

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK



Title:

**Exploring the challenges faced by teenage girls living under Foster Care in
selected Foster Homes in Seke Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe**

By

B200751B

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
AND HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF BINDURA, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK**

Second DRAFT Tino diseertation.docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

14%

SIMILARITY INDEX

6%

INTERNET SOURCES

4%

PUBLICATIONS

10%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

Submitted to Midlands State University

Student Paper

4%

2

www.ajol.info

Internet Source

1%

3

**Elli-Maria Tahkola, Riitta-Leena Metsäpelto,
Maria Ruohotie-Lyhty, Anna-Maija Poikkeus.
"Coping strategies in life stories of young
adults with foster care backgrounds",
European Journal of Social Work, 2021**

Publication

1%

4

www.tandfonline.com

Internet Source

1%

5

**"Handbook of Child Maltreatment", Springer
Science and Business Media LLC, 2014**

Publication

<1%

6

**A. T. Mukushi, V. Mabvurira, J. C. Makhubele,
F. K. Matlakala. "Psychosocial Challenges
Faced by Children in Residential Care
Facilities", Southern African Journal of Social
Work and Social Development, 2019**

Publication

<1%

APPROVAL FORM

I do here-by certify that I supervised **Tinotenda Nigel Nyamaropa** in this research titled:
**Exploring the challenges faced by teenage girls living under Foster Care in selected Foster
Homes in Seke Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe.** This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of
the Bachelor of Social Work

Supervisor's NameSignature.....Date.....

Chairperson of the Department of the board of examiners

I certify that to the best of my knowledge, this report meets the examination requirement and I
therefore declare that Bindura University accept the dissertation for **Tinotenda Nigel Nyamaropa**
entitled: **Exploring the challenges faced by teenage girls living under Foster Care in selected
Foster Homes in Seke Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe**

Chairperson's Name..... Signature..... Date.....

Abstract

The study explored the challenges faced by teenage girls living under foster care in selected foster homes, with Seke Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe being the study setting. The study utilized the qualitative method and data was collected through in-depth interviews and key informant in-depth interviews. The study utilized the Social Relational theory in explaining the findings of the study. The main findings from the study included the living conditions of teenage girls under foster care, the challenges faced by teenage girls living under foster care and the coping mechanisms employed by teenage girls living under foster care. Conclusions drawn from the study were that teenage girls living under foster care are subjected to difficult conditions. The study also concludes that teenage girls living under foster care face a lot of challenges in these homes. The study also concludes that teenage girls under foster care have adopted many coping mechanisms in these homes to overcome the challenges they are subjected to. Therefore, it is recommended that the government through the ministry of Finance and Economic planning should increase the financial resources to the Department of Social Development, the needs of children in foster homes are diverse so for the Department to Offer effective services, financial support is a necessity as it will enable the Department of Social Development to carry out its duties meeting the needs of teenage girls living

under

foster

care.

Declaration

I Tinotenda Nigel Nyamaropa declare that this dissertation titled *EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY TEENAGE GIRLS LIVING UNDER FOSTER CARE IN SELECTED FOSTER HOMES IN SEKE CHITUNGWIZA, ZIMBABWE* is my original work and a result of my own investigation. All literature reviewed in the study was acknowledged and a reference list provided.

Signed: *Tinotenda* Date: *17/09/24*

T. Nyamaropa

Supervisor's Name: *DA T. KUREBOKA* Signature: *(MUA)* Date: *17/09/2024*

Chairperson's Name: *PETER J. NISIMU* Signature: *PP* Date: *17/09/2024*

Dedication

It is with genuine gratitude and warm regard that I dedicate this project to God Almighty, my creator, my strong pillar, my source of inspiration, wisdom, knowledge and understanding. He has been the source of my strength throughout this program and on his wings only have I soared. To my two siblings, Denzel and Anotidaishe, who have been around in every way during this quest, thank you. Grow up and be very responsible adults.

God bless you.

Acknowledgements

I received a great deal of support throughout the writing of this dissertation.

I would first and foremost like to thank my supervisor, Ms Muregi for her expertise which was invaluable. Your constant feedback made me to sharpen my thinking and brought my work to a higher level.

I would also like to thank all the research participants. The key participants were two Probation Officers from the Department of Social Development Chitungwiza. Their kind gesture made life easy for me to get information from the Department and foster parents. Thank you so much as you helped me in gathering the data.

In addition, I would like to thank my parents Mr L.Nyamaropa and Mrs S.Nyamaropa. You have always been my pillar, always there for me and giving me a sympathetic ear and wise counsel. You love me unconditionally and you are a good example that have taught me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve. Had it not been for your never ending support, I would not have reached this point of finishing my dissertation.

Finally, I could not have finished this dissertation without the support of my friends, Guenia Nyamkunguru and Clarence Tauya Kachikira. These friends provided stimulating discussions as well as happy distractions to rest my mind outside of my research. Also not forgetting Mrs Masvaure, who has been by my side during my dissertation writing. She has been a constant source

of support and encouragement during the challenges of graduate school and life. She made sure that I give it all it takes to finish that which I started.

I thank you all and God bless you.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONMYS

AMTO	Assistance Medical Treatment Order
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Module
CCW	Community Care Worker
DSD	Department of Social
DSDO	District Social Development Officer
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PO	Probation Officer

Table of Contents

.....	ii
APPROVAL FORM	iii
Abstract	iv
Declaration	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Dedication	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	ix
CHAPTER 1: Introduction and Background of the Study	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	3
1.3 Aim of the study	4
1.4 Objectives	4
1.5 Research Questions	4
1.6 Significance of the Study	4
1.7 Definition of Key terms	5
1.8 Chapter Summary	6
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review	7
2.0 Introduction	7
2.1 Theoretical frame work: Social Relational Theory	7
2.2 Conceptualization of foster care	8
2.3 Living conditions of teenage girls living under foster care	10
2.3.1 Global overview of living conditions of teenage girls living under foster care	10
2.3.2 Regional overview of living conditions of teenage girls living under foster care	12
2.3.3 Local overview of living conditions of teenage girls under foster care	13
2.4 Global overview of challenges faced by teenage girls living under foster care	14

2.4.2 Regional overview of challenges faced by teenage girls under foster care	16
2.4.3 Local overview of challenges faced by teenage girls under foster care	18
2.5 Coping strategies employed by teenage girls living under foster care	19
2.5.1 Overview of coping strategies by teenage girls under foster care	20
2.5.2 The knowledge gap	21
2.6 Chapter Summary	21
CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology	22
3.0 Introduction	22
3.1 Research Design	22
3.2 Target population	23
3.3 Sampling methods	23
3.4 Sampling size	24
3.5 Data Collection Methods	24
3.5.1 Key informants Interviews (Semi structured interview)	24
3.5.2 Participants Interviews (In-depth interviews)	25
3.6 Data Collection Tools	25
3.6.1 Key Informants Interview Guide (Semi-structured interview)	25
3.6.2 Participants interview guide (In-depth interview)	26
3.7 Data Presentation and Analysis	26
3.8 Pilot Testing	27
3.9 Ethical Considerations	27
3.10 Informed Consent	27
3.11 Voluntary Participation	28
3.12 Confidentiality	28
3.13 Chapter Summary	28
CHAPTER 4: Data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings	29
4.0 Introduction	29
4.1 Demographic characteristics	29
4.1.2 Table	29
4.2 Living conditions of teenage girls living under foster care in Seke, Chitungwiza	30
4.2.1 Children's nutritional needs and provision of food	30
4.2.2 Misconceptions about children under foster care	31

4.2.3. Fitting in the new foster environment (Protection and Safety)	33
4.3 Challenges being faced by teenage girls living under foster care in Chitungwiza	35
4.3.1 Abuse	35
4.3.2 Inadequate Psychosocial Support	36
4.3.3 Inadequate Educational Support	38
4.3.4 Interference of the Biological Family	40
4.4 Coping strategies employed by teenage girls living under foster care in Zimbabwe	41
4.4.1 Engaging Community Care Workers (CCWs)	42
4.4.2 Acceptance	43
4.4.3 Avoiding conflicts with the foster parents	45
4.5 Chapter Summary	46
5.0 Introduction	47
5.1 Summary of findings	47
5.2 Conclusions	48
5.3 Recommendations	48
5.3.1 Government	48
5.3.2 Department of Social Development	49
5.3.3 Community	49
5.3.4 Participants	49
5.4 Suggestions for Future Research	50
5.5 Chapter Summary	51
REFERENCES	52
APPENDIX 1	59
Consent form for primary participant	59
Participant In-depth Interview Guide (Foster Child)	60
APPENDIX 2	61
APPENDIX 3: APPROVAL LETTER	64

CHAPTER 1: Introduction and Background of the Study

1.0 Introduction

This research aimed to explore the challenges faced by teenage girls living under Foster care in selected Foster Homes in Seke Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe. To fully understand the complexity of this issue, the research took a comprehensive approach by examining global, regional and local literature on the challenges faced by teenage girls living under foster care. The study will delve into the real-life challenges faced by these girls to gain a deeper understanding of their specific struggles and how these issues can be addressed. The insights gained from this research can be used to develop interventions and policies that can improve the lives of these young girls.

This chapter provides an overview of the introduction and background, the problem statement, research aim, objectives, research questions, justification, definition of key terms and a summary of the chapter. It offers a brief glimpse into the origins and reasons of undertaking the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The origins of foster care can be traced back to ancient times. Looking back, some of the earliest documented instances of fostering can be found in historical texts such as The Bible, where churches and temples were known to care for orphaned children. According to Dozier and Bernard (2019), families were also recognized for adopting orphaned or abandoned children during that era. In 1562, the English Poor Laws permitted the placement of orphaned and abandoned children to be nurtured and educated until they reached adulthood. The Poor Laws, a series of relief measures for England and Wales, were established in the 16th century. Globally, the welfare and care of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) has become a significant concern in contemporary child protection, leading to the formation of committees like the District Child Protection Committee. The foster care model is just one of several approaches utilized to care for

these children. It has increasingly garnered significant attention as a safety measure from national authorities, non-governmental organizations, and other groups (Gasva and Mutanana, 2016).

The primary reason behind implementing the out-of-home care system has been the conviction that it is more appropriate for foster children to be placed in an environment that allows them to engage with family and the community. Nevertheless, despite achieving remarkable success and gaining widespread acceptance in the modern era, the foster family care model has been accompanied by both positive and negative consequences. Instances of child indentured servitude were well-documented, with abuse, exploitation, and neglect being significant concerns, yet the government did not actively intervene to prevent such occurrences during that period (Bernard, 2019). Subsequently, the American English colonies, and later the United States, adopted the English Poor Laws as a framework for addressing the needs of orphaned and abandoned children. This marked the initial effort to place children in "foster" style households. The introduction of indentured servitude may have been perceived as a positive change, as children were often apprenticed to learn a trade, rather than simply residing in large group homes or almshouses, which were frequently in substandard conditions (Baynes-Dunning and Workington, 2019). Both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) emphasize the importance of children being raised in families in their introductory statements. The African Children's Charter specifically acknowledges that 'the child holds a distinctive and esteemed position in African society and that for the complete and balanced development of their character, children should be raised in a family setting, surrounded by happiness, love, and comprehension. Foster care is identified as one of the tools that can be utilized to guarantee that children are brought up in family environments. It is anticipated that the family settings in which children are raised should provide them with

environments characterized by happiness, love, and empathy. According to both the UNCRC and the ACRWC, which serve as the standard frameworks for children's rights, the safeguarding of children is to be overseen by the state's 'parens patriae' authority.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In an ideal scenario, children in foster care should be the authorities on their experiences in foster homes and should consequently lead such conversations. However, in most research conducted on these issues, their perspective has been omitted, creating a gap in research. The current foster care system in the nation is not adequately addressing the needs of adolescent girls who encounter distinct challenges. The failure by agencies to fully provide comprehensive services for the care and protection of the child is a concern to be discussed by any government or non-governmental organization. Regardless of child care being rendered by foster parents, the number of cases of children being abused and those failing to be cared for in foster homes however, remains high and the problem is of concern. According to Chibwana and Gumbo (2015) traditionally, a child should be cared for in a family unit complemented by extended family networks. Despite the provision of child care by foster parents, children in foster care encounter numerous challenges, particularly impacting the girl child. Mushunje (2017) noted an increasing prevalence of foster families in Zimbabwe, indicating a burden on the extended family, which is no longer able to manage, signifying cultural deterioration and affecting the six tier. These difficulties faced by teenage girls can have adverse effects on their physical and mental well-being, educational achievements, and future prospects. This study aims to reveal the actual challenges experienced by teenage girls residing in foster care.

1.3 Aim of the study

To explore the challenges faced by teenage girls living under foster care in selected foster homes in Seke Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe

1.4 Objectives

- i. To examine the living conditions of teenage girls living under foster care in Seke Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe
- ii. To examine the challenges being faced by teenage girls living under foster care in Zimbabwe
- iii. To come up with recommendations to improve the living standards of teenage girls living under foster care in Zimbabwe.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What are the living conditions of teenage girls living under foster care in Zimbabwe?
- ii. What are the challenges being faced by teenage girls living under foster care in Zimbabwe?
- iii. What are the recommendations that can be suggested to improve the living standards of teenage girls living under foster care in Zimbabwe?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Numerous research and studies have predominantly focused on the challenges experienced by foster parents, often overlooking the perspectives of the teenagers under their care, which is a critical aspect that should not be underestimated. Therefore, an investigation into the perceptions of teenage girls in foster homes may be valuable for stakeholders to comprehend the actual situation. The informative findings of the study will assist authorities in understanding the difficulties faced by teenage girls residing in foster homes. The research will broaden society's

understanding of the magnitude of challenges encountered by girls living in foster homes and shed light on some of the unexplored aspects. The information gathered may also be advantageous to children and organizations involved in child care and protection, who confront a myriad of challenges, as it will help to dismantle the culture of silence surrounding them. The insights generated from this research could potentially contribute to policy formation by addressing potential challenges encountered by children within the foster care system. This could assist the government and other stakeholders in directing development efforts towards resolving such issues through social policies. By comprehending the real-life experiences of these children, the research has the potential to raise awareness about the challenges and requirements of teenage girls in foster care, ultimately leading to increased support and resources for them. The research holds practical value for both clinical and developmental social work practice, as child care and protection are relevant across a wide range of social work domains. The study is primarily motivated by the social work objective of uncovering realities about the challenges faced by vulnerable groups, with the overarching goal of influencing policy and addressing issues.

1.7 Definition of Key terms

Teenage girls - They are defined as females pertaining to, involving, or intended for individuals aged between 13 and 19, as per the Cambridge Dictionary (2023).

Foster parent - Foster parent is a person who temporarily serves as a parent for a child who has lost or been removed from their biological parent`s care. Williams (2020), states that a foster parent is someone who plays a multifaceted role, extending beyond mere caregiving to provide a transformative experience for children. They serve as asource of healing, a passionate advocate, and offering a secure, nurturing space for children to recover, flourish, and reach their full potential.

Foster care - Foster care can be characterized as a formal agreement in which a competent authority arranges for children to be placed in the domestic setting of a family other than their own, which has been chosen, certified, and authorized to provide such care (UNICEF ESARO 2022).

Permanency- A stable, long-term living arrangement, such as adoption or legal guardianship. Permanency is about creating a lifelong connection between a child and a caring adult, providing a sense of belonging, security, and continuity that lasts a lifetime (Schreiber, J. 2019).

Reunification- The process of returning a child or teenager to their biological parents after a period in foster care. Belanger, (2017) states that reunification is a process of rebuilding and restoring relationships, trust and attachment between a child and their family, requiring a comprehensive and individualized approach that addresses the unique needs and circumstances of each family.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed overview of the introduction and background of the study, along with explaining the rationale for conducting the study, which is the significance of the study. It also offered an understanding of the issue that prompted the researcher to consider conducting the research on the challenges experienced by teenage girls living in foster care. Additionally, it delineated the research's objective and the specific research goals, leading to the formulation of the research questions.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The primary focus of this chapter centers on the theoretical framework and literature review. This chapter examines the existing body of literature concerning the real-life challenges faced by adolescent girls in foster care. The literature aims to present a discussion among various authors regarding the challenges experienced by teenage girls living in foster care. According to Kumar (2018), the literature review serves as a method for demonstrating understanding of a specific area of study. A literature review can be broadly defined as a more or less methodical approach to gathering and combining prior research (Kumar, 2018).

2.1 Theoretical frame work: Social Relational Theory

This research was guided by Social Relational theory or the social systems theory. According to Kuczynski and De Mol (2015), Social Relational theory examines the concept of children's agency through the lens of family dynamics and interpersonal processes within social connections. Drawing from this theory, a significant factor is the bond between the child and their foster family. The theory proposes that this bond will impact the child's growth, emphasizing the importance of nurturing a feeling of acceptance and interconnectedness. Social Relational theory emerged as an effort to comprehend the growing empirical evidence on children's influence on parents and everyday family occurrences such as children's defiance of parental directives, parent-child conflicts, and parents' openness to children's impact. Despite being widespread and unquestioned, these social dynamics were not understandable within the traditional one-sided assumptions about the nature of agency, power, and direction of influence within the family (Kuczynski, 2015).

As per social relational theory, both parents and children possess equal potential to exert influence on each other, and this influence is not always straightforward or foreseeable. Instead, it is crucial

to comprehend the intricate interplay of elements such as power dynamics, mutual reliance, and enduring connections. This theory also acknowledges the autonomy of children, signifying their capacity to take independent actions and make decisions that impact their lives. Simultaneously, it underscores the significance of relational contexts, such as the parent-child relationship, in shaping the thoughts, feelings, and actions of children.

The social relational theory holds significance in the investigation of children in foster care, as it explores how family dynamics and interpersonal interactions mold social connections. In particular, the theory aids in elucidating the reasons behind the difficulties faced by children in foster care concerning conflicts and resistance to authority as well as everyday family phenomena such as children's noncompliance to parental demands, parent-child conflict, and parents' receptivity to children's influence. Furthermore, the theory facilitates comprehension of the reasons why parents may not be open to the impact of children, even when striving to establish close bonds with them.

2.2 Conceptualization of foster care

According to Busso et al., (2019) foster care is meant to be a safe respite for children being harmed by their parents. However, there exists a belief held by many individuals that foster care is never justifiable and always results in harm. Similarly, Alder (2019) defines foster care as a type of alternative care where children are placed away from their parents, and the government holds responsibility for their placement and well-being. This encompasses placements in foster family residences, group residences, transitional housing, institutional group homes, day-care establishments, and pre-adoptive homes.

Foster care is defined as a temporary placement of a child in a family that is not biologically theirs when the original home situation warrants their removal (Government of Zimbabwe, 2015). This procedure is governed by a court decree issued by the children's court, and the Department of Child Welfare and Probation Services (DCWPS) holds legal jurisdiction over it. The National Orphan Care Policy (NOCP) of 1999 promotes the adoption of foster care as a method of establishing an effective child care environment, with the biological family being the preferred choice, followed by the extended family, the community, foster care, adoption, and institutionalization. While foster care is ranked fourth in the hierarchy of child care systems, some scholars, such as Sherr et al. (2017), contend that it can be equally beneficial as being raised in a stable family environment, provided it is well structured and supported. Numerous studies have indicated that children's developmental requirements are most effectively addressed when they are raised in a secure family setting (UNICEF, 2017).

The tradition of foster care has roots in ancient times, with some of the earliest instances found in religious texts such as the Bible and historical records detailing the church or temple's care for orphaned children. Throughout history, families have been recognized for adopting orphaned or deserted children. In the context of England and Wales, the Poor Laws of 1562 permitted orphaned or abandoned children to be placed as indentured servants until they reached adulthood. These laws were a series of governmental initiatives established in the 16th century to tackle poverty and homelessness in England and Wales (Busso et al., 2019). According to Strassburger (2018), the system of child indentured servitude, which was patterned after the English Poor Laws, had its shortcomings, as there were recorded instances of mistreatment, exploitation, and negligence that were not adequately addressed. Nevertheless, it marked progress from the prior custom of accommodating orphaned and deserted youths in extensive communal residences or charitable

institutions, where circumstances were frequently suboptimal. The employment of children as indentured servants provided them with the chance to acquire a skill and achieve independence, as opposed to being abandoned to manage on their own.

2.3 Living conditions of teenage girls living under foster care

Children living under foster care around the world have a wide range of experiences and challenges. Some countries have well established foster care systems while others have less developed systems. This part of the literature will review the global, regional and local experiences and challenges of children living under foster care.

2.3.1 Global overview of living conditions of teenage girls living under foster care

According to research, teenage girls in foster care need to develop robust self-confidence and self-assurance to successfully navigate various life domains, including education, work, and relationships with friends and family members (A Better Childhood, 2019). Many of these girls have endured significant trauma and instability by the time they reach adulthood, which can include abuse or neglect, multiple foster home placements, educational disruptions, and loss of important relationships. These experiences can result in mental health issues, substance abuse problems, and poor self-confidence, all of which impact the development of teenage girls in foster care, potentially leading to long-term negative consequences on their physical and mental health, education, and economic stability (A Better Childhood, 2019). Without additional support and resources, it can be very challenging for these girls to transition successfully to adulthood.

Research conducted by Alder (2020) on the developing brains of adolescents and young adult's points to the importance of understanding the vulnerability of teens, and the significance of this stage and highlights the importance of positive, supportive relationships in the context of the

continuing development of the adolescent brain. For fostered girls in particular, it is vital that they have a stable home and access to adult mentors upon leaving the child welfare system. Such mentoring relationships have been shown to improve educational and employment outcomes, psychological well-being, and physical health in young adulthood, as well as reducing engagement in risky behaviours such as unprotected sex, alcohol and substance abuse, and delinquent activities (Block and Williams, 2019). Therefore, it is clear that having positive adult mentors during adolescence is an important protective factor for fostered girls, who may face additional challenges as they transition to adulthood.

The primary objective of the childcare and protection system is to either reintegrate children with their families when it is safe to do so, or find a permanent placement for them with another family. UNICEF (2021) states that, in the United States, a total of 407,493 children and youth were living in foster care in 2020, with approximately one-third of these children between the ages of 1 and 5, and 7% being babies. These numbers have been consistent for years, despite the fact that Black and American Indigenous children are disproportionately represented in the foster care system. Specifically, nearly half of all foster children were placed with non-relative foster families (45%) in 2020, while the number of children placed with relatives increased from 25% to 34% between 2000 and 2020. In addition, the percentage of children placed in group homes or other facilities decreased from 18% to 10% during that same period (UNICEF, 2021). Only a small percentage of children in foster care are placed in pre-adoptive homes (4% in 2020) or have trial home visits (4%). Additionally, a significant number of older youth in foster care live independently but receive supervision (2%). In 2020, the percentage of children and youth who had experienced two or more placements ranged from 24% to 49% across states, indicating that many children experience multiple moves each year. These frequent changes can be traumatic, and research has

shown that stable relationships and environments are essential for children's health and development which makes it critical to reduce the number of moves children make while in foster care. In an effort to address this issue, child welfare agencies are working to implement strategies that promote stability, such as family finding, which helps locate family members or others who can provide stable homes for children. They are also working to improve the availability of supportive services, such as mental health and substance use treatment, which can help families address the challenges that led to a child's placement in foster care.

2.3.2 Regional overview of living conditions of teenage girls living under foster care

The practice of parents placing their children in the care of another family is an ancient tradition that has been observed in many societies around the world, particularly in West Africa. While the practice has not been studied extensively, researchers have started to take a greater interest in the phenomenon, exploring it from anthropological, sociological, and demographic perspectives. English-speaking Africans use a variety of terms to describe the practice, including fosterage, fostering, adoption, child movement, child mobility, child migration, child custody arrangement, and child custody transfer (Strassburger, 2018). These terms all refer to the act of placing a child with another family, either temporarily or permanently. While the specific terms and practices vary across cultures, the core concept of placing a child with another family is present in many societies.

Among the many terms used to describe the practice of child relocation, "fostering" is by far the most common. However, the wide variety of terms and their sometimes unclear definitions can lead to confusion. These terms refer to a diverse range of situations and factors, including the child's age and gender, family structure, socioeconomic circumstances, and cultural context. Traditional reasons for child fostering vary widely, from illness and death to divorce, separation, socialization, and education. In many societies, child fostering has become an important

component of family structure and function, reinforcing social bonds and helping to maintain high fertility rates by distributing the costs of child-rearing more evenly.

2.3.3 Local overview of living conditions of teenage girls under foster care

Although group homes and other care facilities have their downsides, such as absence of family ties and bonds and upbringing for children, foster care has not become widely popular in Zimbabwe. According to Vinga (2016), most children in Zimbabwe are placed in institutions rather than in foster care. The limited use of foster care is not due to its limitations, but rather to various factors, including a lack of government investment (Vinga, 2016) and a lack of public awareness about the potential benefits of foster care among altruistic members of the community. As a result, institutionalization has become the more common option, despite its drawbacks. It's important to note, however, that foster care, if implemented correctly, can be an effective alternative to institutionalization, and it offers an opportunity for orphans and other vulnerable children to grow up in loving homes where they have a greater chance of healthy development. In some cases, the biological family may try to interfere in the child's life while in foster care, attempting to control how the foster family cares for the child. Foster care is often criticized for being temporary in nature, though research has shown that children in foster care also experience long-term emotional development, similar to that of children living with their biological family. While this anecdotal evidence suggests that foster care can effectively care for orphans and other vulnerable children, it is not meant to disparage the significance of biological families or alternative child care arrangements. Rather, it highlights the need to explore the opportunities associated with foster care in Zimbabwe, despite the low utilization of the system in the country (Muchinako et al., 2018).

2.4 Global overview of challenges faced by teenage girls living under foster care

Children and youth in foster care often face unique challenges and traumas that set them apart from their peers. In this context, the term "foster care youth" refers to young people who have been placed in out-of-home care due to various adversities that endanger their health and development (Child Welfare Act 417/2007). These adversities can include exposure to childhood maltreatment, domestic violence, parental substance abuse, poverty, criminal behavior, severe neglect, and other traumatic experiences. According to Yi et al. (2020), 97% of children in foster care reported that they did not have a close friend, and many indicated that they faced discrimination and bullying due to misunderstandings about HIV and AIDS. This suggests that the social development of these children may be negatively affected by their experiences in foster homes and in the community. While it is often assumed that foster homes provide a safe haven from mistreatment and neglect, research has found that children living under foster care are at increased risk for violence and abuse compared to children in nuclear families (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017). It is therefore important to consider the experiences and perspectives of children in foster homes, as they provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by these children and can inform policy and program development. The study by Busso et al. (2019) found that family and peer support can play a crucial role in helping children in foster care to cope with educational challenges and prevent future mental health problems. However, social support must be evidence-based and tailored to the individual child's needs. The lack of social support for children in foster care may be due to a focus on meeting basic needs, such as food, shelter, and schooling materials, which leaves little time or resources for emotional and interpersonal support. Children's mental health and social development may suffer as a result of this imbalance, as the demands of providing for practical needs may take precedence over meeting children's interpersonal and emotional needs.

According to Alder (2020), many children in foster care have experienced trauma in their early life, such as physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, or unsafe living conditions. The placement itself can also be a source of stress, and the loss of a primary attachment figure and prior adverse experiences in the birth family may interfere with the ability to form healthy relationships. The impact of these experiences can have long-term consequences for the child's mental and physical health and well-being. Despite its aim to provide temporary care for children who have experienced abuse or neglect, foster care can expose children to additional trauma and abuse.

Even under the best circumstances, foster care is characterized by uncertainty, instability, and impermanence. At the same time, the quantity of minors and families that need foster care has increased in the last twenty years, and they frequently have intricate and interconnected requirements, examples include psychological well-being, joblessness, substance misuse, and domestic conflict. This growth has exacerbated the challenges faced by child welfare agencies, which often lack the capacity to effectively meet the needs of children and families (Child Welfare Monitor, 2020). Reforms in response to tragedies within the foster care system have often failed to bring about meaningful change. A study of children under foster care found that they experienced higher rates of social problems compared to parent-reared and early-adopted children. This may be due to factors such as the death of parents, abandonment, or separation from primary caregivers, and separation from other family members. These experiences can affect children's ability to develop relationships with others and may lead to aggressive behavior or depression. This is also true for children who are not orphans but who were abandoned or who were placed in foster care due to other factors, such as parental incarceration. According to Alder (2020), the resulting division of children from parents essentially robs the children of essential emotional and psychological safety. Furthermore, the situations of becoming foster children due to the death or

separation of parents present unique mental and emotional challenges for both foster children and the adoptive parents.

Other factors that affect the relationship between foster children and parents include the length of time the child has been separated from their biological family, the child's age and developmental stage, their prior experiences and exposure to trauma, developmental milestones just like onset of adolescence, the duration of interaction with the foster parents, and individual circumstances play a role. Financial difficulties and other internal dynamics within the foster household can also prevent a child from receiving the full attention and care they need. This can have a negative impact on the child's emotional, social, and physical development. Alder (2020) states that in some parts of the world, it has been observed that the number of children who require foster care is increasing, and there has also been an increase in the number of people who volunteer to be foster parents. As an example, the author cites a study by Duke University that found an increase in the number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) in African and Asian countries, most of whom are now being cared for in foster care settings. The study also found that children in foster care often experience psychological problems such as neglect, emotional stress, and depression. The study recommended that to avoid the challenges associated with foster care and other out-of-family child care approaches, traditional family systems and local communities should be empowered to care for OVCs.

2.4.2 Regional overview of challenges faced by teenage girls under foster care

The reality of the educational opportunities that fostering can provide for children may not always be what it seems. The nature of the relationship between the child's biological family and the host family, and between the child and the host family, can greatly affect the child's ability to succeed in school. (Mushunje, 2017). A study of data from a survey in Côte d'Ivoire on the social

dimensions of child adjustment found that foster children are often given lower education budgets than the head of household's own children (Chibwana and Gumbo, 2014). Many foster children are expected to complete chores in exchange for their room and board, such as washing dishes, laundry, fetching water, helping with cooking and shopping, or contributing to commercial activities. Though these tasks may fit into a socialization and educational upbringing process, studies have shown that foster children are sometimes given less food and made to work more than other members of the household, under the guise of providing a proper upbringing. Foster children may be viewed as domestic servants, which can have a negative impact on their academic performance. They are more likely to repeat grades, fail, or drop out of school. Both boys and girls may face these issues, but girls may be especially vulnerable due to the additional domestic chores they are often expected to complete. Studies have found that fostering for educational purposes does not necessarily protect children from abuse, mistreatment, or exploitation, which can cause them to fail or drop out of school. In some cases, being placed in a foster home may even prevent a child from enrolling in school, particularly in rural areas where girls are sent to urban families to act as household aids or maids (UNICEF, 2017).

A study by UNICEF (2017) found that foster children, many of whom are orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs), are less likely to be enrolled in school than non-foster children living in the same household. This can lead to lower academic performance, as foster children may experience stress and depression as a result of their circumstances. In addition, foster children may not have access to support and assistance with schoolwork, as their foster parents may be occupied with work or may lack the emotional connection necessary to provide effective assistance. Similar studies in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa have shown that foster children often experience more disruptions and discontinuity in their education. Data collection in rural Uganda found that

children living in a blended family experienced elevated amounts of psychological distress, including unhappiness, moodiness, antisocial behavior, anxiety, depression, and anger (Child Welfare Monitor, 2020). These problems were exacerbated as the children became more aware of the differences in their life circumstances compared to other children. Another study conducted in Uganda found similar results among children living with adoptive parents (Child Welfare Monitor, 2020). The researchers noted that poverty is a key factor leading to siblings being separated as the extended family is often unable to care for them all.

2.4.3 Local overview of challenges faced by teenage girls under foster care

A traditional family unit supported by extended family networks is an ideal environment for a child's development. However, in countries like Zimbabwe, which have been affected by HIV/AIDS, there are many orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) who are placed in foster care. Mushunje (2017) notes that there has been an increase in the number of foster families in Zimbabwe who take in relatives' children acting as surrogate families, often lacks the resources to care for all children in need. Sibindi (2016) suggests that the problems faced by foster children can be caused by the foster system itself, as well as the country's culture and religious beliefs. According to the Children's Act of Zimbabwe, foster care refers to the placement of children by a competent authority, via a court order, into an alternative care situation with a registered foster family that has been selected, qualified, approved, and supervised to provide such care. Those wishing to become foster parents must go through a screening process conducted by the Department of Social Development.

Chronic poverty, which is defined as an experience of deprivation that lasts for an extended period of time, was found to be a factor contributing to the challenges these children face. Furthermore, families with persistently low incomes or consumption levels below the poverty line were also

found to be more likely to have foster children. It was also found that some foster parents may see the government support provided for foster children as a means of economic gain, which can lead to neglect or exploitation of the children. Researchers have attempted to assess the trauma experienced by children in foster care, and they have found that adverse childhood experiences, such as maltreatment, lack of stability, and lack of social support, increase the risk of trauma. UNICEF (2017) has found evidence that maltreatment and a lack of permanence in relationships can increase the risk of mental disorders and trauma. Also unsuccessful family reunifications can also be a contributing factor to trauma in foster children. Although reunification can be an important goal for many children in care, it is also possible that some children may experience trauma as a result of reunification. A Better Childhood (2019) has found that instability, such as multiple placement changes, can be a contributing factor to trauma in foster children, as it can lead to feelings of loss and isolation.

2.5 Coping strategies employed by teenage girls living under foster care

While some anthropological research has focused on the positive aspects of children's ability to navigate social environments, Scovdal and Andreoulakis (2018) have noted that the same social environments can also limit children's ability to thrive. Thus, children's agency and resilience may be influenced by both positive and negative social factors. Research on children's and adolescents' coping strategies has identified two main dimensions, namely approach and avoidant strategies. Approach strategies involve directly engaging with the source of the stressor, whereas avoidant strategies involve trying to distance oneself from the stressor (Feely et al., 2020). Approach strategies, such as problem-solving and seeking social support, have been associated with better outcomes, whereas avoidant strategies, such as denial and behavioral avoidance, have been associated with poorer outcomes. However, it is important to note that no single coping strategy is

universally effective or ineffective, and the specific context should be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of a given strategy.

According to Alder (2020), the coping strategies of teenage girls are unique to their age group, and the use of ineffective strategies can have serious psychological consequences. Coping strategies that target both problems and emotions are particularly important. Foster teenagers may be at higher risk for negative outcomes, as they may lack the support of loved ones. To provide the best possible care for foster teenagers, foster parents must have a diverse skill set. In addition, A Better Childhood (2019) noted that foster teenagers require support during their developmental years. Foster parents can provide emotional support, as well as practical information and guidance on health and well-being.

2.5.1 Overview of coping strategies by teenage girls under foster care

As Chibwana and Gumbo (2014) have observed, many children who are able to maintain a positive outlook and resilience in the face of adversity report a strong sense of self-belief and determination to succeed in life. They have big dreams for the future and are determined to make the most of their situation, despite the challenges they face. This resilience is often developed through the experience of receiving help and support from organizations, which can help restore a sense of hope, meaning, and purpose in life. Having access to a supportive network of friends and family members can also be a powerful source of resilience. Problem-solving skills and engaging in healthy coping mechanisms, such as relaxation, exercise, and realistic expectations, can also be effective in helping children to manage stress and adversity. On the other hand, unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as denial, self-blame, and internalizing failures, can be detrimental to children's mental health and well-being. These unhealthy coping mechanisms can also lead to additional stress and a lack of resilience. As Child Welfare Monitor (2017) has observed, there is still limited

knowledge about the coping strategies employed by children and youth in foster care. A few prior studies have examined the coping styles of foster youth, and they have found that children's and adolescents' perspectives on coping differ from those of adults. In children and adolescents, coping often involves more unconscious or involuntary responses, and it is influenced by the adversities they face, such as divorce or conflicts with parents. Two main dimensions of coping have been identified, approach and avoidant strategies. Approach coping strategies include seeking social support and engaging in problem-solving, while avoidant coping strategies involve denial and behavioral avoidance.

2.5.2 The knowledge gap

Although no single coping strategy is universally associated with only positive or negative outcomes, avoidant strategies have been linked to poorer adjustment and poorer health, while approach strategies have been linked to more positive adjustment. After reviewing the existing literature, the researcher noticed a gap in that most of the information lacked the perspectives of the teenage girls themselves. In studies conducted in Chitungwiza, the research did not directly focus on the experiences of the girls, but their voices were not heard. The researcher felt that it was important to understand the experiences of these girls through their own perspectives, in accordance with Biestake's principle of individualism. As a social work student, the researcher used this principle as a guide for understanding the issue and collecting relevant data.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on literature review, it has also provided a theoretical framework for the study. It has demonstrated existing literature on conditions, challenges and coping strategies of teenage girls under foster care. The following chapter shall focus on research methodology.

CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter concentrated on detailing the procedure for investigating the actual experiences of teenage girls residing in selected foster homes in Seke Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe. It covered the research methodology, approach, design, target population, sample size, sampling methods, data collection techniques, instruments used for data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, potential constraints, and boundaries.

3.1 Research Design Approach

The study employed the Case study research design. According to Creswell (2013), research designs encompass the plans and procedures for research that encompass decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. (Royce, 2018) defines a Case study as a comprehensive portrayal of an individual case and its analysis through the examination of an individual, group, or phenomenon. (Punch, 2017) suggested that a case study is a depiction and analysis of a distinct matter or case with the intention of detecting elements, components, patterns, and modes of interaction among participants in the situation. A Case study centers on the environment and the context of the research.

This study employed the Qualitative research approach. The researcher selected the qualitative methodology because of its ability to adjust and capability to conceptualize societal shifts from the perspective of the researched subjects. Qualitative study can be characterized as an iterative process that contributes to an enhanced understanding within the scientific community by creating new significant distinctions through a closer examination of the studied phenomenon (Aspers et al 2019). Furthermore, it can support instruction, communication among researchers, bridge the gap

between qualitative and quantitative researchers, address criticisms of qualitative methods, and serve as a benchmark for evaluating qualitative research. Kalof, et al (2018) assert that the objective of qualitative research is to comprehend processes, experiences, and the significance individuals attribute to various aspects. This method was the most suitable for this study as it enabled an interactive process between the researcher and participants to gain an understanding of the actual experiences of teenage girls living in foster care.

3.2 Target population

The target population encompasses all individuals who meet the specified criteria for a research exploration (Willie 2022). It pertains to a subset of the population from which the researcher aims to draw conclusions, representing individuals whose characteristics are of interest to the researcher. From the outset, the researcher requested girls aged 13 to 17 years who had been in foster care for at least a month from the foster parents, who acted as the gatekeepers and legal guardians for the children. Only those meeting the qualifications were included, while those who had been in foster care temporarily as a safety measure were excluded. As for the key informants, the foster parent had to be registered under the Department of Social Development.

3.3 Sampling methods

This study employed the Purposive sampling method. Sampling can be described as a process for selecting a sample from a large population for a specific research purpose (Bhardwaj 2019). This method was suitable for the study because Purposive sampling allows the researcher to extract a wealth of information from the collected data. It enables researchers to articulate the significant impact of their findings on the population. The primary participants were teenage girls aged 13 to 17, and through that purposive sampling method the researcher selected the key informants to gather information.

3.4 Sampling size

A sample represents a segment of a population chosen for the purpose of a study, and the conclusions drawn from a sample are then used to make generalizations about the entire study population from which the sample was depicted. The study's sample size included 9 participants, comprising 2 foster parents, and 2 probation officers who served as key informants. The foster parents acting as key informants had to be registered under the Department of Social Development. The sample is chosen through a sampling process, where Burns and Grove (2011) define sampling as the act of selecting a group of individuals, events, or behaviors for the purpose of conducting a study.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The researcher utilized interviews as the method for data collection. The process of gathering and quantifying specific data points in a structured and consistent manner is known as data collection. This methodical approach enables the acquisition of valuable insight, allowing for the assessment of outcomes and answering of pertinent questions.

3.5.1 Key informants Interviews (Semi structured interview) Method

In this case, the research used semi-structured interviews to gather information from key informants. Semi-structured interviews involve the interviewer preparing a prearranged set of questions in advance. According to Edwards and Holland (2013), this method allows the researcher to interpret non-verbal signals and obtain additional information to achieve a thorough understanding of the relevant themes. For this particular study, the interviewer crafted open-ended research inquiries aligned with the study's goals and the rationale for systematic analysis. The collection of information from participants was conducted through interviews. Semi-structured

interviews allow the interviewer to pursue interesting points raised by the interviewee and facilitate a more in-depth exploration of themes.

3.5.2 Participants Interviews (In-depth interviews) Method

Rutledge (2020) defined an in-depth interview as a qualitative research technique employed to conduct detailed interviews with a small number of participants. Researchers using the in-depth interviewing approach dedicate a significant amount of time to each participant, utilizing a conversational format. The interview questions are predominantly open-ended, fostering a discovery-oriented approach. During the interviews, the interviewee is regarded as the expert, while the interviewer assumes the role of the student. The interviewing techniques are driven by the aspiration to comprehensively learn and acquire knowledge. Consequently, this method was most suitable as it enabled the interviewer to gain extensive insights from the participants regarding the research topic.

3.6 Data Collection Tools

This research utilized in-depth interview guides and a key informant interview guide as research tools. According to Roller (2019), the guide serves as a framework rather than a rigid, directive document. The primary aim of the guide is to facilitate the interviewer or moderator in effectively covering all the pertinent issues essential for achieving the research objectives. Ensuring clarity throughout the interview or discussion regarding the relevant issues is actually a more crucial function of the guide than the specific questions or follow-up inquiries it may contain.

3.6.1 Key Informants Interview Guide (Semi-structured interview)

In this research, a semi-structured interview guide was utilized to engage with key informants. The design of the semi-structured interview guide aimed to capture comprehensive insights from individuals with the required knowledge and experience relevant to the study's focus, which in

this instance, relates to the challenges faced by teenage girls living under foster care. This guide establishes a framework for interviewer, presenting essential topics and questions to ensure uniformity across interviews while allowing room for the discussion to adjust based on the informant's input.

3.6.2 Participants interview guide (In-depth interview)

The investigation employed an in-depth interview guide for the participants. These interviews entail individual engagement with participants, either in a physical setting or through remote means, and facilitate fluid and adjustable conversations that delve deeply into various topics. As per Roller (2019), in-depth interviews demand more extensive planning and resources due to their intensive nature. One of the key advantages of the in-depth interview guide lies in its capacity to offer valuable insights into the thoughts and emotions of users. Direct interactions enabled the researcher to interpret non-verbal cues, analyze shifts in vocal intonation, observe subtleties that cannot be discerned through other feedback channels.

3.7 Data Presentation and Analysis

The research outcomes were conveyed through narrative descriptions, and the data was then summarized to create a comprehensive and detailed report of the study's observations. The researcher employed thematic analysis to analyze the data. As per Rubin and Babbie (2016), data analysis is the process of aggregating, modeling, and transforming data with the objective of highlighting valuable information, proposing conclusions, and supporting decision-making. The researcher utilized thematic content analysis and testimonies collected during the data collection phase. According to Burnard et al (2008), thematic content analysis involves scrutinizing transcripts, identifying themes within the data, and compiling instances of those themes from the text. It was observed that interview transcripts and field notes do not inherently provide an

explanation; therefore, the researcher had to make sense of the collected data by elucidating and interpreting the raw data.

3.8 Pilot Testing

This process is utilized to evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of a research study before it is carried out on a large scale. Polit & Beck (2020) emphasize that pilot testing is employed to ascertain the reliability and validity of an instrument or method. In this specific study, the focus is on assessing the practicalities and feasibility of the research, including the willingness and ability of participants to take part, and ensuring that the procedures involved are suitable and function as intended. The researcher secured the participation of respondents by conducting a trial run of the research, providing them with clear and accurate information about the research objectives, methods, and anticipated outcomes related to the real-life challenges and experiences of girls in foster care.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

In this study, the principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality were upheld. According to Rich (2013), ethics entails a systematic process of understanding, examining, and discerning issues related to morality and immorality, good and bad, commendable and deplorable as they pertain to the well-being of and the relationships among sentient beings.

3.10 Informed Consent

The researcher secured the involvement of participants by furnishing them with precise and clear details regarding the research objectives, methodologies, and anticipated outcomes in a straightforward and easily understandable manner. The researcher refrained from using technical language, as it was more likely to create confusion than clarity. Consent was obtained from the

foster parents for the interviews with the teenage girls. Subsequently, assent was sought from the teenage girls themselves before commencing the in-depth interviews.

3.11 Voluntary Participation

Voluntary participation implies that an individual engages in research of their own volition. The researcher communicated to the participants that their involvement was voluntary and that they had the freedom to withdraw at any point. Engaging in social research disrupts the regular activities of the participants, hence no one should be coerced into participating.

3.12 Confidentiality

The investigator reassured the entrants that their privacy would be treated with the utmost respect. Any questions that the participants deemed overly personal and sensitive would not be required to be answered. Confidentiality involves the researcher ensuring a degree of anonymity and privacy of information. Certain information provided by participants might be of a sensitive nature, and if made public, could have adverse effects (Babbie, 2011). Furthermore, the researcher proposed the use of pseudonyms.

3.13 Chapter Summary

The chapter centered on detailing the researcher's data collection methods. It involved the utilization of the qualitative research approach and qualitative data collection techniques. Additionally, the chapter underscored the sampling methodology and strategies utilized by the researcher. The study focused on the demographic of teenage girls in foster care, with foster parents and a probation officer serving as key sources of information.

CHAPTER 4: Data presentation, analysis and discussion of findings

4.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to present and analyze the data pertaining to the perspectives of teenage girls residing under foster care. The chapter was influenced by the social relational theory, the review of existing literature, and the study's objectives. The primary aims of the study were to assess the living conditions of teenage girls in foster care in Zimbabwe, to examine the challenges encountered by these individuals, and to develop recommendations for enhancing the living standards of teenage girls in foster care in Zimbabwe.

4.1 Demographic characteristics

	Intended number	Actual number	Female
Key informants Interviews (semi-structured interview)	4	4	4
Participant Interviews (In-depth interview)	7	7	7

4.1.2 Table

The study is dominated by female participants since they were the primary target of the research. It was necessary to interview participants based on their gender because will give a more accurate view in the realization of the aim of the study.

This research involved 7 participants and 4 key informants to ensure a well-rounded representation of the research findings. The participants' ages ranged from 13 to 17 years, with 1 in primary school, 4 in secondary school, and 2 having achieved some level of secondary education. In the study,

three key informants were involved, including 2 Probation Officers from the Department of Social Development and 2 foster parents from Seke, Chitungwiza. Both key informants possessed tertiary education qualifications.

4.2 Living conditions of teenage girls living under foster care in Seke, Chitungwiza Teenage girls in foster care experience a range of conditions, as indicated by the insights of participants and key informants. These conditions encompass both favorable and unfavorable circumstances.

4.2.1 Children's nutritional needs and provision of food

Both key informants and respondents expressed the perspective that, given the existing national economic conditions, rather than depending on charitable assistance, they turned in horticulture and cultivating vegetables and maize to meet their basic food needs. Nonetheless, this approach may prove insufficient due to the growing influx for children in foster care system and restricted means of provision, resulting in food shortages in foster homes.

According to the second participant, “*kutaura chokwadi chikafu chishoma pano nekuti tinotenga 2 loaves makuseni pavanhu 18, kuchikoro tinoenda tisina lunch tinodzodya tadzoka kuchikoro*”

(*Frankly speaking, food is scarce here because we only buy 2 loaves in the morning for 18 people, and at school, on an empty stomach, so we eat when we return from school*)

As per the fourth participant “*Tinodya ka three pazuva, makuseni tinonwa tea kana kudya porridge, masikati tinodya sadza ne ma veggie kana cabbage, nemanheru tinodya sadza or rice ne nyama kana iripowo musi wacho*”

(We only eat about thrice daily. In the morning, our options include tea or porridge, and at lunch, we eat sadza with vegetables like cabbage, and for dinner we have sadza or rice with meat if available on that day)

Key informant 3 said, “*Dambudziko riri pahuwandu hwevana vatinopihwa neWelfare dzimwe nguva unopihwa vana vakawanda zvinobva zvatiomera kukwanisa kuvatsvagira chikafu chakakwana nekuti welfare haisi kutipa chikafu mazuvano*”

(The challenge lies in the limited support from Welfare for the children we are entrusted with. Sometimes we struggle to provide enough food because Welfare does not consistently provide us with food these days)

This emphasizes the inadequate provision of meals for teenage girls in foster care, as well as the lack of food aid for foster parents from the Department of Social Development. However, these findings contrast sharply with those of Staker (2015), whose research observed that children in foster homes in the United States receive three-course meals, and the U.S. government also provides grants to support foster homes. According to Powell (2016), in South Africa, foster parents also receive grants from the government, and children in foster homes receive food and clothing from the Department of Social Development. Moreover, the social relation theory examines the relationships between foster parents and children, which also influence the provision of food to teenage girls under their care.

4.2.2 Misconceptions about teenage girls living under foster care

Misconceptions can stem from a lack of knowledge or understanding about foster care, and they can negatively influence the perception and treatment of children in foster care. Both key informants and participants highlighted the importance of gaining an accurate understanding of

the circumstances in order to enhance the well-being of these children. As these children reside in diverse communities, individuals in their surroundings such as school peers and local residents may at times lack comprehension of the foster care system.

Participant 3 said, “*kutaura chokwadi, kashoma kusangana nevanhu vanotaura zviru wrong pamusoro pedu but kuchikoro ndiko kwatinombodenhwa nevamwe vana tichinzi vana vepahome*”

(To be honest, it's challenging to interact with people who express views that differ from ours, but at school, this is where we often encounter discrimination from other children who label us as 'children from homes')

Key informant 3 said, “*Vanhu vekunze they criticize, they usually pick every single mistake, so as a foster parent takaona kuti we have to very careful saka tinoudza vana kuti musangotaura zvese kuvanhu*”

(People from the community often engage in criticism, meticulously pointing out every error. As foster parents, we have observed the need to be extremely cautious, so we advise the children not to disclose everything to others)

This also emphasizes the lack of comprehension and awareness regarding misconceptions. Misperceptions, stereotypes, and myths are prevalent across all societal levels, influencing attitudes, decisions, policies, and practices (Shlonsky and Roy, 2014). The presence of these misconceptions underscores the necessity for educational and awareness-raising initiatives to dispel them and foster a more accurate and positive understanding of children in foster care. According to social relational theory, our perceptions and comprehension of the world are shaped by our relationships with others. In the context of foster care, this implies that the public's

perception of foster care is often influenced by stereotypes and misconceptions rather than the actualities of the system.

4.2.3. Fitting in the new foster environment (Protection and Safety)

Both individuals participating in the study and the primary sources of information recognized that foster homes provide a safer environment compared to other settings like institutions. Consequently, these foster homes are occasionally seen as secure shelters for teenage girls.

Participant 7 mentioned this, *“Baba vangu vanorova, kana vabva kubhawa munhu wese anorohwa, dzimwe nguva ndaibviswa skirt ndotanga kurohwa hanzvadzi dzangu namhamha vakatarisa, kundiona nhasi ndiri mupenyu ndiMwari, ndinonzwa kufara kuti kwandinogara izvezvi aunt vanondibata zvakanaka”*

(My father is abusive, if he comes back from the bar, everyone gets beaten. There were times when I would be stripped of my skirt and beaten by my siblings and grandmother watching, but today I am alive by the grace of God, and I am happy with the way my aunt takes looks after me)

Participant 4 said, *“mhamha vedu waitivharira mumba tichitadza kuenda kuchikoro, sekuru vanogara kuUnit H ndovakazouuya nemapurisa tikaburitswa tikazouuya kunoku neSocial Welfare, pari zvino takuenda kuchikoro paChinembiri Primary school”*

(Our mother would secure us at home, which prevented us from being able to go to school. Our grandfather, who lives in Unit H, intervened by bringing the police, and they assisted us in approaching Social Welfare. Currently, we are attending Chinembiri Primary School)

Participant 2 stated, *“Pano unobuda kana takuchera mvura. Gogo havatombode vekuti titambe ne vanhu ve mumaraini. Gate rinogara rakavharwa havatombode havo. Zvinombondibhowa hazvo asi ndakatongonzwisisa kuti vakungoda kutichengetedza.”*

(Here you can come out when we are fetching water. Grandma doesn't usually allow us to play with the people from the neighborhood. The gate is always locked they don't usually open it. It makes me sad, but I have come to understand that they want to keep us safe)

Key informant 1 also mentioned, *"Foster homes are significantly safer than institutions and some of the residences where these girls originate. In these settings, children can access parental care and educational assistance from foster parents with the support of the Department of Social Development. They are shielded from the individuals responsible for their trauma and unfavorable living circumstances."*

These findings indicate that foster care placements can provide a secure setting for adolescent girls residing in such arrangements. UNICEF (2017) supports this notion, highlighting that despite the drawbacks of placement in institutions like the absence of familial bonds and social development, foster care placements have often fallen short in providing gained widespread acceptance in Zimbabwe (UNICEF, 2017). As Vinga (2016) observed, most children in Zimbabwe are placed in institutions rather than foster care. The limited reliance on foster care in Zimbabwe is not due to its deficiencies, but rather to a complex range of factors, including government reluctance to invest in it and a lack of promotion among charitable community members (Vinga, 2016). Consequently, institutionalization has gained prominence despite its limitations. Well-managed foster care is an effective means of mitigating the negative impact of institutions and provides orphans and vulnerable children with the opportunity to grow up in nurturing environments, increasing their chances of healthy development. Additionally, according to Kuczynski and De Mol (2015), the social relational theory focuses on the idea of children's independence within the context of family relationships and interpersonal interactions within social relationships. These social relationships determine the safety and protection of teenage girls in foster homes.

4.3 Challenges being faced by teenage girls living under foster care in Chitungwiza

The research identified a variety of difficulties encountered by teenage girls residing in foster care. The individuals involved also reported the difficulties they encounter in foster homes. These setbacks included mistreatment, absence of social assistance, and inadequate educational support.

4.3.1 Abuse

Furthermore, abuse was identified as a difficulty experienced by teenage girls in foster care. Participants highlighted that they are vulnerable to maltreatment in foster settings and within their local communities.

Participant 7 said, *“Dambudziko riri pano, mashoko anotaurwa ne vamwe vatiri kugara navo, zvinobva zvaita sekuti wakatiza kumba nekuda kwako, ndinofunga inyaya yekusanzwisisa kwatinobva”*

(The concern is present, the words are spoken by others we live with, it seems like you disturbed the peace at home with your behavior, I believe it's about our origins causing confusion)

Participant 2 expressed, *"Listen, my brother it's just the two of us managing all the household tasks for 15 girls and their children here. It's tough, but we have no choice but to handle it, even though it's unjust. They use breastfeeding or their pregnancies as excuses. Among all of us here, one person either has a child or is pregnant. It becomes unjust"*

Key informant 3 stated, *"The only individuals who truly comprehend these girls within this community are myself and the girls themselves. Everyone else has their own assumptions and they never make an effort to inquire. Here, I provide support to girls who are pregnant and have babies."*

I've heard through gossip that they refer to this house as 'pamba pe mvana' imagine how my girls must feel."

The results demonstrated that adolescent girls in foster care are also exposed to mistreatment in foster homes. This is corroborated by the research conducted by Yi Ye et al. (2020). In their investigation, Yi Y et al. (2020) discovered that 97% of fostered children reported not having a close friend. They also revealed that the misconceptions surrounding HIV infection and AIDS exposed them to discrimination, leading to constant bullying and shame. This indicates that the environment in foster homes and the discrimination from society impact these children's social development. Although it is commonly believed that foster homes provide protection from abuse and neglect, researchers have discovered that children in house placement face a higher risk of violence and mistreatment compared to children in traditional families (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017). Children experience various forms of mistreatment in foster homes, including psychological and physical mistreatment. Hence, it is essential to understand diverse perspectives of these children, as they not only reflect numerous facility-related issues but also serve as valuable resources for policy development and program implementation. According to social relational theory, parents and children both act as agents, the influence between them is bidirectional and nonlinear, and the dynamics of human agency, interpersonal influence, and asymmetrical power must be understood within the context of the interdependent, long-term parent-child relationship.

4.3.2 Inadequate Psychosocial Support

The research also uncovered that teenage girls residing under foster care lack psychosocial assistance. This difficulty exacerbates their circumstances in foster homes. Consequently, some feel remorseful and desire to go back to homes where conditions are more favorable.

Key informant 1 expressed, *"One of the rationales for placing children in foster homes is to provide them with a secure environment; however, when multiple children are under the care of a single foster parent, it can be exceedingly challenging for the foster parent to provide sufficient individual and equitable social support. This challenge is compounded by the Department of Social Development's inability to fully address the needs of these children."*

Key respondent 1 also mentioned, *"These children encounter psychological difficulties as they sense a profound sense of isolation, making it necessary for an attentive foster parent to identify these psychological issues."*

Participant 6 said, *"Zvinondinetsa kuudza aunt zvandinonzwa, dzimwe nguva ndinotaurawo neshamwari dzangu paphone, ndinonzwa sendinovanetsa nekuvaremedza kana ndikavaudza zvandinonzwa, asi mupfungwa dzangu mune hondo"*

(It is challenging for me to tell my aunt what I am going through. Occasionally I share with my friends on the cell-phone, but I feel hesitant and anxious when I try to tell them what I am experiencing, but still my thoughts are conflicted)

Participant 2 expressed, *"There are times when I feel the urge to talk someone, but I question who would truly comprehend my situation. I lack someone with whom I can tell about my challenges. The past experiences that led me to this point continue to trouble me. Seeing that everyone here has their own issues, I am concerned that I would only be burdening others if I attempted to open up. This is causing me a great deal of distress."*

Participant 3 shared, *"After discovering my pregnancy, my mother abandoned me on the streets. A member of the ruling party's youth league found me and directed me to Social Welfare, promising financial assistance for self-care. The welfare authorities then brought me to this place. However,*

I did not receive the monetary support that was promised to me (laughs). While the living conditions here are satisfactory, thoughts of my mother cause me immense pain, and I am deeply traumatized. The memories of those events continue to haunt me."

Participant 7 also mentioned, *"While our aunt tries to assist us to the best of her ability, she lacks the time to engage in conversations with us or listen to our issues, as she is an extremely busy individual."*

The findings indicated that teenage girls in foster care receive limited social support from each, foster guardians and the Department of Social Development. Supporting this, a study by Bekema et al., (2020) demonstrated that the separation of foster children from their biological parents undermines their sense of security, confidence, and optimism. The thought of being separated from siblings before entering foster families also deeply troubles some foster children, as they feel unwanted. Additionally, A Better Childhood (2019) noted that certain irresponsible and uneducated foster parents may display moodiness and unfriendliness towards their foster children, sometimes reminding them of their non-biological status within the family. These factors collectively cause psychological and emotional harm to foster children, leading them to yearn for the care of their biological or extended family. The social relation theory emphasizes the interdependence between family and children, highlighting the negative impact of absence of emotional support on teenage girls in foster care.

4.3.3 Inadequate Educational Support

The two individuals providing critical insights and the participants emphasized that teenage girls in foster care do not receive adequate educational support, including essential items like school

attire, textbooks, and additional supplies, from both their foster parents and the Department of Social Development, the official body responsible for fostering children.

Participant 1 also mentioned, *"I attend school, but I lack adequate stationery, a proper bag, and shoes. While everything else is fine, my main struggle lies in having sufficient stationery and appropriate footwear."*

Participant 7 also expressed, *"I had plans to pursue vocational training before I arrived here. I had already secured a placement, but unfortunately, things took a turn for the worse before I could start. Since coming here, I have been unable to attend the training, and as you can see, I am just at home."*

The findings suggested that teenage girls in foster care are not receiving the necessary educational support. Mushunje (2017) argued that the practicality of fostering situations allowing children to attend school may not always reflect the reality, with potential problems arising later. The dynamics of the relationship between the original family, the foster family, and the child play a crucial role. An examination of survey data pertaining to the societal aspects of adjustment in Côte d'Ivoire indicates that educational expenses allocated for foster children are lower than those for the household head's biological children (Chibwana and Gumbo, 2014). Overall, the family anticipates that the foster child will undertake various domestic responsibilities such as dishwashing, laundry, fetching water, assisting with cooking and shopping, and possibly contributing to productive or commercial activities. While these tasks may be viewed as part of the socialization and upbringing process, studies by Vingu (2016) also reveal that these children may be undernourished and overworked compared to other household members, under the guise of providing a good upbringing. Consequently, these children are essentially treated as domestic

workers, which can significantly impact their academic performance, leading to higher rates of repetition, failure, and dropout. This issue affects both boys and girls, but it is notably more challenging for girls, who are often assigned more domestic duties. The social relation theory also underscores family dynamics, including parental behavior and attitudes toward children, which can encompass a lack of educational support for children.

4.3.4 Interference of the Biological Family

The involvement of the genetic family also became a concern for teenage girls residing in foster care. Informants and participants pointed out that the biological families often interfered with the foster homes, as many of the girls placed in foster care had lived in or around Chitungwiza. Consequently, their biological families would learn about their location through word of mouth and would visit the foster homes.

Participant 3 also mentioned, *"My birth mother works as a prostitute and is involved with drugs. I'm unsure how she discovered my whereabouts, but she would occasionally visit and confront my foster guardian, making threats and causing disturbances. The guardian later reported her to the Department of Social Development and the Police, but she remained unresponsive, insisting that it was her right to reclaim custody of her children."*

Participant 1 stated, "Biological parents should not be allowed to be aware of the location where their children have been placed, as this could lead to difficulties. If the biological parent becomes aware of their child's residence, it will invariably lead to issues, as they may make every effort to reclaim the children, disregarding the mistreatment they previously subjected the child to."

Informant 3 expressed, *"If parents have the opportunity to communicate with their children under the care of foster parents, they can have a detrimental impact on the children, leading to*

observable changes in behavior. Regardless of their conduct and treatment towards their children, a parent will always have influence over them and may speak negatively about the foster care system."

The situation highlights the potential negative impact of the biological family on teenage girls living in foster care. In Zimbabwe, as in other countries, children may be removed from their biological parents' care due to neglect, abuse, parental incarceration, or substance abuse, rather than orphan hood (UNICEF, 2017). Despite being allowed to visit their children in foster care, it is argued by Mpambela (2017) that the immediate family often interferes with the child's life and attempts to uncover the care provided by the foster family. While foster care is often accused of its impermanent nature, studies (Grant and Yeatman, 2010) have shown that children in foster care can cultivate enduring emotional relationships similar to those of children in natural families. This evidence suggests that orphans and vulnerable children can receive effective care within foster families. Despite Zimbabwe's shift towards formal foster care as the primary alternative care system for orphans and vulnerable children, the potential of this system remains underutilized in the country (Muchinako et al., 2018). Similarly, the social relational theory examines family dynamics and interpersonal processes in social relationships.

4.4 Coping strategies employed by teenage girls living under foster care in Zimbabwe

Teenage girls residing in foster care recognize that while they encounter various challenges in foster homes, they have also developed strategies to address these challenges. These strategies involve seeking assistance from Child Care Workers (CCWs), embracing acceptance, and avoiding conflicts with their foster parents.

4.4.1 Engaging Community Care Workers (CCWs)

The participants confirmed that they involve Community Care Workers to address the issues they encounter in foster homes, highlighting the importance of this action in improving their situations within the foster care environment.

Participant 1 said, “*Mupfungwa dzangu ndakange ndichishungurudzika zvakanyanya kusvika ndaona kuti kutaure nambuya hutano zvingabatsira, chokwadi ndakabatsirika, vakagara neni pasi vakandiudza zvakawanda zvakandibatsira zvakanyanya*”

(My challenges were overwhelming until I realized that discussing with the community care workers really helps, indeed, I found assistance, and they stayed with me, sharing a lot that greatly helped me)

Participant 5 also mentioned, “*My aunt fell ill for a period, and her children took her to South Africa for a 2-week treatment, leaving us alone. Being one of the older children, I was responsible but faced challenges with resistance from other children, some using offensive language towards me. I eventually sought the help of a Community Care Worker (CCW) who intervened. We were in a tough spot, and she managed everything until my aunt returned.*”

This also indicates that teenage girls residing in foster care are seeking assistance from CCWs to address the challenges they discover in these environments. Additionally, Alder (2020) notes that the coping mechanisms of teenage girls are specific to them, and ineffective coping strategies can result in more severe psychological issues. Dealing with problems and emotions is crucial for coping effectively. Due to the absence of familial support, teenagers in foster care are particularly susceptible to significant challenges. Foster parents need to have a diverse range of skills to provide

comprehensive care. A Better Childhood (2019) also observed that fostered teenagers require support as they navigate their developmental stages. Foster parents offer comfort, emotional support, and essential health-related information for the well-being of orphaned adolescents. In this context, the social relational theory presents a thorough examination of children's capabilities as active participants. The theory seeks to comprehend how close relationships empower children's agency rather than restrict it.

4.4.2 Acceptance

Both participants and key informants agreed that teenage girls in foster care embrace acceptance as a coping mechanism to confront the challenges they face.

Key informant 2 said, *“Vana pavanouuya kwatiri vanenge vaive nemaproblems akatsauka tsauka asi zvandafunda pavana vandagara navo kutsungirira nekunzwisisa maproblems avo vakawanda vacho vave vanhu vakuru kumabasa nemuma areas avari kugara’* (Displays an image to the researcher of a child she fostered who is now wedded with children)

“These children who come to us have diverse challenges, but what I've learned from living with them is to empathize and understand their many challenges. Many of them grow up to be responsible adults in various professional and community settings.” (Displays an image to the researcher of a child she fostered who is now married with children)

Participant 3 mentioned, *“I have come to accept my challenges and realized that dwelling on them excessively could be harmful to my mental well-being. Therefore, I've chosen to simply acknowledge them and navigate through them, believing that things will improve in the future.”*

Participant 7 additionally expressed, *“I have experienced numerous hardships, and they have shaped me into the person I am today. These difficulties are now integrated into my life, and I've*

embraced them. I have cultivated a sense of self-efficacy, and I believe that in the coming days, all these challenges will be a thing of the past.”

The research findings indicated that teenage girls have adopted acceptance as a way to deal with their predicament. This is backed by the observations of Chibwana and Gumbo, (2014), who noted that other children displayed a strong belief in themselves and their capabilities. They had developed a form of resilience and were determined to succeed in life despite their challenges. They harbored ambitious aspirations and envisioned a bright future, striving to derive meaning from their hardships. These children in foster care also expressed that receiving assistance and support from organizations significantly restored their sense of hope, purpose, and meaning in life. This realization made them recognize that there are individuals who care about their well-being. According to Muchinako et al., 2018, many reported that being able to socialize with their peers and friends at school provided temporary relief from their daily worries and responsibilities, serving as a significant source of respite.

Several coping strategies fall under these two styles, including positive reframing, effective help-seeking behaviors, seeking support from friends and family members, problem-solving, relaxation, physical recreation, and maintaining realistic expectations. Unhealthy coping strategies encompass denial, self-blame, and internalization of failures (Child Information Gateway, 2017). Furthermore, in line with this, social relational theory asserts that traditional unilateral assumptions regarding the nature of agency, power, and direction of influence in the family do not fully capture the comprehensibility of social dynamics.

4.4.3 Avoiding conflicts with the foster parents

Teenage girls residing in foster care disclosed that they strive to steer clear of conflicts with their foster parents. This emerged as a crucial coping mechanism embraced by teenagers in foster care.

Participant 1 said, *“Zvakanyanyokundibatsira kuita zvinhu zvinodiwa naAunt nekuti aunt vakatsamwa hamumbovade imi! Ndinoedza nepese pandinogona napo kuti hatipesane”*

(What helped me was to do things that are expected by Aunt because Aunt gets irritated when you cannot do it, I try my best to do what I can so that we will not reach that level)

Participant 3 stated, *“Aunt havatombode munhu ane musikanzwa or kuita zvinhu usina kuvabvunza munopesana, so takawirirana kuti tisaite zvinhu zvinovakanganisa”*

(Aunt doesn't like a person who is disobedient or does things without asking them, so we have agreed that we should not do things that will upset them, otherwise we will get into conflicts)

Key informant 4 expressed, *“I instructed my children that in order to maintain a positive relationship with me, they must follow my guidelines because each household has its own regulations, and I have noticed that they refrain from straying from these.”*

This also indicated that teenage girls in foster care actively avoid conflicts with their foster parents.

In this context, Beltran (2017) identified two broad categories of coping strategies, which are approach and avoidant strategies. Approach coping strategies are directed towards addressing the source of stress or one's emotions or thoughts, such as seeking social support or problem-solving. On the other hand, avoidant coping involves strategies that are focused away from the source of stress, one's emotions or thoughts, like denial or behavioral avoidance. While no single coping

strategy is exclusively linked to positive outcomes, avoidant strategies have generally been associated with poorer adjustment and weaker health outcomes, whereas approach strategies are generally related to more sensible adaptation (Beltran, 2017). However, Child Welfare Monitor (2017) noted that there is still limited knowledge regarding the coping strategies employed by children and youth in foster care. Previous studies have explored coping styles among foster youth. Perspectives on coping in childhood and adolescence differ from those in the adult coping literature, as they mainly encompass unconscious or involuntary coping responses and consider the challenges that emerging adults may experience, such as parental conflicts or divorce. Additionally, the social relation theory aims to understand the growing empirical evidence on the impact of children on parents, as well as everyday family dynamics such as children's defiance of parental demands, parent-child conflict, and parental responsiveness to children's influence.

4.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter reported the outcomes of the challenges of teenage girls living under foster care. This chapter showcased, examined, and deliberated on the findings of key informants and extensive interviews regarding the living circumstances, difficulties encountered, and coping mechanisms utilized by adolescent girls in foster care in Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER 5: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

5.0 Introduction

The chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the research conducted on teenage girls living under foster care in Seke, Chitungwiza. The primary focus of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the living conditions and challenges faced by these girls, with the ultimate goal of identifying practical solutions to improve their well-being.

5.1 Summary of findings

The study uncovered a spectrum of living conditions experienced by teenage girls under foster care. Both participants and key informants highlighted the diverse range of conditions encountered by these girls, encompassing both favorable and unfavorable circumstances. These conditions included misconceptions about foster children, access to adequate food, as well as safety and protection concerns.

The research pinpointed the array of challenges encountered by teenage girls residing in foster care in Zimbabwe, noting a multitude of obstacles faced by these individuals. Participants articulated the various challenges experienced within foster homes, which encompassed instances of abuse, insufficient psychosocial support, limited educational assistance, and interference from their biological families.

The research also aimed to recognize the coping mechanisms utilized by teenage girls residing in foster care in Zimbabwe. These girls acknowledged that despite the numerous challenges they confront in foster homes, they have developed coping strategies to address these difficulties.

These strategies include seeking support from Community Care Workers (CCWs), fostering acceptance, and avoiding conflicts with their foster parents.

5.2 Conclusions

The findings from the research revealed that adolescent girls living in foster care face difficult circumstances. These young individuals reside in constrained shelter and endeavor to cultivate their own sustenance, including vegetables and maize. However, this is inadequate due to the increasing population of children in foster care and the scarcity of resources. As a result, there is a shortage of food in foster homes.

Furthermore, the study emphasized that teenage girls in foster care confront a multitude of challenges, including instances of abuse, insufficient emotional support, limited educational aid, and interference from their biological families. Additionally, the research concluded that these girls have devised diverse strategies for dealing with these challenges, such as seeking assistance from community care workers, embracing their circumstances, and avoiding conflicts with their foster parents in order to surmount the obstacles they encounter.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations have been made.

5.3.1 Government

It is imperative for the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning to enhance the financial allocation to the Department of Social Development. Given the diverse needs of children in foster care, it is crucial for the Department of Social Development to receive sufficient financial support to deliver effective services. This augmented financial assistance will enable the Department of Social Development to effectively carry out its responsibilities and tackle the varied calls of the minors in foster homes.

5.3.2 Department of Social Development

It is vital for social workers within these departments to actively facilitate the provision of services to adolescent girls in foster care, as these individuals are vulnerable and encountering difficulties in meeting their requirements. The Department of Social Development should also conduct frequent visits to foster homes to assess the situations of adolescent girls, rather than merely placing them and disregarding their welfare and coping strategies. Hence, regular monitoring is essential.

5.3.3 Community

The active involvement of the local community is crucial in providing support for adolescent girls in foster care. The assistance for these young individuals should not solely depend on government and non-governmental organizations; rather, the community should also undertake the responsibility of nurturing them. It is vital for the community to advocate for the fostering of these girls, and institutionalization should be viewed as a final alternative or last measure.

5.3.4 Participants

Teenage girls living in foster care should utilize the minimal assistance provided by the Department of Social Development. They should focus on their education and the exploration of their capabilities. It is essential for these young girls to refrain from engaging in misconduct or absenteeism, as their future is within their grasp. Moreover, if they encounter challenges in their foster homes, these teenage girls should seek aid from caregivers and probation officers affiliated with the Department of Social Development.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

To gain a more thorough understanding of the difficulties encountered by adolescent girls residing in foster care in Seke Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe, there are several suggestions for additional research that could provide a more comprehensive insight into this issue:

1. **Impact of Foster Care Environment:** Further study could center on assessing the impact of the foster care environment on the mental and emotional well-being of teenage girls, including their experiences, coping strategies, and the effectiveness of support systems within the foster care setting.
2. **Gender-Specific Programs and Support Services:** Investigating the effectiveness of programs and support mechanisms tailored to the specific needs of female adolescents within the foster care system could offer insights into the unique challenges they face and the adequacy of current interventions.
3. **Healthcare and Well-being:** Research could delve into the healthcare and well-being of teenage girls in foster care, particularly addressing issues such as menstrual hygiene management, access to healthcare services, and the impact of their living conditions on their physical health.
4. **Education and School-Related Challenges:** Understanding the educational experiences and challenges related to schooling for teenage girls in foster care, including issues such as school attendance, academic performance, and experiences of gender-based violence, could provide valuable insights.

These recommendations aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by teenage girls in foster care in Seke Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe, and to inform the development of targeted interventions and support systems for this vulnerable population.

5.5 Chapter Summary

In this section, the study's overview, final thoughts, and suggestions were outlined based on the analysis and dialogue of the results in chapter 4. The suggestions are particularly significant as they offer potential measures for enhancing the day to day realities of adolescent girls residing in foster care.

REFERENCES

- A Better Childhood. (2019). Plaintiffs' lawyers seek permission to proceed with motion for receivership over Mississippi foster care system. <http://www.abetterchildhood.org/plaintiffs-lawyers-seek-permission-to-proceed-with-motion-for-receivership-over-mississippi-foster-care-system/> Accessed 19 May 2023
- Alder E. (2020). Frequent moves don't just harm foster kids' emotions—They hurt their brains. The Kansas City Star.
- Aspers, P. and Corte, U., (2019). What is qualitative in qualitative research? *Qualitative sociology*, 42, pp.139-160.
- Babbie, E.R., (2011). *Introduction to social research* (6th Ed). Wadsworth Cengage learning. USA.
- Bakema MJ, van Zuiden M, Collard D, Zantvoord JB, de Rooij SR, Elsenburg LK, Snijder MB, Stronks K, van den Born B-JH, & Lok A. (2020). Associations between child maltreatment, autonomic regulation, and adverse cardiovascular outcome in an urban population: The HELIUS study. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*
- Barrientos, A., Hulme, D. and Shepherd, A., (2015). Can social protection tackle chronic poverty? *The European Journal of Development Research*, 17, pp.8-23.
- Baynes-Dunning, K. and Workington, K., (2019). Responding to the needs of adolescent girls in foster care. *Geo. J. on poverty L. and Pol'y*.
- Beltran A. (2017). Federal and state advances to support grandfamilies. *GrandFamilies: The Contemporary Journal of Research, Practice and Policy*

Bernard, K., Butzin-Dozier, Z., Rittenhouse, J. and Dozier, M., (2019). Cortisol production patterns in young children living with birth parents vs children placed in foster care following involvement of Child Protective Services. *Archives of paediatrics & adolescent medicine*, 164(5), pp.438-443.

Bhardwaj, P., (2019). Types of sampling in research. *Journal of the Practice of Cardiovascular Sciences*, 5(3), p.157.

Block S, & Williams LM (2019). The prosecution of child sexual abuse: A partnership to improve outcomes. National Institute of Justice. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/252768>.

Burnard, P., Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E. and Chadwick, B., (2008). Analysing and presenting qualitative data. *British dental journal*, 204(8), pp.429-432.

Burns, N & Grove, S, K (2011):The practice of nursing research: Appraisal, synthesis and generation of evident. St Louis, MO: Saunders Elsevier

Busso D, Down L, Gibbons C, & Volmert A. (2019). Stuck in crisis: Media and organizational discourse on foster care and transition age youth. Frameworks Institute. https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/TAY/hilton_tay_mcffa_report_2019_web.pdf

Cambridge University Press and Assessment 2023

Chibwana, M.W.T. and Gumbo, N., (2015). Assessment report of the alternative care system for children in Zimbabwe. Unpublished report). Harare: SOS Children's Villages International.

Chibwana, M. W. T., and N. Gumbo. (2014). Assessment Report of the Alternative Care System for Children in Zimbabwe. Innsbruck: SOS Children's Villages International.

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2017). Extension of foster care beyond age 18. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/extensionfc.pdf>

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2017). Infant safe haven laws. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/safehaven.pdf>

Child Welfare Monitor. (2020). Around the country, states face shortage of foster homes for youth with greater needs. Child Welfare Monitor. <https://childwelfaremonitor.org/2020/01/06/around-the-country-states-face-shortage-of-foster-homes-for-youth-with-greater-needs/>

Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act 2013.

Creswell, J. A. (2013). Study Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches. London, Sage Publication.

Dozier, M. and Bernard, K., (2019). Coaching parents of vulnerable infants: The attachment and behavioural catch-up approach. Guilford Publications.

Feely, M., Raissian, K.M., Schneider, W. and Bullinger, L.R., (2020). The social welfare policy landscape and child protective services: Opportunities for and barriers to creating systems synergy. The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 692(1), pp.140-161

Fernandes-Alcantara AL (2019). John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood. Congressional Research Service. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/IF11070.pdf>

Grant, M.J. and Yeatman, S., (2012). The relationship between orphan hood and child fostering in sub-Saharan Africa, 1990s–2000s. Population Studies, 66(3), pp.279-295.

Government of Zimbabwe. (2015). Foster Care Handbook. Harare: Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare. Harare.

Hulme, D. and Shepherd, A., (2017). Conceptualizing chronic poverty. World development, CPRC Working Paper 2, Manchester: Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester. 31(3), pp.403-423.

IFSW, I., (2014). Global definition of social work. Retrieved August, 8, p.2019.

Jackson, Y., Huffhines, L., Stone, K. J., Fleming, K., & Gabrielli, J., (2017). Coping styles in youth exposed to maltreatment: Longitudinal patterns reported by youth in foster care. Child Abuse and Neglect, 70, pp.65-74.

Kalof, L. and Dan, A., (2018). EBOOK: Essentials of Social Research. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Kuczynski, L. and De Mol, J., (2015). Dialectical models of socialization. Theory and method, 1, pp.323-368. In W. F. Overton & P. C. M. Molenaar (Eds.). Theory and Method. Volume 1 of the Handbook of Child Psychology and Developmental Science. (7th ed.), Hoboken, NJ: Wiley

Kumar, R., (2018). Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners. Sage.

Kurevakwesu, W., (2017). The social work profession in Zimbabwe: A critical approach on the position of social work on Zimbabwe's development. Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences.

Muchinako, George, Mpambela, Memory & Muzingili, Taruvinga. (2018). The time for reflection: foster care as a child protection model in Zimbabwe. University of Zimbabwe Accredited Journals.

Mushunje M. T. (2017). The role of social work in the protection of vulnerable children: Lessons from Zimbabwe. In Gray M. (Ed.). *The handbook of social work and social development in Africa* (pp. 108–120). New York, NY: Routledge International.

Mutanana, N. and Gasva, D., (2016). Challenges Affecting the School Retention of the girl Child in Hurungwe District of Mashonaland West Province in Zimbabwe. *North Asian International Research Journal of Multidisciplinary*, 2(9), pp.1-16

Patel, S.N., Shanmugam, I., Obong'o, C., Mupambireyi, Z., Kasese, C., Bangani, Z. and Miller, K.S., (2021). Child disciplinary practices, abuse, and neglect: Findings from a formative study in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 115, p.105016.

Powell, R., (2014). Can Parents Lose Custody Simple Because They Are Disabled? *Solo*, 31, p.14.

Punch, K. (2015). *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. London: Sage.

Rehman, A.A. and Alharthi, K., (2016). An introduction to research paradigms. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, 3(8), pp.51-59.

Roller, M.R., (2019). A quality approach to qualitative content analysis: Similarities and differences compared to other qualitative methods. *SSOAR-Social Science Open Access Repository*.

Royce, D. (2018). *Study Methods in Social Work*. Belmont, CA: Brooks Learning.

Rubin, A. and Babbie, E.R., (2016). *Empowerment series: Research methods for social work*. Cengage Learning.

Rutledge, P.B. and Hogg, J.L.C., (2020). In-Depth Interviews. The International Encyclopaedia of Media Psychology, pp.1-7

Sarker, P.C. and Das, U.K., (2020). Ethics in Social Research and Its Impact on Policy Implication, Planning and Development. Bangladesh Journal of Bioethics, 11(1), pp.40-51.

Schreiber, J. (2019). Building permanency: Creating lifelong connections for children in foster care.

Sherr, L., Robberts, K.J. & Gandhi, N. (2017). Child violence experiences in institutionalised/orphanage care. Psychology, Health & Medicine, 22 (1): 31-57.

Sibindi, L. & Dube, K. (2016). The efficacy of the Family Based Model for the care of orphans at SOS Children's Village in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies, 4 (11): 172-178.

Strassburger (2018). Crafting complaints and settlements in child welfare litigation. University of Pennsylvania Journal of Law & Social Change.

Tsitsu, B.C. & Dziro, C. (2014). Utility of National Residential Child Care Standards in Zimbabwe: A study of one children's home in Harare. Asian Academic Research Journal of Social Science, 1 (20): 30-43.

UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office. (2022). Supporting Foster Care in Eastern and Southern Africa.

United Nations Children's Fund, For every child (2021). Monitoring the situation of children and women, Children in alternative care. UNICEF, New York. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/children-alternative>

care/#:~:text=Global%20and%20regional%20estimates,in%20residential%20care%20in%20202

1.

Vandermeersch, C. and Chimere-Dan, O., (2016). Child fostering under six in Senegal in 1992-1993. *Population*, 57(4), pp.659-685.

Vinga, A. (2016). More needs to be done for children in foster care, on the streets. *NewsDay* (7 January 2016). Williams

Williams, J. (2019). *Foster parenting: A comprehensive guide*. Routledge.

Willie, M.M., (2022). Differentiating Between Population and Target Population in Research Studies. *International Journal of Medical Science and Clinical Research Studies*, 2(6), pp.521-523.

Yi Y, Edwards FR, & Wildeman C. (2020). Cumulative prevalence of confirmed maltreatment and foster care placement for US children by race/ethnicity, 2011–2016. *American Journal of Public Health* 110(5), pp.704-709

Zimbabwe Children’s Act (Chapter 5:06). (Section amended by section 2 of Act 23 of 2001).

APPENDIX 1

Consent form for primary participant

My name is Tinotenda N Nyamaropa student at Bindura University undertaking an Undergraduate Degree in Social Work. I am conducting a study entitled, “Exploring the challenges faced by teenage girls living under Foster Care in selected foster homes, Chitungwiza”. I will be asking you a few questions and my intention is gather findings which may help in gathering more knowledge on the living conditions of teenage girls under foster care. Participation in the research is voluntary and you can choose not to answer any individual question or all the questions. Feel free to withdraw at any time and withdrawal from the research will not be held against you. If you agree to take part your identity will remain anonymous and your signature will illuminate your willingness to take part. This research is purely academic and no personal details will be captured and information will be treated as confidential.

Feel free to say exactly what you know.

Please tick where applicable

Will you participate in the study? YES NO

Would you allow me to record your voice through the audio recorder? (This is strictly confidential and anonymity is guaranteed). YES NO

If yes then sign the consent form and proceed if no stop.

Is there anything you want to know before we start?

I have read the above and I understand the nature of the study. I am willing to participate and give my consent.

Participant's Signature.....

Researcher's Signature.....

Participant In-depth Interview Guide (Foster Child)

Personal Information

1. Gender.....
2. Age of the Child

Section A: Examining the living conditions of teenage girls living under foster care

1. Did you manage fit into the new environment comfortably and safe?
2. In your opinion, what do you think are some of the misconceptions about children in foster care?
3. How is your relationship with your foster family?

Section B: The challenges being faced by teenage girls living under foster care

4. Have you faced challenges within the foster family?
5. Have you faced any challenges within the community you are in?
6. Have you faced challenges with the foster care system?

Section C: Coping strategies employed by teenage girls living under foster care

7. What helps you feel better when you are feeling down or upset?
8. What do you do to make yourself feel more connected to your foster family?
9. What support does the government, particularly the Department of Social Development offer?
10. What things or activities you do every day to make sure that you get your needs such as food and other basic necessities?

11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for taking the time to share your valuable perspectives.

APPENDIX 2

Consent form for Key Informants

My name is Tinotenda N Nyamaropa, a student at Bindura University undertaking a Undergraduate Degree in Social Work. I am conducting a research entitled “Exploring the challenges faced by teenage girls living under Foster Care in selected foster homes, Chitungwiza”. I will be asking you a few questions and my intention is to gather findings which may help in enhancing the intervention strategies that can be used with the attempt to gather more knowledge on the living conditions of teenage girls under foster care. Participation in the research is voluntary and you can choose not to answer any individual question or all the questions. Feel free to withdraw at any time and withdrawal from the research will not be hold against you. If you agree to take part your identity will remain anonymous and your signature will illuminate your willingness to take part. This research is purely academic and no personal details will be captured and information will be treated as confidential.

Feel free to say exact what you know.

Please tick where applicable

Can I interview your children?	YES	NO
Will you participate in the study?	YES	NO

Would you allow me to record your voice through the audio recorder? (This is strictly confidential and anonymity is guaranteed). YES NO

If yes then sign the consent form and proceed if no stop.

Is there anything you want to know before we start?

I have read the above and I understand the nature of the study. I am willing to participate and give my consent.

Participant's Signature.....

Researcher's Signature.....

In-depth Interview Guide for Key Informants

Personal Information

1. Gender.....
2. Agency.....
3. Role

Section A: Examining the living conditions of teenage girls living under foster care

1. What strategies do you use to help the children adjust to their new environment of foster care setting?
2. How do you ensure that the foster children's nutritional needs are met?
3. How is the child to foster parent relationship?

Section B: The challenges being faced by teenage girls living under foster care

4. Are there any reports coming from foster children to you?

5. Are there any noted challenges faced by the foster children in trying to blend into the new foster care environment?
6. Are there challenges with the foster care system?
7. What do you think are some of the misconceptions about children in foster care?

Section C: Support structures available towards teenage girls living under foster care

8. What are the resources available to these foster children to help them cope with the challenges?
9. What support does the government, particularly the Department of Social Development offer?
10. How do you ensure the safety of foster children from all kinds of abuse?
11. Do you have anything else to add or say concerning this topic?

Thank you for taking the time to share your valuable perspectives, your input in this research has been extremely helpful and greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX 3: APPROVAL LETTER

Official communications should
Not be addressed to individuals

Telephone: Harare 790872/7
Telegrams "SECLAB"
Private Bag 7707/7750



ZIMBABWE

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR AND SOCIAL
WELFARE
Compensation House
Cnr Fourth Street and Central Avenue
HARARE

12 February 2024

Tinotenda Nigel Nyamaropa (B200751B)
Bindura University of Science Education
Bindura

**REF: LETTER OF APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY
TITLED "EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES OF TEENAGE GIRLS
LIVING UNDER FOSTER CARE HOMES IN SEKE". A CASE STUDY OF
CHITUNGWIZA.**

Receipt of your letter with the above mentioned matter is acknowledged.

Please be advised that permission is hereby granted for you to carry out research
titled "Exploring The Challenges of Teenage Girls Living Under Foster Care
Homes in Seke".

Permission is granted **STRICTLY** on condition that the research is for academic
purposes only in pursuit of your Degree in Social Work. The data collected should
not be shared to third party (3rd).

You are requested to submit a copy of your final research documents to the
Department of Social Development upon completion as your research has a bearing
on the Department's mandate.

pp T. Zimhunga
Director Social Development.
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR AND SOCIAL WELFARE

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR
AND SOCIAL WELFARE
SOCIAL WELFARE REGISTRY
12 FEB 2024
P.O. BOX CY 429, CAUSEWAY
ZIMBABWE TEL: 0242-790721/4

