states that the period between the late teens and early twenties, is a period of experimentation and exploration of potential direction. In this regard, delaying marriage, particularly for young women, is viewed to have positive benefits such as an increase in their decision-making powers, improved reproductive health, and positive impact on development in

areas such as maternal and infant health, HIV and AIDS, reproductive health, and well-being (Katamar, 2016). In relation to this view, the decline of this nature could be attributed to what is referred to as the emerging adulthood. In contrast to the traditional view, this conception of youth transitioning into adulthood is reported to be influenced by changes related to industrialisation. As such, marriage is no longer regarded as a norm that depicts achievement.

5.2.1.4 Respondent's Level of education and Age

The study found that children in foster care had poor educational outcomes, low academic progress and the high dropout rate. Many were found to be still in school beyond the age of 18 years, which is a direct contrast to the general population. This is likely to be attributed to their frequent moves, placement instability and multiple school transfers often associated with foster care system (Bruskas, 2008; Zetlin et al., 2004). Traditionally, educational attainment remains a universal goal and a fundamental driver in determining one's sense of independence as it enhances career development, employment opportunities, economic emancipation and leading a productive life independent of government assistance. The assertion that due to educational vulnerability, educational outcomes of children in foster care remain a major concern and an area of interest in view of its impact on adulthood outcomes and it remains is alarming (Barth, 1999; Collins, 2001; Mason & Mina, 2001; Finkelstein, et al., 2002). This implies that educational attainment for children in foster care remains a distant goal and their chances of leading an independent and productive life are diminished.

5.3 Nature and extent of foster care

The nature and extent of foster care in Ugu District Municipality indicates that there are six Child Welfare Organisation providing child protection services with the majority of children placed being orphans.

5.3.1 Child Welfare organisations responsible for the placement

The findings suggest that six designated Child Welfare Organisations participated as NonGovernmental Organisations who provided statutory child protection services on behalf of government. Child Welfare agencies assume responsibility when foster youth are removed from their

biological families (Havlicek, 2011), with the aim of protecting vulnerable children (Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004). Their care and protection become the responsibility of the state, as the state has authority over them (Bass et al., 2004; Duncan & Argys, 2007; Hall et al., 2016; Wallis, 2014).

5.3.2 Foster care exit year

Only respondents who had reached the age of maturity and exited foster care system in 2018 were included in the study. The majority aged out at the age of 18 years whilst some experienced extended foster care as legislated. Critical for noting is that in relation to the respondents, year 2018 coincided with the transition from care (moving out) and transition into emerging adulthood (moving in). Age of 18 years is often regarded as the critical developmental stage and respectively denote the legal landscape of ageing out of foster care and the commencement of emerging adulthood. Remaining in care beyond the age of 18 years is not a statutory obligation, rather a provision (Children's Act 38 of 2005). The provision of the extended foster care is viewed as beneficial as it is likely to increase probabilities of youth completing high school, enrolment in college, increases chances of employment and decreases odds of economic distress and hardship and positive adult outcomes (Courtney et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2009).

5.3.3 Age at time of entering foster care

This study found that the majority of respondents entered the foster care system between the ages of 6-10 years. Taking into consideration the exit year 2018, it is apparent that all participants were placed in foster care post 1994. The year 1994 marked a significant historical transition period from the apartheid era to the democratic South Africa. Critical in this transition was the adoption of the welfare approach (Loffel, 2008).

5.3.4 Age at time of foster care exit

The findings suggest that the respondents lingered in care until they reached the age of maturity as determined by the state. The majority aged out at the age of 19 whilst some remained in care beyond the age 19 until the age 21. Literature shows that reaching the age of maturity and being released from the provisions of the law is unanimously determined by the different states and it means the end of eligibility to all foster care related services (Atkinson, 2008; Dickens &

Marx, 2020; Kimberlin et al., 2008; Osgood et al., 2010; Simms et al., 2000; Zetlin et al., 2010).

The assertion that despite efforts to plan thoughtful exits from the foster care system, a significant number of youth tend to leave the system through unplanned exits is critical (McCoy, McMillen & Spitsnagel, 2008). This implies that for youth ageing out of foster care, exit is not a choice rather a statutory obligation as regulated by the legal landscape. Therefore, the contradiction in practice and legal framework is worth noting. This contradiction blatantly portrays a deficiency in practice and gloomy systematic failure. This view is based on the notion that the welfare system is cognizant of the legal landscape and the ramifications thereof, yet based on the empirical findings from different studies, it is evident that ageing out of foster care is still viewed as abrupt and unplanned (McCoy, McMillen & Spitsnagel, 2008; Barklays, 2017).

5.3.5 Activity at the time of placement

The findings suggest that at the time the respondents were placed in foster care, all respondents were of school going age and in school with the majority being orphans. This affirms the stance of government in improving the quality of life through compulsory school attendance as regulated by the South African School's Act (Act 84 of 1996). The Act regulates compulsory school going age where caregivers and parents have the obligation to ensure that children of school going age are in school (South African School's Act 84 of 1996). Edgerton, Roberts and von Below (2012) states that traditionally, educational attainment remains a universal goal and a fundamental driver in determining one's sense of independence as it enhances career development, employment opportunities, economic emancipation that are substantial in smoothing transition to emerging adulthood. Subsequently, permitting individuals to lead a productive life independent of government assistance. This assertion could be attributed to the traditional view that formal education is critical in determining successful adult life and still regarded as the remedy for all social and economic ills (Edgerton et al., 2012). Critical for noting is that childhood is the crucial developmental stage where children are delicate consequently development and protection are essential (Uchitel, Alden, Bhutta, Goldhagen, Narayan, Nick, Wettach, Woolfenden & Mikati, 2019). Yet when children move in care, move through care, they experience adversities that have precautions over life course and render them academically

vulnerable. The role of the education and welfare system remains fundamental and critical in child protection and in buffering children from adversities and enhance quality of life in relation to improved educational outcomes of children in foster care (National Centre Brief, 2010). Therefore, regardless of the foster care challenges, being served by numerous systems that strain their opportunities, schooling remains critical for children in foster care. Formal education enhances the probabilities of quality for life for children in foster, provides them the opportunity to improve educational outcomes and to successfully navigate the transition passage to emerging adulthood and live independently of government support.

5.3.6 Reasons for placement in care

The findings of the study suggest that the vast majority of children placed in foster care were orphans. Therefore, the assertion that the South African Welfare system is overburdened with orphans is confirmed (Hall et al., 2016; Loffel, 2008; Pretorius & Ross, 2010). The findings suggest and or confirm the deep-seated orphan crisis. South Africa witnessed a sharp rise in the number of orphans (Winter, 2018); leaving children vulnerable, without a primary care giver and their basic needs unmet. Firstly, in relation to vulnerability, the extended family became the prominent safety net for orphans with children being absorbed into the extended families (UNICEF, 2003). It is critical to note that the absorption of orphans by extended family members prompted the transformation of the family structure. Secondly, the stance of orphans prompted the government to consider welfare overhaul that transformed the welfare system in an attempt to meet the constitutional obligation. Therefore, the stance of orphans triggered the transition encountered by the government as well as the extended families. The transformation of policies allowed children who were previously disadvantaged to access the welfare system. The welfare system overhaul was a milestone in bridging the poverty gap created during the apartheid regime. The government's primary obligation is child protection and, in an attempt to meet this statutory obligation, the system became bloated with orphans. The government's intentions were legit; however, the approach used was not a good-fit. Therefore, the system burden was the unintended consequence of the welfare approach.

5.3.7 Problems experienced in care

The findings suggest that the use of addictive substances in children in foster care was common and it was a serious issue as children often experience pressure and experiment with drugs or alcohol at an adolescent stage (McIntosh & McKeganey, 2006). The majority of children use addictive substances to fit in and for some as a way of dealing or coping with life challenges. Drug dependency and truanting in school are common and remain areas of concern for children in foster care. The view that truanting in school exacerbates poor educational outcomes is a major concern. Social problems and challenges deeply rooted in the family structure could be viewed as the underlying factors instigating truanting in school (Byer & Kuhn, 2003), with multiple placements over time, emotional instability, and changing schools worsening the situation (Finkelstein et al., 2002). Truancy is often associated with negative school and post school outcomes (Virtanen, Lerkkanen, Poikkeus & Kuorelahti, 2014).

5.3.8 Preparedness before foster care placement

The findings suggest that children in foster care are predominantly orphans who were already in the care of their grandparents and relatives before they were placed in foster care. Circumstances precipitating foster care often-prompt separation of children from the significant others (Mitchell & Kaczynski, 2010) and they transition into care. Evidence shows that more often social workers disregard this critical aspect of preparing children to transition into care, yet transition is regarded as abrupt (Backlay, 2017), psychologically challenging (Marinkovic & Backovic, 2006) and the critical turning point in a child's life (Mitchell & Kaczynski, 2010). This means that preparing children before placement is the critical point of departure that should not be overlooked. Firstly, critical in this aspect is the durable effect that the lack of preparation has on the transition trajectory in relation to moving in care and moving through care as determined by Schlossberg transition theory. Secondly, foster care experience is viewed as emotionally traumatic from the child's perspective and it is associated with detrimental developmental outcomes and lower educational achievement (Barth, 1999). This means that when social workers overlook the aspect of preparing children before care, the children's lives are in jeopardy and no reason would be suitable enough to validate this deficit in practice.

The preparation process may commence with several discussions with the child or the young person about the prospective family (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013). When children are placed in foster care, they transition into state care, therefore preparation before care is essential to assist them to navigate the welfare system and adapt in care. Firstly, in relation to the welfare system, Child Welfare Information Gateway (2020) states that child welfare is a multifaceted system with specific procedures that differ from state to state. This means that preparing and supporting the child when moving in care is critical in assisting the child to navigate the child welfare system and the legal processes, to enable the child to understand what is happening and the reasons thereof. Secondly, in relation to adjustment in care preparation, it is fundamental that children and youth moving in care are supported to comprehend the past events and to deal the feelings and emotions connected to the experiences of trauma (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013). Critical in this, is the notion that preparation before care could buffer the child from the long-term life course psychological effects.

5.3.9 Familiarity with foster family

These findings indicate that the majority of children placed in foster care were orphans who were predominantly placed in kinship care. Therefore, the vast majority shared blood ties with their foster families and only a few were placed in non-kinship care. The fundamental principle of Ubuntu in the African culture is premised on the resilient foundation of traditional forms of care entrenched in the fiber of the Africans. The growing number of orphans compelled grandparents to assume the parental role (Croxford, 2011, Koen et al., 2013). The stance of orphans prompted formalised government intervention through foster care, thereby providing financial muscle to meet the basic needs of the children who were already in the care of relatives. As a result of the compromised traditional forms of care, the South African foster care system is overburdened with relatives and grandparents being expected to support the increasing numbers of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (Hall et al., 2006; Lofell, 2008; Pretorius & Ross, 2010). In this instance, grandparents abandoned their roles as they assumed parental role, consequently experiencing transition as well. This transition trajectory within families affected both the child who moved in care as well as the grandparent who assumed the parental role. The assumption of the parental role affirms the assertion that lives are lived interdependently, therefore transition in one's person life often entails transitions for other people as well (Elder et al., 2004).

5.3.10 Respondent's struggle to adapt in care

The findings suggest that the majority of respondents struggled to adapt in foster care. When they were placed in foster care, they struggled to adapt as they were not prepared to transition from being cared for by their parents and became the state responsibility. Schiller (2015) asserts that the loss of a parent whether it is a result of death or state intervention is arguably traumatic for any child and can lead to an irreparable sense of loss that can stunt development and lead to behavioral problems. Thus, social work services are critical in addressing the psychological needs of children who have experienced loss to smooth the grief process. The notion of pre-foster care experiences and child adjustment are considered fundamental in determining developmental aspects and how the child adjust in foster care (Simms et al, 2000).

The aspect of moving in care and adjustment in care could be viewed as essential in eroding earlier attachments to the significant others and could have dreadful consequences throughout life course. Brukas (2008) asserts that most institutions have orientation systems in place aimed at orientating employees about the organization, yet children in foster care are deprived of such orientation. This means that children in foster care are often plunged at the deep-end and must learn to navigate the welfare system on their own. They are expected to move in care and move through care without the necessary preparation and essential support to aid them to successfully navigate the welfare system. It is critical to note that the detrimental psychological and developmental effects of this transition process are disregarded as the successful navigation of the transition process is left to chance. Foster care orientation, educating children in foster care about foster care and their relationship to foster care is noteworthy taking into consideration the age and the level of maturity of the child. Lack of or limited preparation before care could be considered as a deficiency in the welfare system and in practice, this is based on the view that preparation before care is fundamental.

5.4 Experience of foster care drift

The findings of the study suggest that the majority of the respondents were orphans who drifted in care until they aged out. Foster care drift could be attributed to the notion that children in foster care were orphans who experienced adversities precipitated before care and in care. What is critical in this section is that interruptions, extensions, change in placements in more than one

occasion and movement from one temporary foster family to the next were substantial in shaping foster care drift and were the unpremeditated consequences of welfare approach.

The majority of the respondents experienced foster care disruptions. The longer the child stays in foster care the greater the probabilities that foster care will disrupt and that child will drift in care. This could be attributed to the notion that when children move in care, they experience transition. Critical for noting is that Backlays (2017) regards transition as abrupt, whilst Marinkovic and Backovic (2006) regard it as psychologically challenging and Mitchell and Kaczynski (2010) regard it as a critical turning point in a child's life. Thus, moving in care and moving through care is traumatic. Therefore, due to the traumatic nature of transition, lack of preparation before care, adversities experienced before care and in care, foster care placements are likely to disrupt. Heins and Marshal (2003) assert that life course experiences permit connections to be made between earlier and late life course experiences. For children in foster, this implies that life course experiences allow for the linkages to be made in relation to the trauma experienced before care, in care and moving out of care, and the negative psychological development that have detrimental effects over a life course.

Foster care is temporary in nature; this implies that when children are placed in foster care social work services are critical for the transitioning in care and transitioning out of care. This view was constructed on the foundation that literature is in harmony with the scenery notion that foster care was designed to be temporary, however most often children linger in care until they age out (Atkinson, 2008; McNamara-Barry & Steffe, 2012). Hall et al, (2016); Lofell, (2008), Pretorius and Ross (2010) are of the view that in South Africa, the majority of children in foster care are orphans who cannot be efficiently removed from the system. The findings of the study ratify this view. It is critical to note that the transition to the welfare approach enabled the majority of orphans to move in care and move through care on the basis that they were "orphans" and "without visible means of support". As determined by Elder et al., (2003), the principle of time and place was significant in the South African political transition as it influenced the adoption of the welfare approach. Welfare White Paper 1997 and Integrated Service Delivery Model were instrumental in the development and adoption of the welfare approach (Strydom, Schiller & Orme, 2020). The welfare transition played a significant role in determining the fate of orphans. Sadly, orphans were not eligible for adoption nor family reunification services. Regrettably, the system became

overwhelmed, as orphans could not be efficiently removed from the system. Rather their stay in foster care was extended as regulated in terms of section 159 and 176 of Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005). Therefore, they lingered and drifted in care until the legal landscape automatically forced them out of the system. The findings of the study established that the majority of the respondents moved from one temporal family to another. It is also critical to note that the majority of the respondents were orphans and were not eligible for either adoption or family reunification.

Therefore, they could not be efficiently removed from the system. In such instances where family reunification or adoption are not suitable options, the Children's Institute (2000) argues that the law tolerates the welfare system in overlooking the aspect of reunification. This provision by law paved way for lengthier stays in foster care with social work services deemed instrumental in determining the duration of stay. As a result, foster children have become an invisible population shuffled through life as they are moved from one foster care placement to another (Berardi & Morton, 2017) and linger in care while awaiting a permanent placement (Bass et al., 2004). These constant movements expose the child to further trauma as the child is compelled to constantly adapt in care exposing the child to developmental psychological effects that are detrimental over a life course.

Change in placement is the unavoidable ramification of foster care disruptions. Foster care is temporary in nature. As determined by Atkinson (2008) the temporary nature of foster care is based on the child's welfare fundamental assumption that children grow and function best in nurturing, stable and lifelong families. However, is critical to note the contradiction in practice, as this fundamental assumption is not realized. Therefore, perpetual change of placement defies this fundamental principle, as children in foster care grow up in wobbly environments that are likely to expose them to supplementary wounds. The repercussion of these unnecessary changes have substantial implications on a child's well-being (Waid et al., 2016), children are compelled to change families, adapt in new environment and new schools (Anderson et al., 2012) and earlier attachments established are likely to be eroded (Strijker et al., 2008). What is more concerning being the psychological effects of the wounds sustained before care, wounds sustained in care and their implication thereof over a life course when the child transition out of care and transition into emerging adulthood. As determined by Elder, Jonson and Crosnoe, (2003; 2004) transition to emerging adulthood implies that development does not end at age

18, rather adults can and do experience fundamental changes- biological, psychological, social that are developmentally meaningful.

5.5 Transition out of care

In this section, NEET and social support are the critical issues that are worth nothing. The findings suggest that the majority of youth who transitioned out of care were not in employment, education, or training. Schlosberg's transition theory determines transition as moving in, moving through and moving out. Youth leaving care concurrently transition from state care to self-independence (moving out) and transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood (moving in). Transitions occurring concurrently are designated to as "pile up" transition. Heins et al., (2003) points out that "pile up" transition has detrimental effects, and as such transition could be viewed as critical turning points (Mitchell & Kaczynski, 2010). Life course theory determines that transitions and turning points have the potential to open up new opportunities, alter life goals, and create stress (McLeod & Almazan, 2003).

NEET and social support are interrelated in determining the transition outcomes. They are interrelated in that youth transitioning into adulthood as NEET and with disrupted social support are likely to experience negative transition outcomes and are likely to navigate the transition passage unsuccessfully. Substantial in this period is the effective negotiation of the transition passage. It is also critical to note that successful transition to emerging adulthood is a key challenge facing youth (Mlatsheni & Ranchhod, 2017). Employment, education, and training are central in measuring successful transition (Dickens & Marx, 2020) and in the lives of the youth during transition (Cusick, Courtney, Havelick & Hess, 2010). The critical aspect is based on the popular view that education is still recognized as the key instrument in human capital development (Stats SA, 2020). Education is regarded as critical in influencing the transition outcomes for youth leaving care (Stern & Nakamura, 2012) and employment is still regarded as critical for the realisation of the successful transition to independency and into adulthood. However, against the backdrop that employment, education, and training are viewed as central in determining successful transition, the majority of youth are regarded as NEET. It

is therefore crucial to note that the respondents transition or emancipate to emerging adulthood as vulnerable.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that although the majority had adequate social support, nonetheless they struggled to adapt upon leaving care. Social support is fundamental in providing a secure base for the successful navigation to adulthood (Collins, 2001). Families of origin, foster care families and romantic partners are crucial sources of social support that aid the young person to successfully navigate the transition passage into emerging adulthood. Even so, it is worth noting that most likely as a result of the foster care trajectory, these support systems are likely to be disrupted and or contaminated therefore rendering them ineffective in providing the much needed critical support. More often, youth ageing out of foster care is abrupt and the majority of those leaving care receive little or no preparation on how to successfully negotiate the transition passage (Atkinson, 2008, Collins, 2001). Ageing out of foster care and transitioning to adulthood comes with the expectation that one will be self-reliant and self-sufficient and assume adult roles. Sadly, the reality that young adults are not prepared to deal with the hard realities of adulthood (Atkinson, 2008), resulting in the majority struggling to successfully negotiate the transition passage to emerging adulthood and to adapt upon leaving care.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the discussions emanating from the findings of the study presented in the previous chapter. The discussions were divided into sections, namely biographical data, the nature and extent of foster, the experience of foster care drift and transition out of foster care. Lastly the discussion of the outcomes informing foster care drift and the outcomes measuring the transition out of care were presented. The discussions presented were supported with relevant literature and the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the conclusion and recommendations of the study. The chapter presents the synopsis of the research problem, followed by the discussion on the sample profile for each research questions. The research questions are interrelated to the findings obtained in chapter four. Conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the study, recommendations on effective transitions to the Department of Social Development as the custodian of the Children's Act (38/2005) and for the future research are presented.

6.2 Synopsis of the study

The study aimed to investigate the influence of foster care drift on foster care children's transitioning out of foster care into adulthood. A quantitative research methodology was adopted. The study provided some insights on the nature and extent of foster care, the extent of foster care drift and influence of foster care drift on transitioning out of foster care. Recommendations on effective transition out of foster care were made. For this reason, the study focused on youth between the ages of 19 up to 21 years who were placed in foster care as children and who transitioned from childhood into adulthood in year 2018.

6.3 Conclusions related to research questions

This section outlines major findings as well as the conclusions reached in relation to the findings of the study on chapter four. Research questions were used to present the conclusions.

6.3.1 What is the nature and extent of foster care in Ugu District Municipality?

This question intended to explore the nature and extent of foster care in locality, which is Ugu District Municipality. This question was addressed in that there were few relevant findings that were found.

The findings in relation to this question could be summarised as follows:

- The vast majority of respondents were orphaned children who were placed in foster care post 1994, an era characterized by HIV and AIDS pandemic and had functional relationship with significant others.
- The majority of respondents were not prepared before they were placed in foster care.

The respondents of the study were reported to have accessed the foster care system post 1994. The rapid increase of number of orphans challenged the resilience of the extended family and the traditional forms of care, which were instituted and erected on the premise of Ubuntu, rendering them defenseless. The stance of orphans prompted the transformation of the welfare system, as the government championed for and adoption of the welfare approach. On the footing, “without visible means of support” orphans were amongst the children who were regarded as in need of care and protection as regulated in section 150 of the Children’s Act (38 of 2005) and were placed in foster care. The goal of foster care is to protect vulnerable children and once children are placed in foster care the state assume responsibility.

South African literature point to the notion that the political transition from the post-apartheid era prompted an overhaul transformation of the welfare system (Hall et al, 2016, Lofell, 2008, Ross & Pretorius, 2010). The adoption of the laws and policies influenced the transformation of the welfare system, which enabled children who were previously disadvantaged to access the welfare system and to address the injustices of the post-colonial South Africa. On the contrary, the approach swamped the welfare system as the children who were previously disadvantaged accessed the welfare system. The influx of children into the system exerted pressure on social workers as they could barely meet the mandate of placing orphans in the system. The circumstances did not permit the social workers the prospect to prepare children before the placement, consequently children were deprived the opportunity to be prepared for the foster care placement. The adoption of the welfare approach paved the current foster care scenery. Foster care system is temporal in nature as it was designed for the abused, neglected and abandoned children who were destined to be returned to parental care when the circumstances were conducive. It is worth noting that the vast majority of children in foster care are orphans who cannot be efficiently removed from the system and the system is considered to be on the

verge of collapse. The status of the welfare system is the unintended consequence of the welfare approach. The study argues that the decision to attach the welfare approach to the existing and under resourced system was ad hoc and unplanned.

6.3.2 What is the extent of foster care drift applicable in Ugu District Municipality?

This question aimed to examine the extent of foster care drift in Ugu District Municipality. In relation to this question, few relevant findings were found and are summarised as follows:

- The majority of respondents experienced foster care disruptions and foster care extensions
- The majority moved from one temporal placement to another and changed placement in more than one occasion

Foster care drift highlights that the majority of respondents were orphans and as results, they were not effectively removed from the system. Significant in the findings is that the welfare approach immobilized the welfare system, as the children could not be efficiently removed from the welfare system; instead, children lingered in care until they aged out. Foster care extensions regulated the lengthier stays in foster care, consequently foster care extensions are not without challenges. Drift in care is accredited to adversities experienced before care and in care. The deficiency of the welfare approach regulated entry of orphans in care, and consequently overloaded the system. The stance of orphans was the primary concern of the government; sadly, the regulation of the exit of these orphans was not a subject of concern at the time. Sadly, that aspect cannot be disregarded any longer. The numerous North Gauteng High court interventions that seek to compel the Department of Social Development to address the foster care backlog challenges attest to the notion that the foster care system is on the verge of collapse.

The age upon entry and the age upon exit are significant in portraying the drift in care whilst the change of placement for more than one occasion and the movement from one foster family to another depicts the trajectory in care. The powerlessness of the welfare system is the unintended consequence of the welfare approach since orphans were placed in foster care due to economic benefit, therefore they were not eligible for family reunification or adoption, and rather the legal landscape forced them out of the system. The unintended consequences of the welfare approach, just to mention the few are that (i) children stay longer in care and are not effectively removed

from the system and the system is in the verge of collapse, (ii) children are susceptible to foster care disruptions and (iii) they drift in care without permanency until they reach the age of maturity. The majority remained in care for more than two years. It is critical to note that the respondents who were between 6-10 years when placed in foster care are the majority of those who remained longer in care.

6.3.3 How does foster care drift influence transition into adulthood?

This question intended to ascertain the role of foster care drift on foster care children's transition out of foster care. Few relevant findings were established and could be summarised as follows:

- The majority of respondents were not in employment, not in education nor training
- The majority maintained contact with friends, family of origin and foster family
- The vast majority were involved in romantic relationships
- The majority struggled to adapt upon leaving care, struggled to cope with the new changes and the coping skills were inadequate
- The majority did not have career aspirations and choices with no plans and goals about the future

Youth transitioning out of care often experience chronic levels of unemployment; they are not in education nor training. The majority were not in employment, not in education nor training and the aptitude to successfully navigate the transition passage was significantly compromised. Employment, Education and Training are universally recognized as measures of successful transition into adulthood. For youth transitioning out of foster care, the NEET can be viewed as the transition pitfall that has the potential to trap them until mid-adulthood. NEET youth transitioning out of foster care do not effectively navigate the transition passage as they are trapped in the transition pitfalls that diminish their chances to effectively navigate the transition passage to economic independence and self-reliance. Rather, they transition with vulnerability as they continue to depend on significant others and government for support to help them navigate the transition passage effectively. These outcomes are perpetuated by the deficiency in the foster care system, further wounds sustained in care and the dynamic nature of transition.

As a result, they are forced out of the system wounded, vulnerable and fragile. The government's mandate is to protect children; therefore, it can be concluded that the government failed on its mandate.

The ramification of foster care drift highlights the transition trajectory to adulthood. The role of social support during transition to emerging adulthood is critical as it buffers the youth in transition from negative outcomes and aid them to successfully navigate the transition passage. Youth transitioning out of foster experience concurrent transition and this pile up transition makes the period more distressing, and the role of social support can never be over emphasized enough. Transition out of care to emerging adulthood means the termination of all state provided services even if the need still exists, whilst the transition from adolescence to emerging adulthood comes with the expectation that one will become self-sufficient, independent, and self-reliant. Sadly, literature seem to concur on the notion that more often they transition with sporadic support. It is also critical to note the contradiction in the study in relation to that aspect as the majority transitioned with stable social support from both foster family, family of origin and romantic partners. However, it is critical to interrogate the quality of support and the adequacy, therefore. One should bear in mind two critical aspects; support does not necessarily mean that (i) the support is adequate (ii) it responds to the developmental needs of the young person. This is based on the view that with the support they had, they struggled to adapt upon leaving care and did not cope with the new changes. Empirical evidence from previous studies suggests that youth leaving care receive little or no preparation from the state (Simms et al., 2000). Therefore, this deficiency or the crack in the system can no longer be flouted. The anticipation is that social support would compensate for the deficit in the system and aid them to navigate the transition passage. Nevertheless, it is distinguished that the social support was more skewed towards the provision of basic needs rather than empowering one to become self-reliant and independent. On the other hand, one could argue the aspect of resilience and the deficiency of motivation from an individual. However, the issue of adequate social support, whether social support responds to the developmental needs of the young person or not is beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, as a result the majority of youth transitioned out of care as "NEET" and the

social support did not buffer them from the negative outcomes. This confirms that the respondents of the study did not efficiently navigate the transition passage into emerging adulthood.

6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 Recommendations for the study

The study revealed that the majority of respondents were not prepared before they were placed in foster care. Based on this finding, it is recommended that social workers should prepare children before they are placed in foster care in order to assist them to navigate the welfare system and adjust in care.

The study revealed that the majority of respondents were not in employment, not in education nor training; therefore, it is recommended that youth should be trained and equipped with relevant and appropriate technical skills relevant to the labour market to increase the employability chances. Preparing youth transitioning out of care for exit would assist them in navigating the transition passage effectively; reduce the number of youth who become “NEET” and those who re-enter the system at a later stage.

The study revealed that the majority struggled to adapt upon leaving care, struggled to cope with the new changes and the coping skills were inadequate. Therefore, it is recommended that the government should prepare the youth to age out of foster care system and before foster care grant is terminated alternative plans should be in place to ensure that their needs are still met until they can be independent. Youth ageing out of foster care should be linked with existing training institutions for technical skills especially those who dropped out of school.

The study revealed that the majority of children in foster care experienced foster care drift. Based on this finding, it is recommended that social workers should provide supervision and therapeutic foster care services to address the psychological needs of children in foster care and mitigate the negative impact of foster care drift.

6.4.2 Recommendations for practice

Foster care exit strategies and or programs aimed at preparing children for the effective foster care exit be developed and regulated. There is a need to plead with the government, the Department of Social Development in particular as the custodian of Children's Act to consider the regulation and development of exit strategies for each child in foster care.

The development of guidelines and policy framework on foster care exit strategies will provide strategic direction as well as sensitisation of social service professionals about the effects of foster care. Through policy guidelines and implementation, social service professionals shall be mandated to provide foster care therapeutic services and implement and review the transition plan as regulated. Therefore, the guidelines will ensure the active participation of both the foster child and the foster parent, in doing so giving them a voice in issues affecting them.

The issue of capacity building on foster care therapeutic services and the social work caseload are critical in ensuring efficiency in dealing with foster care cases and ensuring uninterrupted service.

To alleviate the foster care system, orphans placed in foster care should be effectively removed from the system through the implementation of the proposed kinship grant.

6.4.3 Recommendations for future research

A study on causal factors and the foster care drift mitigating factors that could buffer children from drifting is recommended because the study reveals the extent of foster care drift. The psychological and or long-term impact of foster care drift cannot be ignored as the psychological impact of foster care drift outweighs the economic impact.

6.5 Concluding remark

The current status of the welfare system is the unintended consequence of the welfare approach adopted by the government post 1994. The South African foster care background indicate that orphans accessed the system as a result of the economic benefit; as such they linger and drift in care until they age out of the system. The welfare approach rendered the system ineffective, as orphans are not efficiently removed from the system; as a result, the foster care system is on the verge of collapse. The implementation of the long proposed kinship grant is critical to ease the overburdened system. It is substantial that the government regulate foster care exit strategies, develop a policy framework and guidelines for the implementation of foster care exit strategies. Additionally, government should appropriate funding for effective implementation of the exit strategies aimed at empowering youth leaving care to effectively navigate the transition passage to emerging adulthood and live independently of government support.

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APPENDIX 1

INFORMED CONSENT

Researcher : Miss N. Mhlauli

Contact Details: 0722338513

Institution : University of KwaZulu-Natal

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE ON THE RESEARCH STUDY

Aim

To investigate the influence of foster care drift on foster care children's transitioning out of foster care into adulthood.

Objectives

- To examine the nature and extent of foster care in Ugu District Municipality.
- To examine the extent of foster care drift in Ugu District Municipality.
- To ascertain the role of foster care drift on foster care children's transition out of foster care (adulthood).
- To establish the recommendations on effective transition out of foster care system

BEFORE YOU TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY: PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING

PROCESS: As the participant, you are requested to take part in the completion of the questionnaire by sharing information regarding the exposure to foster care drift whilst in foster care and how did you transition from being cared for by the state to adulthood. This will be a self-administered questionnaire which is likely to take 30 minutes to complete.

ANONIMITY: To protect your identity and ensure anonymity, the pseudonym is used. Moreover, the information collected will be kept confidential, which will be the responsibility of the researcher - Miss N. Mhlauli.

HARM: There are no physical or psychological harm anticipated in this study. However, to deal with unforeseen circumstances, should the study trigger some negative emotions, you will be referred to a qualified Social Worker for counselling purposes in the Department of Social Development providing services in your respective area.

REMUNERATION: Be advised that you will not be compensated for participating in the study, in either monetary value or rewards. However, your participation in this study will add value and contribute towards helping others in similar situations. The findings of the

study will be used to improve social work services for children who are exposed to foster care drift whilst in foster care and who transitioned to adulthood.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: You are not obliged to participate in the study, your participation in is voluntary and you may terminate at any stage of the study.

KEEPING OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS: The researcher will make every reasonable effort to ensure that the information collected is kept strictly confidential. It is only the researcher who will know you're identifying details and those of your family. The research will be documented and kept safe in a lockable cabinet for a prescribed period (5 years), thereafter it will be disposed with through shredding (hard copy) and deletion (soft copy).

For further enquiries, you may contact Miss N. Mhlauli during office hours

I the undersigned understand my rights and I am signing this consent form out of my own free will. I understand the aims of the study, how is it going to be done and why is it done

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE:

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Ms. N. Mhlauli about the nature, conduct, benefit, and the objectives of the study.

I have also received, read and understood the above written information regarding the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost.

I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form on request.

In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerized system by the researcher.

Surname and Initials

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Surname and Initials

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact

1. the researcher Miss N. Mhlauli at 0722338513 or

2. Dr. M.S. Sithole who is the research supervisor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Applied Human Sciences at 031 260 3802 or
3. The UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research is voluntary and participants may withdraw participation at any point. In the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation the participants will not incur penalty or loss of treatment or other benefit to which they are normally entitled. There will not be any consequences to the participant for withdrawal from the study.

The Data will be stored in the voice recorder and be locked in the shelf. Only the researcher and supervisor will have excess to the data. The researcher will destroy this data after five years.

CONSENT

I

.....
..... have been informed about the study entitled (Critical Analysis on Foster Care Services: Relationship between Foster Care Drift and Transitioning out of Foster Care) by Ms. N.

Mhlauli I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at 0722338513 or email 220074717@stu.ukzn.ac.za or Dr M.S. Sithole who is the research supervisor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal- Applied Human Sciences at 031 260 3802 or email Sitholem3@ukzn.ac.za.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Telephonic -record my interview

YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Biographical Data

Please supply the following personal information by making a cross (X)

1.1 Current Age	Response	
18 years	1	
19 years	2	
20 years	3	
21 years	4	

1.2 Gender	Response	
Male	1	
Female	2	
Undefined	3	

1.3 Marital Status	Response	
Single	1	
Married	2	
Divorced	3	
Other (Specify _____)	4	

1.3 Marital Status	Response	
Single	1	
Married	2	
Divorced	3	
Other (Specify _____)	4	

1.4 Level of education	Response	
Grade 9 or below	1	

Grade 10	2	
Grade 11	3	
Grade 12	4	
Post matric	5	

Objective 1: To examine the nature and extent of foster care in Ugu District

Section B: Nature and extent of foster Care

Please choose your answer/ response by marking with a cross (X)

2.1 Child Welfare Organisation responsible for Placement	Umzambe	Ekubusisweni		Vulamehlo	Port Shepstone	Margate	Izingolweni
Response	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2.2 Foster care exit year	2018	2019	2020
Response	1	2	3

2.3 Foster care entrance age	5 years or less	6- 10 years	11 to 15 years	16 years and above
Response	1	2	3	4

2.4 Foster care exit age	18 years	19 years	20 years
Response	1	2	3

2.5 Activity at the time of placement	Not of schooling going age	Primary school learner	High school learner	Tertiary	Other Specify (_____)
Response	1	2	3	4	5

2.6 Reason for placement	Abuse	Neglect	Abandonment	Loss of one or both parents	Other Specify (_____)
Response	1	2	3	4	5

2.7 Problems in experienced care	Substance usage/abuse	Crime	Truantiing School	Ill-health	Other Specify (_____)
Response	1	2	3	4	5

2.8 Preparation before placement	Informed prior to removal	Informed at a time of removal	Informed after removal	Never been informed	Other Specify (_____)
Response	1	2	3	4	5

2.9 Familiarity with foster care family	No knowledge	Limited knowledge	Very well	Other Specify (_____)
Response	1	2	3	4
2.10 I have struggled to adapt in foster care placement due to lack of preparation	Adapted easy	Did not adapt easy	Uncertain	
	1	2	3	

Objective 2: To determine the nature and extent of foster care drift applicable in Ugu District

Section C: Experience of foster care drift

Indicate whether you agree or not with the statements below. Please indicate your answer/response with

Across (X)

3.1 I have experienced foster care interruptions	Yes	No	Uncertain
	1	2	3

3.2 I have experienced foster care extensions	Yes	No	Uncertain
	1	2	3

--	--	--	--

3.3 I have changed placement in more than one occasion	Yes	No	Uncertain
	1	2	3

3.4 I have experienced movement from one foster family to another	Yes	No	Uncertain
	2	2	3

Objective 3: To ascertain the role of foster care drift on foster care children's transition out of foster care (adulthood).

Section D: Transition out of foster care

Indicate how you agree with the statement below. Please indicate your answer with a cross (X)

D1: Current occupation	Ye	No	Uncertain
4.1 Are you in Employment, Education or Training?			

D2: Social Support (Friendship, Family & Intimate relations)	Yes	No	Uncertain
4.2 I have maintained relationship with my friends			
4.3. I have maintained relationship with my family of origin			
4.4. I have maintained relationship with my foster family			
4.5. I am involved in a romantic relationship			

D 3: Social Identity	Yes	No	Uncertain
4.6 I adapted easily upon exiting foster care			
4.7 I managed to find a way to cope with the new changes			
4.8 I regard the coping strategies applied as functional			

D4: Adaptation	Yes	No	Uncertain
4.11 I believe I have what it takes in relation to career aspirations and choice			
4.12 I have clear goals and plans about my future			

Objective 4: To establish the recommendations on effective transition out of foster care system

Section E: Recommendations

4. What exit strategies and support measures would you recommend for improvement of children's outcomes of foster care

APPENDIX 3

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



10 September 2020

Miss Nolusindiso Mhlauli (220074717)

School of Applied Human Science

Howard College

Dear Miss Mhlauli,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001706/2020

Project title: Critical Analysis of Foster Care Services: Relationship between Foster Care Drift and Transitioning out of Foster Care

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification — Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 17 June 2020 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 10 September 2021.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC040414040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000 Tel: +27 31 260 8350 1 4557 1 3587

Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg
Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX 4

GATEKEPPERS LETTERS



SOUTH AFRICA
MARGATE CHILD WELFARE
Non-Profit Organisation No. 002-239 / PBO 13000 2009

All correspondence to be addressed to Child Welfare: Margate Office

Tel: (039) 312 2015/31

Fax: (039) 312 2006

P.O.Box 13, Margate, 4275

Email: margatechildwelfare@telkomnet.com

22 May 2020

Ms. N. Mhlauli,

Request for Data Base Access for Studies

As per your request our Chair and Executive Committee have reviewed your request for access to our data base (for the required category listed only). Please be advised that our Organisation will give consent based on the progress of the Covid- 19 Lockdown Stages and Regulations set out by the State, Health and Safety Regulations but not limited to, and the final decision of the Management Committee which shall be non-negotiable.

We understand that your request is to be confirmed by the Ethics Committee of the University. Once you have received their approval, kindly forward a copy to Child Welfare Margate.

1. Upon our receipt of the approval from the Ethics Committee from the University and forwarding us the confirmation, our social workers will collate the respective data base which will be limited to point 2. Our Supervisor, Mrs Busi Mdunjana shall be your contact in this aspect.
2. Access will only be for the data base of clients who turned 18 in 2018 and beyond who received a Foster Grant or were discharged (you have elaborated this with Mrs Mdunjana as per telephonic conversation on 21st May 2020).
3. To retain our codes of ethics our clients will be contacted by our social workers to obtain their approval, prior to you communicating with them. This will also eliminate those who are not willing to partake in the study. We understand that the numbers are dependent on how many clients from other organizations are obtained.
- 4- Prior to your commencement, as requested to utilize our office, you are required to contact the Office Manager in order to obtain the requirements of Health and Safety that will be determined by our Office Manager and Executive Committee at that given time which will fall in line with the Covid-19 Regulations, Health and Safety but not limited to. These conditions will be nonnegotiable.
- 5 — Margate Child Welfare is not responsible for transporting clients to and from home whether it be utilization of our vehicles or financial

Ricard Botoft (Mr.)

CHAIRPERSON

Child Welfare SA Margate c/0 039-3122015



CHILD WELFARE SOUTH AFRICA

UMZINTO, PBO No. 930058952

Minarate Road, Umzinto

In reply please quote:

Tel: (039) 974 1872 /974 3056

Your Ref:

Fax: (039) 974 1872

P.O. Box 35, Umzinto.

Enquiries:

NPO. No.: 002-330

Email: childwelfareumzinto@telkomsa.net

Ms. Nolusindiso Mhlauli

RE: PERMISSION FOR TO CONDUCT A STUDY - STUDENT NO. 220074717

This correspondence serves to confirm permission to conduct a study at our organisation for the abovementioned student.

Thank you

Yours faithfully



All of communications to be addressed to the secretary



EZINQOLENI

NPO. No. 01163

P.O.BOX 339

IZINGOLWENI, 4260

TO: WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE- PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN RESPECT OF MISS N. MHLAULI

This correspondence serves as the confirmation that Miss MHLAULI NOLUSINDISO has been granted permission to conduct her study with our organization. Access to the data base of youth who aged out of foster care as per her request is granted. In addition to that, any kind of assistance needed in relation to her study will be granted.

For further enquiries please do not hesitate to contact Mrs M. B. Mzibomvu (the chairperson)

Signature

Date: 06.08 2020



CHILD WELFARE

SOUTH AFRICA

EKUBUSISWENI

NPO No: 002-285

Mgayi Area, Ward 08, 4200

Phone/ ucingo / Telefoon: P. O. BOX 445
(039)9743056

FAX
:

Enquiries | Imibuzo | Navrae: Ms. P. Zuma Umzinto E-mail: child_welfareumzinto@telkomsa.net

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE- PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN RESPECT OF MISS NOLUSINDISO

MHLAULI: STUDENT NO- 220074717

Miss Nolusindiso Mhlauli approached our organization requesting permission to conduct research. This correspondence serves to confirm that the organization has granted her permission to conduct the study. She is permitted to have access our database for children who aged out of foster care as per her request. Social Worker will be available to assist her throughout the study should she needs further assistance For further enquiries, you may contact Mr. S.R Nene at 073 7375 574 (Chairperson).

Yours faithful



Mr. S.R. Nene

Chairperson

Date 03/09/2020

CHILD WELFARE SOUTH AFRICA
EKUBUSISWENI
002-285 NPO
P.O. BOX 445
UMZINTO 4200



To whom this may concern

Re: Confirmation for Ms. Mhlauli Nolusindiso to conduct or use of the Organisation's information for the use of Research

On behalf of the organisation: this serves to confirm that Ms. Mhlauli Nolusindiso is permitted to conduct her research at the organisation and have access to some of the information as required but solely for conduction of Research studies only. Yours in service

[REDACTED]
MRS. INL MUBHLO

Chairperson

CHILD WELFARE S.A. VULAMEHLO
PO BOX 310

SOUTH AFRICA

P.O. Box 310

VULAMEHLO
NPO. No.: 002-405

Scottburgh
4180

Email:
cwsavulamehlo@gmait.com



CHILD WELFARE SOUTH AFRICA
UMZUMBE CHILD WELFARE

Your ref:

Enquires:

NPO.No. 01163

NPO NO.002-558

P.O.BOX 46038, HIBBERDNE, 4240

TEL.....

Date: 21.07.2020

DEAR SIR OR MADAM

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN RESPECT OF MISS NOLUSINDISO
MHLAULI (STUDENT NO. 220074717)**

This letter serves to confirm that CWSA-UMZUMBE has granted Ms. Nolusindiso Mhlauli permission to conduct a study and she is allowed to have access to the office data base of children who aged out of foster care as per her request.

Should the above-mentioned student need any assistance the social workers will provide such assistance.

For further inquiries, you may contact Mrs. G. Lushaba at 073 5671 113

Yours Sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of G. Lushaba.

G. Lushaba

Chairperson (CWSA-Umzumbe)

**APPENDIX 5 APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY
(GATEKEEPER LETTER)**

THE CHAIRPERSON: CHILD WELFRE SOCIETY (UMZINTO CHILD WELFARE)

**SUBJECT : RE- REQUEST SEEKING APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A
STUDY: DEGREE IN MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN
SOCIAL WORK IN RESPECT OF MISS NOLUSINDISO
MHLAULI**

STUDENT NO : 220074717 .

DATE : 25 APRIL 2020

PURPOSE

The purpose of this request is to seek permission from the chairperson and the management committee to undertake the following

- Conduct a study in relation to furthering studies in the Master of Social Science in Social Work Degree
- To be allowed access to the data base and records of the youth who aged out of foster care in year 2018.

BACKGROUND

Miss N. Mhlauli is the employee of the Department of Social Development based at Ugu District Office. She is a registered Social Worker responsible for the coordination of HIV and AIDS Program in Ugu District. Miss Mhlauli is registered with the University of Kwa Zulu-Natal as a full-time student advancing her studies in the Master of Social Science in Social Work Degree in 2020. Her interest is on foster care services and the proposed study is as follows:

RESEARCH TITTLE

Critical Analysis of Foster Care Services: Relationship between Foster Care Drift and Transitioning out of Foster Care (Adulthood).

RESEARCH PROCESS

The respondents of the proposed study involve the youth who were placed in foster care and transitioned from being cared for by the state to being independent. The participants must have reached 18 years in 2018 and received foster care services from your organisation. Considering that this will be a quantitative study, the data self-administered questionnaires will be used to collect data. The collated data will be statistically analysed.

The proposed study will be undertaken within the auspices of the University of KwaZuluNatal as per protocols determined by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC), therefore as the researcher I am ethically bound by the prescribed ethical provisions. The researcher wishes to emphasise that, among the identified ethical aspects, she is obliged to maintain confidentiality in relation to information.

MOTIVATION

The state has the responsibility to protect children from any form of harm and abuse. Child protection is captured in section 28 (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa as well as the Children's Act No 38/2005. Non-Profit Organisations providing child protection services are the extension arm of Department of Social Development. Chapter 7 of the Children Act No 38/2005 mandates the registration of Child Protection Organisations. Child Protection Organisation are registered in terms of section 109 of the same Act.

Children in need of care and protection are removed from parental care and placed in foster care. Foster care placement is temporal in nature and children are ought to be re-united with the family of origin when the home circumstances are conducive. However, children tend to stay longer in foster care until they reach the age of 18 years. When children reach the age of 18 years they are regarded as adults, and they age out of foster care. Meaning that when they reach the age of 18 years they are regarded as adults and are expected to live independently, when they age out of foster care state services are terminated.

When children stay longer in foster they tend to move from one temporal placement to the next until they reach the age of 18 years. Research indicates when children move from one foster family to the next they are negatively affected. The negative outcomes affect them to adulthood. The study aims to investigate the relationship between the frequent movement of children and the ageing out of foster care.

Additionally, the study aims to influence policies and intervention in relation to foster care drift and ageing out of foster care in order to improve the outcomes of children ageing out of foster.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study does not have financial implications to the organisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the chairperson grants Miss N. Mhlauli, the authority to conduct her study and access to the records in respect of the youth who aged out of foster care in 2018.

DATE: 25 APRIL 2020



MEAND SURNAME

Admin

DESIGNATION

2020 04 25
11:00 AM

DATE

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY (GATEKEEPER LETTER)

THE CHAIRPERSON: CHILD WELFARE SOCIETY (IZINGOLWENI CHILD WELFARE)

SUBJECT : RE- REQUEST SEEKING APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A STUDY: DEGREE IN MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN SOCIAL WORK IN RESPECT OF MISS NOLUSINDISO MHLAULI

STUDENT NO. : 220074717

DATE : 25 APRIL 2020

PURPOSE

The purpose of this request is to seek permission from the chairperson and the management committee to undertake the following:

- Conduct a study in relation to furthering studies in the Master of Social Science in Social Work degree
- To be allowed access to the data base and records of the youth who aged out of foster care in year 2018.

BACKGROUND

Miss N. Mhlauli is the employee of the Department of Social Development based at Ugu District Office.

She is a registered Social Worker responsible for the coordination of HIV and AIDS Program in Ugu District. Miss Mhlauli is registered with the University of Kwa Zulu- Natal as a fulltime student advancing her studies in the Master of Social Science in Social Work Degree in 2020. Her interest is on foster care services and the proposed study is as follows:

RESEARCH TITLE

Critical Analysis of Foster Care Services: Relationship between of Foster Care Drift and Transitioning Out of Foster Care (Adulthood).

RESEARCH PROCESS

The respondents of the proposed study involve the youth who were placed in foster care and transitioned from being cared for by the state to being independent. The participants must have reached 18 years in 2018 and received foster care services from your organisation. Considering that this will be a quantitative study, the data self-administered questionnaires will be used to collect data. The collated data will be statistically analysed.

The proposed study will be undertaken within the auspices of the University of KwaZulu-Natal as per protocols determined by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC), therefore as the researcher I am ethically bound by the prescribed ethical provisions. The researcher wishes to emphasise that, among the identified ethical aspects, she is obliged to maintain confidentiality in relation to information.

MOTIVATION

The state has the responsibility to protect children from any form of harm and abuse. Child protection is captured in section 28 (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa as well as the Children's Act No 38/2005. Non-Profit Organisations providing child protection services are the extension arm of Department of Social Development. Chapter 7 of the Children Act No 38/2005 mandates the registration of Child Protection Organisations.

Child Protection Organisation are registered in terms of section 109 of the same Act. Children in need of care and protection are removed from parental care and placed in foster care. Foster care placement is temporal in nature and children are ought to be reunited with the family of origin when the home circumstances are conducive. However, children tend to stay longer in foster care until they reach the age of 18 years. When children reach the age of 18 years they are regarded as adults, and they age out of foster care. Meaning that when they reach the age of 18 years they are regarded as adults and are expected to live independently. When they age out of foster care state services are terminated.

When children stay longer in foster they tend to move from one temporal placement to the next until they reach the age of 18 years. Research indicates when children move from one foster family to the next, they are negatively affected. The negative outcomes affect them to adulthood. The study aims to investigate the relationship between the frequent movement of children and the ageing out of foster care. Additionally, the study aims to influence policies and intervention in relation to foster care drift and ageing out of foster care in order to improve the outcomes of children ageing out of foster.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study does not have financial implications to the organisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the chairperson grants Miss N. Mhlauli the authority to conduct her study and the access to the organisations record in respect of the youth who aged out of foster care in 2018

Nompumelelo B. Mzimbomvu

NAME AND SURNAME

CHAIRPERSON

08.05.2020

DESIGNATION

DATE

~~APPROVED/NOT APPROVED~~

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY (GATEKEEPER LETTER)

THE CHAIRPERSON: CHILD WELFARE SOCIETY (MARGATE CHILD WELFARE)

**SUBJECT : RE- REQUEST SEEKING APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A
STUDY: DEGREE IN MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN
SOCIAL WORK IN RESPECT OF MISS NOLUSINDISO
MHLAULI**

STUDENT NO. : 220074717

DATE : 25 APRIL 2020

PURPOSE

The purpose of this request is to seek permission from the chairperson and the management committee to undertake the following:

- Conduct a study in relation to furthering studies in the Master of Social Science in Social Work Degree
- To be allowed access to the data base and records of the youth who aged out of foster care in year 2018.

BACKGROUND

Miss N. Mhlauli is the employee of the Department of Social Development based at Ugu District Office.

She is a registered Social Worker responsible for the coordination of HIV and AIDS Program in Ugu District. Miss Mhlauli is registered with the University of Kwa Zulu- Natal as a fulltime student advancing her studies in the Master of Social Science in Social Work Degree in 2020. Her interest is on foster care services and the proposed study is as follows:

RESEARCH TITTLE

Critical Analysis of Foster Care Services: Relationship between of Foster Care Drift and Transitioning Out of Foster Care (Adulthood).

RESEARCH PROCESS

The respondents of the proposed study involve the youth who were placed in foster care and transitioned from being cared for by the state to being independent. The participants must have reached 18 years in 2018 and received foster care services from your organisation. Considering that this will be a quantitative study, the data self-administered questionnaires will be used to collect data. The collated data will be statistically analysed.

The proposed study will be undertaken within the auspices of the University of KwaZulu-Natal as per protocols determined by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC), therefore as the researcher I am ethically bound by the prescribed ethical provisions. The researcher wishes to emphasise that, among the identified ethical aspects, she is obliged to maintain confidentiality in relation to information.

MOTIVATION

The state has the responsibility to protect children from any form of harm and abuse. Child protection is captured in section 28 (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa as well as the Children's Act No 38/2005. Non-Profit Organisations providing child protection services are the extension arm of Department of Social Development. Chapter 7 of the Children Act No 38/2005 mandates the registration of Child Protection Organisations. Child Protection Organisation are registered in terms of section 109 of the same Act. Children in need of care and protection are removed from parental care and placed in foster

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Additionally, the study aims to influence policies and intervention in relation to foster care drift and ageing out of foster care in order to improve the outcomes of children ageing out of foster.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study does not have financial implications to the organisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the chairperson grants Miss N. Mhlauli the authority to conduct the study and access the organisations records in respect of the youth who aged out of foster in 2018

25 APRIL 2020

NAME AND SURNAME

DATE

DESIGNATION

DATE

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY (GATEKEEPER LETTER)

THE CHAIRPERSON: CHILD WELFARE SOCIETY (EKUBSISWENI CHILD WELFARE)

SUBJECT : RE- REQUEST SEEKING APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN DEGREE OF THE MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK IN RESPECT OF MISS NOLUSINDISO MHLAULI

STUDENT NO.220074717

DATE : 25 APRIL 2020

PURPOSE

The purpose of this request is to seek permission from the chairperson and the management committee to undertake the following:

- Conduct a study in relation to furthering studies in the Master of Social Science in Social Work Degree
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She is a registered Social Worker responsible for the coordination of HIV and AIDS Program in Ugu District. Miss Mhlauli is registered with the University of Kwa Zulu- Natal as a full-time student advancing her studies in the Master of Social Science in Social Work Degree in 2020. Her interest is on foster care services and the proposed study is as follows:

RESEARCH TITLE

Critical Analysis of Foster Care Services: Relationship between of Foster Care Drift and Transitioning Out of Foster Care (Adulthood).

RESEARCH PROCESS

The respondents of the proposed study involve the youth who were placed in foster care and transitioned from being cared for by the state to being independent. The participants must have reached 18 years in 2018 and received foster care services from your organisation. Considering that this will be a quantitative study, the data self-administered questionnaires will be used to collect data. The collated data will be statistically analysed.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study does not have financial implications to the organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the chairperson grants Miss N. Mhlauli the authority to conduct the study and access the organisations records in respect of the youth who aged out of foster in 2018

MISS N. MHLAULI

DATE: 25 APRIL 2020

Sipho R. Moyo

NAME AND SURNAME

DESIGNATION

DATE: 11.05.2020

APPROVED/~~NOT APPROVED~~

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY (GATEKEEPER LETTER)

THE CHAIRPERSON: CHILD WELFRE SOCIETY (UMZUMBE CHILD WELFARE)

SUBJECT : RE- REQUEST SEEKING APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN DEGREE OF THE MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK IN RESPECT OF MISS NOLUSINDISO MHLAULI

SUDENT NO. : 220074717

DATE : 25 APRIL 2020

PURPOSE

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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RECOMMENDATIONS

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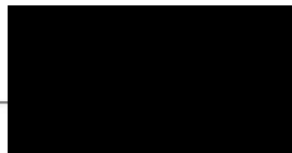
25 APRIL 2020

MISS N. MHLAULI

DATE

GETAUIDE LUSHABA

NAME AND SURNAME



CHAIRPERSON

DESIGNATION

DATE: 25.04.2020

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY (GATEKEEPER LETTER)

THE CHAIRPERSON: CHILD WELFARE SOCIETY (VULAMEHLO CHILD WELFARE)

SUBJECT : RE- REQUEST SEEKING APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN DEGREE OF THE MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK IN RESPECT OF MISS NOLUSINDISO MHLAULI

STUDENT NO. : 220074717

DATE : 25 APRIL 2020

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study does not have financial implications to the organisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

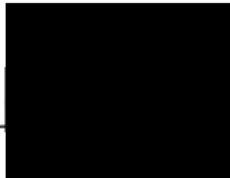
It is recommended that the chairperson grants Miss N. Mhlauli the authority to conduct her study and to access to organisations records in respect of the youth who aged out of foster care in 2018.

MISS N. MHLAULI

25 APRIL 2020

DATE

Nomsa L. Mbulaho
NAME AND SURNAME



CHAIRPERSON

DESIGNATION

05 APRIL 2020

APPROVED/NOTAPPROVED

APPENDIX 6



YOVE EDITORS LIMITED



14/07/2021

To whom it may concern

Re: Editorial/proof reading

Critical Analysis of Foster Care Services: Relationship between foster care drift and transitioning out of foster care

This letter confirms that Yove Editors edited and proofread Ms N Mhlauli's MA dissertation. The work done included grammar correction, language and rearranging phrases, proofreading and editing, the content of the work was not altered.

We are delighted to do business with you.

Sincerely,

Yove Editors



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South Africa mobile: +27633794913
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<https://www.yoveeditorslimited.co.uk>