

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

**EXPLORATION OF THE CHALLENGES FACED BY FOSTER CHILDREN IN
GURUVE DISTRICT: A CASE STUDY OF GURUVE RURAL DISTRICT.**

By

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**THIS DESSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
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SOCIAL WORK**

APROVAL FORM

Supervisor

I certify that I have approved **GRACE MUFURATIRWA B190040B** for this research titled **EXPLORATION OF THE CHALLENGES FACED BY FOSTER CHILDREN IN GURUVE DISTRICT: A CASE STUDY OF GURUVE RURAL DISTRICT**.in partial fulfilment of requirements of the Bachelor of Social Work Honours Degree and it may proceed for examination

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DEDICATION FORM

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Miss A. Nhongonhema. I thank you for your support in providing for my needs be it financial or emotional support. I am forever grateful for the love and support.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the challenges faced by foster children in Zimbabwe and was primarily undertaken in pursuit for improved care for children living in foster care in Guruve District. The case study research design was adopted and is best suited when the information the researcher needs should come directly from the individuals under study. A population comprising of foster children aged eight to eighteen years and a sample of twelve (N=12) participants conveniently selected from the target population was utilised. Interviews were used as the research instruments in the gathering of data and were preferred for their various advantages including the fact that they enabled the researchers to obtain rich and meaningful data viewed through the eyes of the participants. The Thematic Content Analysis Technique (TCAT) was used in analysing the findings. The major findings of the study were that while the foster family was found to be generally able to provide basic needs including food, shelter and education; lack of attachment affected the relationship between the foster child and the parent. Consequently, most foster children were noted to be emotionally affected by the separation from their biological family and general lack of parental attachment. Thus, this produced intense feelings of vulnerability, loneliness, emptiness and a desire for a fulfilling life; while discrimination and lack of freedom have also cast a dark shadow on the psychological health of most foster children. The study further revealed that some foster parents have less time for interaction with foster children. On the other hand, not all foster children experience challenges in foster families as some of them have since accepted their situation and are effectively coping. The study recommended, among other things, that relevant government ministries, departments, non-governmental and community-based organizations should support foster care arrangements through realistic policies and financing.

ACRONYMS

AIDS.....Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

AMTOAssisted Medical Treatment Order

BEAM.....Basic Education Assistance Module

DSD..... Department of Social Development

DSDO.....District Social Development Officer

HIV.....Human Immune Virus

NAP/OVC.....National Action Plan For Orphans and Vulnerable Children

NGO's.....Non-Governmental Organizations

OVC.....Orphans and Vulnerable Children

PA.....Public Assistance

PO..... Probation Officer

PVOs.....Private Voluntary Organizations

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Globally, the care and welfare of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) has become a major concern and topical issue in contemporary child protection discourse. The foster care model is one of the many approaches for caring for OVCS and in most communities; it has increasingly received widespread attention as a safety net from central government, civic society and other organizations. Notably, the adoption of the foster care approach has been a gradual paradigm shift from institutionalisation of OVCs, and the underlying principle for adopting it has been that it is more appropriate to keep foster children and other OVCs in a set p that gives them the opportunity to interact with family and the community.

The category of OVCs range from orphaned children, children bon of very poor parents, children born of aged and mentally challenged parents, children living on the streets, children infected and affected by HIV and AIDS and so on (ZimStat, 2014). However, despite having record a phenomenal success and gradually receiving pervasive acceptance in the modern world, the foster family care model has shrouded with both negative and positive outcomes. Accordingly, this study found it imperative to investigate the challenges faced by foster children living in Guuve District of Mashonaland Central Province In Zimbabwe.

1.1 Background of the study

According to Perlmatter and Hall (2012), the foster family care management has become one of the most viable tends in caring for OVCs. This has largely been necessitated by the increasing

number of OVCs which has been a result of many factors including the disintegration of the nuclear and extended family systems as well as the HIV and AIDS pandemic which has since left many children orphaned and vulnerable after the death of one or both parents. Naturally, foster children, like any other children, require regular care for mere survival, and much more for them to develop the necessary skills and competencies for effective survival and development to adulthood. Mvududu (2001) notes that, traditionally, both the family and community have been responsible for children's general care and welfare where they played a nurturing role as well as the transmission of cultural and societal norms and values.

Best (2002) purports that with many children orphaned and vulnerable, most approaches, practices and policies and foster-caring have dwelt more on child care and welfare. However, while most of the care and attention particularly in the developing world has been given to OVCs such that they grow with good cultural and societal norms and values, their experiences have been daunting particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa where resources are generally scarce and society's attitudes towards fostering have been mixed. In some instances, the psychological and emotional needs of foster children have been either neglected or taken for granted. More so, the voices and lived experiences of most foster children have not been heard enough to allow for the promotion of their strategic needs and expectations, which has also impeded their normal growth and development (Mvududu, *ibid*).

For example, the Government of the Republic Zimbabwe, as early as 1999, and in response to the impending crisis, developed and adopted a National Orphan Care Policy (NOCP) which sought to complement traditional methods of care and discouraged forms of care which removed

children from their communities and culture. The policy recommended foster-care and adoption as the desired alternatives for children who did not have extended families to take care for them. The policy also discouraged institutional care and clearly state that institutionalization should be regarded as the last resort after all efforts to secure an ideal care environment have been exhausted. It is believed that a child is more likely to cope if he or she lives in surroundings that are either familiar or similar to normal family and community set-ups, In order to reduce several potential challenges, an OVC should be left out to be close as possible to his or her community, a situation which the foster-care approach somewhat promotes (Georckel, 2004).

Traditionally, a child should be cared for in a family unit complemented by extended family networks. However, in the sad apparent situation affecting many countries particularly in predominantly HIV and AIDS affected Sub-Saharan Africa, every community has OVCs, a good number of whom are now placed under foster-care. There is generally an increasing number of foster families in Southern Africa as the extended family is usually overburdened and no longer able to cope. The negative lived experiences which most foster children face are usually a result of scarce resources or simply neglect by some foster parents. In some cases, the problems that foster children face are caused by foster systems of the country, as well as its culture, religion and so on (Powel,2004). It is against this backdrop that the current study, therefore, sought to find out the challenges faced by foster children in the area under study.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Generally, the voices and lived experiences of most foster children have not been heard in order to help society evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of the foster- family care model. In some sections of society, the model has been criticized for exposing OVCs to a host of challenges including psycho-social problems. Little is known about the day to day experiences of foster children and this is compounded by the fact that the number of OVCs in need of alternative care arrangement including fostering is on the increase, hence, the need to unveil the challenges faced by foster children.

1.3 Research Aim and objectives

The purpose of the current study is to explore the challenges faced by foster children living in different foster homes in Guruve District of Mashonaland Central Province in Zimbabwe. The study will be guided by the following key objectives:

- To determine the need for and challenges caused by lack of ‘attachment’ in children.
- To find out the day to day relationship between foster children and parents.
- To establish the challenges faced by foster children in the area under study.

1.4 Research Questions

- What are challenges being faced by foster children in their foster homes?
- How orphan and vulnerable children (OVCs) are embracing fostering in Guruve District?
- Are there any efforts by the responsible government ministries and departments to come up with effective guidelines and policies for the care and welfare of foster children?

- Is fostering giving foster children crucial emotional and psychological security?

1.5 Assumptions of the Study

The study is going to be guided by assumptions. The researcher is working with the assumption that the assumed target participants will be knowledgeable of the research subject hence they will provide relevant and rich information. This is in particular to key informants. The researcher assumes that participants in the study will participate willingly and be cooperative. The researcher assumed the children and foster parents interviewed were honest and forthcoming in their responses to the researcher's questions.

1.6 Significance of the study

It is envisaged that the significance of the current study is essentially that it will expose the challenges and other lived experiences of foster children living in different foster homes. Such findings are expected to be used for the improvement of the care and welfare of OVCs including children under foster care. The findings may assist responsible government Ministries and departments (such as the Department of Social Development in Zimbabwe) in their efforts to come up with effective guidelines and policies for the care and welfare of foster children. In addition, the findings may further motivate the civic and donor community to support effective foster-family care arrangements in order to promote their normal development. The findings are also expected to add to available knowledge on fostering as well as form a basis for future research by illuminating areas that need further investigation

1.7 Definition of terms

Foster care... A legal process whereby a child is raised in a foster family by individuals other than their biological parents without being adopted.

Foster child ... A child being taken care of in foster care.

1.8 Proposed chapter outline of the dissertation

Chapter 1

As the first chapter, it will concentrate on areas that will be expanded upon which includes background of the study, statement of the problem, aims, objectives, significance of the study. Conclusion of the chapter is also given at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 2

This chapter will concentrate on literature review, exploring the various ideas that have been put forth by various academics regarding this subject, as well as the theoretical framework that is relevant to the area of study.

Chapter 3

This chapter will discuss the research methodology in detail, including the design, sampling, sampling strategy, population and data collection methods to be used in the study.

Chapter 4

The methodology's findings will be documented so that everyone is aware of what the research has revealed. The findings will help identify areas that are operating effectively and others that require improvement.

Chapter 5

As the final chapter, this section will look at the summary, conclusion and recommendations. Recommendations will ensure that if other studies are to be conducted they will need to look into them so that the issues can be addressed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is focused on the literature based on other scholars' perception towards the study of the topic under review. Various ideas and notions from these scholars helped to build this study; the relevance of their ideas will also be evaluated. The review of related literature conceptualized the notions of 'fostering' and 'attachment' as well as reviewing the different challenges faced by foster children and some empirical studies on fostering. The Critical theory, which serves as the study's theoretical foundation, will also be emphasized in this section, along its applicability

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study will use Critical Theory primarily proposed by Frankfurt School theoreticians: Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm and Max Horkheimer. Early critical theory was concerned with the idea of 'domination' and specifically confronted our need to control social and natural environment (Agger, 2006). This perspective sought to deconstruct the authority of social institutions in maintaining status quo. Critical theory is a school of thought that stresses the examination and critique of society and culture, drawing from knowledge across the social sciences and philosophy. Critical theory aims at explaining and transforming the circumstances that enslave human beings, as Max Horkheimer defined the term in his now famous 1937 article Traditional and Critical Theory. Critical theory in most of its main form has at least two main elements. Firstly, it is held that empirical study and philosophical analysis should be brought

together to form a detailed and correct understanding of a phenomenon under study. Secondly, it is held that the normative basis for the critical research and critique should be founded on the needs, longings, and moral demands of the people living under the conditions of the system or structure that are criticized.

The theory also focuses on reflective assessment and critique of society and culture in order to reveal and challenge power structures. Stemming from this early work, several other critical theorists also considered ways in which social structures inhibit human potential. Bohman (2005) argues that social problems are influenced and created more by societal structures and cultural assumptions than by individuals and psychological factors.

Critical theories aim to change and critique society as a whole by finding the underlying assumptions in social life that prevent people from participating in a “true democracy. “Critical Theory developed in the Frankfurt school from scholars such as Horkheimer and Adorno with an emphasis on examining and deconstructing fascism and mass media. Habermas continued the tradition of Critical Theory through his notion of the life world and the public sphere. He theorized that political and economic institutions had invaded public life, leading to a lack of nuance in discourse and preventing people from participating in a “real democracy. “Critical Theory morphed into critical legal theory in the latter 20th century, which eventually gave rise to branches such as critical race and critical gender theory. Critical Theory is a social theory that aims to critique and change society as a whole. Critical theories attempt to find the underlying assumptions in social life that keep people from fully and truly understanding how the world works. These

underlying assumptions, in the view of critical theories, create a “False consciousness” that actively undermines people’s progress toward a true democracy.

The goal of critical theory is to give the general public information on issues that can cause oppression to groups of people. By drawing attention to an unfair practice, critical theory hopes that behaviors can correct the unbalanced systems that favor particular people. Critical theory works to end the oppressive practices that are common practice in society. If the oppressive practice is called to light, theorists believe that it can be changed to reduce the oppression it causes. The general goal of critical theory is to enlighten the general public on the issues that can cause alienation and unequal opportunities within a population. By drawing attention to the unbalanced nature of the practice, critical theory hopes that amended behaviors can correct the unbalanced systems that favor certain groups of people. This theory was introduced by Karl Marx, who sought to correct the capitalist system he saw around him. He claimed that the capitalist system created powerless citizens who were trapped and exploited by money. Marx believed that people must recognize the oppressive system before they could free themselves from the explosion of the societal system. Marx laid the foundation for critical theory.

2.1.1 Applicability of the theory to the study

The theory will help the study in understanding the basis of all problems being faced by foster children. Foster children are facing problems in the societies they live in as a result of social institutions trying to maintain the status quo. These institutions include the politics, culture and other societal structures that are responsible of socializing and ensure that foster children are growing in a socially acceptable manner. The critical theory will be useful for this study since it will be helpful in understanding the strategies that can be employed in addressing the factors affecting foster children and how to improve care in foster care. Primary to critical theory are four elements that could be useful to decision-making in child protection and welfare services. These include: deconstruction and integration, critical thinking, reflection and critical consciousness (Leitz, 2009). Social and economic challenges affecting children in foster care can be addressed using the highlighted elements in decision making different cases. Service providers can integrate and deconstruct, critically think the way forward in improving care in foster care.

2.2 The ‘Fostering’ Concept

2.2.1 Globally

The conceptualization of the term ‘fostering’ has variations as it depends on several factors including setting and cultural context. Generally, ‘fostering’ is taking care of a child, usually for a limited time; without taking full legal guardianship. For Foster et al, (2009), the foster- family care model entails placing a child in the temporary care of a family other than his or her own as the result of problems or challenges within the birth family, or while critical elements of an adoption

are being completed. Foster-care is, thus, placing a child in the temporary care of a family other than his or her own and is considered a full-time substitute care of children outside their own home by people other than their biological or adoptive parents or legal guardians. A ‘foster parent’ can be referred to as any person caring for a non-biological child whose parents cannot do so for one reason or the other and it includes a person providing full time care of a child or children. On the other hand, a ‘foster child’ is the name used to describe a child raised by someone who is not the child’s natural or adoptive parent or parents, or simply a needy child who is either orphaned or vulnerable and living in a foster family, community or supported by intervention from a specific charitable organization UNAIDS (2008).

2.2.2 Regionally

As noted by Foster and Bertman (2007), the rise in the number of OVCs has become a common trend in most communities, and one of the related phenomenal developments has been the advent of foster-family care. This is typical of impoverished communities including Africa which has been described as a land that has been torn apart by war and disease, consequently becoming a predominantly problematic continent. In this regard, Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest population of OVCs, as in 2016, 12.3 per cent (43 million) of all children in the region were OVCs, nearly double the 7.3 per cent of children in Asia, and 6.2 per cent of children in Latin America and the Caribbean, who were OVCs (Foster and Bertman, *ibid*; UNAIDS, *ibid*).

Most of these OVCs have been subjects for out-of-family care arrangements including foster-family care.

2.3 Children's need for attachment and challenges caused by lack of attachment

2.3.1 Globally

There are several theories proposed by social scientists particularly psychologists to explain the concept of 'attachment'. Generally, the term attachment is used in Social Science to describe an infant's tendency to seek physical and emotional closeness to particular individuals and to feel more secure in their presence. Traditionally, the belief is that the child's attachment to the mother naturally develops simply because she is the source of food, one of the infant's most basic needs. A series of experiments with monkeys have, however, shown that there is more to 'mother-child attachment' than just the mother being the source of food (Atkinson et al, 2000). Berk (2007) argues that the nature and duration of attachment between the mother and the child determines the extent to which the child will feel emotionally attached. Most children naturally become emotionally attached to the mother as the mother is normally the most dominant figure in the child's early life. This attachment is also motivated by the fact that the mother gives birth and takes the leading role in nurturing the child. However, this attachment has to be broken at some point in order for the child to develop a separate sense of self, which will pave way for secondary attachment with significant others in the life of the child (Feldman and Papalia, *ibid*).

2.3.2 Regionally

In relation to foster parenting, attachment generally implies an affection bond or tie between an individual and an attachment figure; who is usually a foster parent or caregiver. Such a bond is usually reciprocal between the child and parent or caregiver, and the bond is essentially based on

the child's need for safety, security and protection. The attachment theory also proposes that children attach to a parent or care giver instinctively, initially for the biological purpose of survival and ultimately for the psychological purpose of security. At a secondary level, „attachment“, therefore, implies the psychosocial relationship between a child and a parent, foster parent or caregiver (Fernald and Fernald, *ibid*). Myers (2006) resonates that the attachment theory illustrates how infants form attachments not only to biological parents, but to any significant other or consistent caregiver who is sensitive and responsive in social interactions with them.

The theory hypothesizes that the quality of the social engagement between the child and attachment figure is more influential than the amount of time spent. While the biological mother is usually the principal attachment figure, the role can be taken by anyone who behaves in a “mothering” way over a period of time and this involves social interactions, signals and approaches. On the other hand, the theory further claims that fathers also have the potential of becoming principal attachment figures if they provide most of the child care and social interaction to the child (Baron, 2006; Schacter, 2009). Generally, a young child normally works back and forth between exploration of the environment and checking in with an attachment figure.

2.3.3 Nationally

Children who lost their parents may suffer serious psychological consequences with respect to lack of attachment. If the primary attachment figure, who is expected to be either the mother or father is late, it therefore, means that there is no one who can immediately provide the basic attachment needs of the child. OVCs usually manifest this gap which often results in developmental problems or psychopathology for most of them. This essentially explains the causes

of developmental and emotional problems often experienced by foster children as they lack an attachment to a biological figure while also often developing fragile and inconsistent attachment with a foster parent (Baron, *ibid*).

2.4 Relationships in foster families and challenges faced by foster children

2.4.1 Globally

The subsequent separation of children from parents essentially deprives the children of crucial emotional and psychological security. The circumstances of becoming foster children as a result of parent's death or separation pose particular psychosocial challenges for both foster children and the non-biological parents. The sad experiences of foster children include disempowerment when witnessing the parent's separation, deterioration, pain and/or death. They also feel anxious that their source of livelihood and their ability to retain the family home after the parent's separation or death is under threat and so even if they are taken to a non-biological family, these emotions are still with them, hence, causing the relationship within the foster family not to be sceptical. More often than not, peers and ill-informed community members sometimes subject foster children to teasing and discrimination (Bertman, *ibid*).

Other factors affect the relationship between foster children and parents, and these include, period of detachment from their families, the age of the foster child, developmental milestones such as reaching puberty, time spent with the foster parents and other personal factors. On the other hand, due to economic challenges and other internal factors in the foster family, not every child will get

the full attention they would need and deserve, let alone the foster child. This alone increases the psychological damage to the foster children concerned which is detrimental to their normal growth and development (Mussen, *ibid*; Diego, Field and Hernandez, *ibid*). The separation of foster children from their biological parents for any reason also shatters their sense of security, confidence and hope.

It is also very disturbing to some foster children when they think of their siblings that they were separated from because no one was willing to live with them at one place before they moved into foster families. In some instances, some unscrupulous and illiterate foster parents *are sometimes moody and not all that friendly to their foster children; and may at one point unnecessarily remind the foster child that he or she should not forget that he or she is actually a foster child and not a biological child in the family. All these factors have an aggregate psychological and emotional harm on foster children as the affected children would not stop thinking about the need for their real“ family where they are cared for by their biological parents or at least by extended family members (Mvududu, *ibid*).

2.4.2 Regionally

Foster children are more vulnerable than other children in many ways, according to a number of recent studies. For example, a foster child is more likely to drop out of school or to go to school not well supported as compared to a non-foster child. Using cross-sectional data from 10 Sub-Saharan African countries, Case et al (2000) cited in Bertman (2001) concluded that foster children most of whom are OVCs are less likely to be enrolled in schools than non-foster children with whom they live with. Consequently, most foster children tend to have a low intellectual capacity

due to stress and depression resulting in them achieving low in school. Some of the problems of foster children include lack of support and attachment to the foster parents and they do not have access to be helped in school work where they do not understand because the foster parents might always be occupied at work or simply lack that attachment. Similar researches done in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa found out that foster children experience more interruptions and loss of their education (Bertman, *ibid*).

In a study conducted in Namibia, Agyarko (2002) found out that mild child trauma was associated with most foster children, possibly having resulted in witnessing the separation or death of a parent or parents. The study also revealed that children in foster care self-report more stress and depression than children in intact nuclear and extended families. An anonymous Namibian Social Worker once acknowledged to the Agyarko (2002) study that:

“Though the foster-family care model has been a resounding success in many parts of the world, we know that the foster care environment can have a detrimental effect on the intellectual and socio-emotional development of the foster child”. This subjective admission on its own points to the question whether foster-family care is the most effective means for caring for OVCs.

In one study carried out in rural Uganda, high levels of psychological distress were found in foster children living with non-biological parents (Case et al, *ibid*). The problems of these foster children manifested in the form of unhappiness, moodiness, antisocial behaviour, anxiety, depression and anger. These psychological problems became more severe as the foster children became increasingly more conscious of their differential life opportunities with other children. In another related study conducted in Uganda, high levels of psychological distress were found in foster

children and children who live with adopted parents (Perlmatter and Hall, 2012). The study also revealed that more parents in impoverished African communities are no longer living with all their siblings and this alone has resulted in problems which lead to the adoption and foster-parenting of some children. Thus, to this present day, siblings in impecunious communities are often split up as the extended family is unable to care for them. As noted by Worden (2005), problems such as multiple changes of residence, parents and caregivers who are strangers and to whom the child has no attachment are liable to make foster children face a host of psychological and emotional challenges.

2.4.3 Nationally

In some parts of Zimbabwe, it has been noted that the number of children in need of foster care is on the increase and there has also been a complementary increase in the number of people volunteering in foster-parenting. For example, a Duke University study highlighted an increase in the number of OVCs in African country; most of whom are now in foster-care settings (Mukoyogo and Williams, 2001). For them, the study also found out that most children in fostering experience psychological problems which include neglect, emotional stress and depression. The study recommended among other things that it is better to implement or reinforce the traditional family system and provide local communities and close relatives to take care of OVCs in order to avoid challenges associated with fostering and other out-of-family child care approaches. Furthermore, the study recommended that when employing the Safety Net Approach (SNA), the first port of call should be the biological family, and in the case of OVCs, the extended family becomes the best

alternative for child care as it will provide the child with a sense of belongingness while at the same time providing a normal and conducive environment for development.

2.5 Social Problems Faced by Children in Foster Care

2.5.1 Globally

In different part of the world, foster children remain vulnerable and the face different problems affecting their well-being. National Association for Social Workers (2015) highlighted that in fiscal year 2013, an estimated 679,000 children in foster care were found to have experienced maltreatment, with children under the age of one being the most likely to have been maltreated in United States of America. They also noted that in United States of America, there were 402,378 children and youths in foster care and 19,499 young people aged out of foster care. It is also estimated that 1,484 children die each year due to child abuse and neglect and most experts report that this number may be much higher.

More so, there was evidence that children in the care of the Canadian child welfare system are particularly vulnerable group. When compared to other developed countries, Canada has an exceptionally high rate of children in care (Brownell, Chartier, Au et al., 2015). Problems faced by children in developed country evidently require mainly child protection intervention. They are not mainly affected by political or economic factors but rather the social factor which require such of social related intervention. This might be reason Social workers practicing in these countries offer more child protection services since many of the children are in need of such services compared to those in developing countries.

2.5.2 Regionally

There are quite number of problems affecting children in foster care in Africa causing them to have a dysfunctional social life. Foster children in Africa are mostly affected with poverty which has led to the poor accessibility to child welfare services such as health, education and food security. Due to poverty many children were put in foster care for their wellbeing but in foster care they survive from food aids provided by different international organizations. And in some areas where these food aid programs are not accessible children in care are prone to hunger and end up running away from the foster care affecting their social wellbeing as some resort to prostitution. Foster children have become the primary victims of the socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe since it is rated as one of the poorest country in Africa.

2.5.3 Nationally

In Zimbabwe children in foster care face ore problems as highlighted by the research conducted by UNICEF (2016) as a result of the social and economic factors. Their rights to healthcare, and nourishment and education remain by and largely unprotected given that due to economic challenges of the country these children sometimes get one meal per day and sometimes welfare services are delayed leaving the foster parent to struggle to put food on the table for the children in her care.

2.6 Child Protection and Welfare Services to Foster Children in Zimbabwe

2.6.1 Public Assistance

There are multiple of organisations responsible of offering public assistance to vulnerable children in Zimbabwe such as educational assistance, medical assistance, cash transfer and food assistances. According to Mutasa (2015), the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) is one of the important pro-poor funds that are meant for the marginalized and vulnerable communities in Zimbabwe. BEAM is a programme that provides school fees, examination fees levies and building assistance. It was introduced by the Government of Zimbabwe in 2001. The Department of Social Development (DSD) is also responsible of offering services to address the challenge of growing food insecurity, effective social protection programmes must be implemented and scaled-up. Cash transfers are one such programme, the primary objectives of which often include poverty alleviation and food insecurity reduction (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013).

2.7 SUMMARY

The chapter began by explaining the importance of the Critical Theory to the study. The chapter also reviewed other literatures that are relating to the study. The gaps that were found in other studies were highlighted including the almost similar to the study and how relevant they can be to this study. The next chapter presents the research methodology adopted to achieve the objectives of this research.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The chapter focused on the methodology which was used by the researcher during data collection. It focused on the research approach, research design, study setting, target population, sampling and sampling procedures, data collection tools, data presentation and ethical consideration and feasibility of the study. Patel and Patel (2019) Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. It comprises the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. Methodology includes three approaches named qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. This study utilized the qualitative approach.

3.1 Research Approach

The researcher used qualitative research approach in this study. Qualitative approach is empirical where the data is not in form of number and it captures the world in action (Punch, 2001). Qualitative research describes a set of non-statistical inquiry techniques and processes used to gather data about social phenomena (McNabb 2002). The data is gathered through multiple sources such as interviews and observations instead of single source of data (Creswell 2007). The study explored the challenges being faced by foster children, which required researcher to capture the real experiences of these children in foster care. Thus, this led the researcher to use the qualitative approach for data collection and analysis. The researcher utilized this approach because of its

advantages that is it subjective it gives the reality of human life and it focuses more on quality of the research result.

3.2 Research Design

The researchers adopted the case study approach. Case study allows in-depth, multi-faceted exploration of complex issues in their real life settings Yin (2014). With the goal of capturing the challenges being faced by foster children in the area under the study. This design was suitable in this study because it helped in data collection and analysis since the data was based on the real life experience of foster children. Thus, this meant that a deeper and holistic picture was realised by the current study regarding the challenges faced by foster children living in Guruve, for which findings may be generalized to communities of similar setting and culture.

3.3 Population under the study

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2015), population is a group of people with particular characteristics to be used to establish certain information. A population is a collection of objects, events or individuals having some common information that the researcher is interested in studying (Creswell, 2007). The population for this study comprised of foster children in Guruve and their foster parents and the key informants from the DSD

3.4 Sample Size

Accordingly, the sample comprised twelve participants (N=12) who were interviewed individually in order to accomplish the study. Two key informants were interviewed who are the district Social Development Officer (DSDO) and the Probation officer (PO). Two foster parents

were also interviewed one from ward 4 of Guruve district and one from ward 1 of Guruve district and eight foster children, four picked from ward 1 and four from ward 4.

3.5 Sampling Methods

The researchers found it impossible to include every element of the population in the research exercise; hence, the idea of sampling was conceived. Convenience sampling technique was used to pick the foster children and the key informants to identify the study sample. Sampling involves using a smaller number of items or part of the target population to make conclusions about the whole population and it claims the advantages of low cost, increased speed in data collection as well as accurate and reliable information (Bailey, 2004). Grayson et al (2005) define a sample as the actual number of participants that the researcher is going to work with. Convenience sampling was considered for the current study because it consisted of appropriate participants who happened to be in the right place at the right time. In line with Cohen et al (2007), this sampling technique, thus, involved choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size had been obtained or those who happened to be available and accessible at the time.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Data collection are ways of collecting data in research. Research instruments are the tools used to gather data during a research and the success of any research is a function of the appropriateness of tools used to collect data during the study (Dyer, 2005). The researchers used in-depth interviews and utilised interview guides to gather the necessary information for the study.

3.7 In-depth interviews

Interviews are viewed as „sessions in which pre-association and hidden sources of feelings and beliefs are discussed generally through structured or unstructured questions administered by a skilled interviewer (Grayson et al, *ibid*). The researchers considered several advantages of using interviews including the encouragement of personal thought, respondent attentiveness to questions, and the ability of the interviewer to probe the interviewee further and to sense non-verbal feedback. Brief in-depth interviews were conducted with the foster children who were the participants for about five to eight minutes with each of the eight children. These interviews consisted of open-ended questions in order to allow the participants to openly disclose their thoughts, feelings and perceptions regarding the challenges they faced as foster children. The interview environment consisted of a child-friendly quiet room, which was conducive enough to provide privacy and a sense of security for the foster children who were the participants. The two foster parents were also interviewed for twenty to thirty minutes in a room and were separated from the children. The two key informants from the Department of Social Development Gurube were also interviewed at their office for thirty minutes.

More so, interviews were preferred for the additional advantage that they enabled the researchers to obtain rich and meaningful data viewed through the eyes of the participants (Coolican, 2004). This was so because use of interviews is a qualitative method that permits direct observation of the people involved in the process and the ability to listen to what those people have to say. The suitability of the interview guides was tested through a pilot study conducted with four randomly

selected foster children who were not part of the study. This helped the researcher to consolidate the interview guide by attending to unclear interview questions and also improving their clarity.

3.8 Research instruments

Arisunta (2010) posits that an instrument is any tool that is used in data collection. The research instruments that were employed were interview guides. Two different guides were provided one for key informants with its own questions and the other for children in foster care. The guides had unstructured questions for key informants and open ended questions for children under the study. The guides had different questions to cater for a variety of answers.

3.9 Data Collection Procedures

Permission to conduct the research was sought from relevant authorities such as the university, the Department of Social Development and the participants themselves. This was done in form of a letter from the university.

3.9.1 Data Analysis and Presentation

The first step taken by the researchers was to visit foster families to sensitize them about the study as well as seek for permission from foster parents to interview foster children under their care. Brief in-depth interviews were conducted with the foster children who were the participants. These interviews consisted of open-ended questions in order to allow the participants to openly disclose their thoughts, feelings and perceptions regarding the challenges they faced as foster children. The interview environment consisted of a child-friendly quiet room, which was conducive enough to provide privacy and a sense of security for the foster children who were the participants. Data on

the challenges faced by foster children was accordingly gathered and then transcribed word for word. This helped the researchers to remember and revisit the entire process of the interview. The Thematic Content Analysis Technique (TCAT) was used in analysing research data, which allowed the researchers to incorporate emerging themes to give depth to themes from the interview guide. Data was then put in thematic categories and subcategories for easy interpretation.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues were also considered in the current study as it is for the well-being of participants. McLaughlin (2012) denotes that ethics refers to some sets of rules conducts to set off principles. As noted by Creswell (ibid:p141), “Regardless of the approach to qualitative inquiry, a qualitative researcher faces many critical ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports”. The researcher cognized the following ethical considerations:

- **Confidentiality**- Accordingly, the study respected participants’ right to privacy. The researcher assured the participants that whatever they discussed was confidential hence no personal information and names was published in this research study. .
- **Informed Consent** -their freedom to participate as well as determining whether or not their opinions, attitudes, beliefs and values regarding their fostering can be made public was recognized.
- **Avoidance of harm**-The study also took into account the right to protection against physical or emotional harm of the participants, that is, the researchers were not to reveal any information that may embarrass the participants or endanger their life.

- **Competence-** The researcher was very aware of boundaries of her study and that she operates within the confines of the study area. By being competent, the researcher was culturally and socially sensitive hence, helped in not using derogatory language but rather was used locally recognized language which participants are familiar with so that positive results was yielded
- **Voluntary Participation-**As succinctly stated by the Criteria of the American Anthropological Association (CAAA) (2002) cited in Robson (2009) „a qualitative researcher should formally request people to participate in the study, and should seek their consent to participate in the study“, and in this case, as the participants were mostly minors, the consent of their parents was sought, hence, identified foster children participated in the study without being coerced to do so by the researchers.

3.11 Feasibility of the Study

Qualitative research was conducted at Guruve District in Mashonaland Central Province on the challenges faced by foster child and how can foster care be improved. A total number of twelve participants were used in this study. Two participants being the key informant from Guruve DSD, Two foster parents one from ward 4 of the area under study with four foster children she take care of and another foster parent from ward 1 of Guruve district with also four foster children under her care as they were the sample representing the population of the study.

3.12 Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented and justified the choice of the various research methods, procedures, techniques and tools used in the study. The chapter further discussed the research design and approach adopted in the study which is the survey research design. In addition, the chapter presented the study population, sample size and sampling strategy and data collection plan. Thereafter data presentation plan has also been outlined in detail. The chapter laid the foundation for the next chapter that focuses on data presentation, analysis and interpretation of the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis, Presentation and Discussion of findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter concentrate on the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data collected at Guruve District on challenges faced by foster children under the area on study. The results were derived from the interviews with the children in foster care, the foster parents and two key informants from the Guruve department of social development. The data was presented in form of tables and description of the themes that came out from the study. Each subheading presents the data according to the relevant objective.

4.2 Demographic Information of Respondents

The section presents the demographic profile of the participants. The demographic profile of respondents is important in research study because it assists in data analysis and to construct conclusions on data findings.

4.2.1 Demographics of the total respondents

Table 1 Total Respondents

Respondent	Intended	Actual	Total
Foster children	8	8	8
Foster Parents	2	2	2
Key Informants	2	2	2
Total	12	12	12

N=12

The table above shows that the total number of respondents was 12. The respondents were both male and females since the research was targeting everyone to get information. The Researcher managed to get all participants and all key informants. 2 key informants were district social development officer (DSDO) who was a male and a Probation Officer (PO) who was a female.

4.3 Qualitative Data Presentation

The research study aimed at exploring the challenges being faced by foster children in foster care. In order to get the required information, the researcher conducted interviews with the key informants and foster children and the foster parents. Four children from foster home in ward 1 of Gुरुve and their foster parent were interviewed, another four children from ward 4 under the area under study and their foster parent also and two key informants from DSD were also interviewed to get more accurate information since they are the ones responsible for fostering.. The data was coded into different themes. The themes will be described and discussed below

4.4 The need for and challenges faced by lack of attachment in children

This subsection explores the why children might need attachment and the challenges faced when they lack attachment. The participants mainly the foster parents were asked about the need for attachment and what causes lack of attachment in children and challenges being faced when lacking attachment. Children who enter foster care experience fear and anxiety. While the children are placed with people who have been determined able to provide a safe place, children still need to learn to trust the new adult(s) in their lives. Some of the children who come into care have not attached well to anyone in their family. The following factors helped the researcher to understand the need for and challenges of lack of attachment.

4.4.1 Death or separation from biological parents

Children who lost their parents may suffer serious psychological consequences with respect to lack of attachment. If the primary attachment figure, who is expected to be either the mother or father is late, it therefore, means that there is no one who can immediately provide the basic attachment

needs of the child. OVCs usually manifest this gap which often results in developmental problems or psychopathology for most of them. This essentially explains the causes of developmental and emotional problems often experienced by foster children as they lack an attachment to a biological figure while also often developing fragile and inconsistent attachment with a foster parent.

Many foster children have no reason to trust adults and this makes it difficult when they are in school, where most children generally trust teachers. It is important to remember that, in order to survive both emotionally and physically, foster children have had to rely on only themselves. Through patience, time, good parenting, and teamwork, these children can come to trust adults. One of the foster parent respondent mentioned that:

“Kana vana Ava unofanira kutoisa effort pakuvayarutsa, zuva nezuva unofanira kutarisira zvinhu zvitsva, vanouya varivadiki ava vanenge vasati vakujaira saka vanoda kurangaridzwa nguva nenguva kuti vanodiwa and ivo vanotoda kuzviona” (“You have to put a lot more effort in raising those children. You have to be ready every day for a new examination. They are never completely calm and secure. Every moment they need to be reassured that we love them. They constantly try to examine stability and our love towards them.”)

She further went on to say

“Amai vakakosha kuvana chero vakakenge vachiabuser kana vakarasa wana zvakakosha kumwana kuti ave nemuono wakanaka kunaamai and isu sevabereki vavo pano tinofanira kuvabatsirakuti vaoone amai vakanaka.” (“The mother is everything for a child, even if she had

abandoned him/her. It is essential for children to keep a positive image of her. We [the foster parents] should help with this.”)

One of the key informants from the DSD also noted that

“Many foster children have suffered experiences of abuse and neglect, or have grown up with psychotic, alcoholic or drug-addicted parents, and may therefore display attachment behaviours that can be classified as disorganised.”

In contrast, children who are insecure are not confident that their caregiver will meet their emotional needs. If children cannot rely on their caregiver to respond to distress, they may intensify a display of emotion by being very fussy or demanding to ensure they are not ignored. Since they are often angry that they cannot rely on the caregiver, they may also refuse to accept the caregiver’s attempts to provide comfort. This can be very confusing to the caregiver, who may find it difficult to distinguish between the child experiencing true distress and the child just needing to be held and comforted. This confusion adds to the disharmony and dissatisfaction in the relationship.

4.5 Relationship between foster children and foster parents

The interviewed foster parents reported positive relationships with their foster children. They mentioned that it is not only positive between them but to the entire family. Foster parents were seeing part of their role in providing care for children as giving back to the younger generation. Foster parents are caring for those children to teach future generations about humanity, they are teaching them values so that they can also pass it to the next generations. They believe that it is

important to do something good for another person because even foster children are learning from them. One of the foster parent noted that:

“Ndinonzwa kukomborerwa uye ndine mufaro mukuru kuva nevana ava tinogara tineufaro handina dambudziko navo vanoterera zvokuti” (“I feel so blessed to have these children, we are always happy and they never gave me any problems. They are respectful to me and to this family”)

She further on went to say:

“Kana ndikafa vana ava vakaona munhu anod acare vanomubastira nokuti ndirikuvadzidzisa rudo.” (“When I’m gone and my children see someone who needs care, they will provide for that person because I taught them love and care”)

Another foster parents reported that foster children have a serious problem when it comes to their behavior. They sometimes do not care about other people’s feelings, they become selfish. They can be disrespectful towards everyone, including foster parents. She reported that:

“Umwe ndikauti suka maplates especially those who are fifteen and above anoti madii mati ngana asuke, umwe ndikamubvunza kuti sei wanonoka lubva kuchikoro anongonditarisa atoinda panze asina chaataura (“If I’m asking her to wash dishes, especially these elder girls she will say but mom why can’t you ask her to wash them? . Another one if she comes back late from school and I’m asking where she was, she just looks at me and leaves the room without saying anything.”)

She further said that:

“Our societies turned to be something else, I feel sorry for so many children and there are so many families that are facing challenges, fostering makes me feel like I am contributing to better the society and I love these children and I try to create a very good relationship with them”

One of the key informants argued that:

“While the foster parenting experience may change during the tenure as foster parents, one aspect that did not change was their desire to help. While this desire was primarily directed at helping other people, it expanded into helping the community and society as a whole.”

Positive relationship is a close emotional bond between an infant and a parent, foster parent, or other primary caregiver. This bond is important. It acts as a kind of blueprint for future relationships, shaping what the child will expect of significant others in relationships. There are secure attachments and several types of insecure attachments. The type of relationship that children develop to their foster parents influences how they view themselves.

Many children have secure relationships with their foster parents. They interact well with their caregivers, look to them for reassurance, and usually stay fairly close to them when strangers are present. They might cry when the caregiver leaves the room, but they are easily soothed.

Insecurely attached children might avoid, ignore, or resist their caregivers. Some may not get upset at all when their caregiver leaves the room, while others may get very upset. Experts suggest that secure attachments will develop when the caregiver responds to the child in a way that is finely tuned to the child’s needs and is warm, sensitive, and responsive. The caregiver doesn’t have to be perfect. The care most children receive is sensitive enough to develop secure attachments. With

patience, love, and time, even children who have endured neglect and/or abuse can learn they are worthy of love and grow to expect that others will respond to their needs

4.6 Challenges being faced by foster children

The foster reported of having many social, economic and all other challenges affecting their day to day living in foster care.

4.6.1 Economic challenges

Foster children face any economic challenges like:

4.6.1.1 Health challenges

Children under foster care are put under medical assistance called Assisted Medical Treatment Order (AMTO) and these AMTOs they are valid only in government hospitals and they do not cover scans operations and this is a huge disadvantage to the foster care as some of foster parents do not work. One foster parent reported that:

“Ndaigara anewana mukomana pano and ane akore mapfubamwe akaita hennia ndakaenda ku DSD vakandipa AMTO kuchipataa vakati mwana anoda operation but panoda mari kwete AMTO, ndakadzokera kuwelfare vakati ndimodzokea vambonyora report rinoenda kuprovince vachikumbira emergency AMTO zvakatora nguiva apa mwana achingorwara aka pendzisira asingachaendi kuchikoro nekurwara ndakatozotsvaka rubatsiro KuMUSASA.” (“I had a young boy aged nine he had hernia I went to DSD offices he was given the AMTO but when I went to hospital they said that AMTO does not cover operation I have to bring cash and I had no money as I do not work, I went back to the DSD and they said they had to write a report to the provincial

offices for emergency AMTO but it took time to a point where the child was no longer going to school due to the pain he was experiencing I had to go to MUSASA for help and he was helped and got treated”)

4.6.1.2 Food shortages

It is the duty of the department of social development to give grants to foster care but according to the foster parents and children grants were coming in late or they would sometimes go for whole two months without receiving anything. One of the interviewed foster child reported that:

“Hatichazivi kudya rice tikudya sadza maskati nemanheru kuchikoro totakura mangai kana mutakura vamwe vachiuya nechimodho” (“ we miss eating rice as we are having sadza everyday during the afternoon and the evenings even we bring lunch with ‘mutakura or mangai’ while other students bring bread.”)

This shows that these kids also want a good diet.

4.6.1.3 Education

The Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) is one of the important pro-poor funds that are meant for the marginalized and vulnerable communities in Zimbabwe. BEAM is a programme that provides school fees, examination fees levies and building assistance. It was introduced by the Government of Zimbabwe in 2001.

However, the BEAM programme is not fully providing for these children given that it does not provide stationery and uniforms and foster parents had to work extra hard to help with stationery

and uniforms and some parents fail to provide due to unemployment affecting the education of foster children. One foster parent noted that

“Dzimwe nguva vana ava vanodvingwa kiuchikoro woshaiwa kuti zvinorevei ivo vari muBEAM kuchikoro voiti pano sports fee, extra lessons fee and mari dze maexam fee apa unenge usina womboti mwana imbomira kuenda kuchikoro ndichitsvaka mari kuwelfare vanenge vachingoti mwana haafani kudzingwa voiuya vitora masizes emaschool uniforms asi gore rinotopera school uniform isati yauya” (“Sometimes these children they are send back home saying there is need for sports fee extra lessons fee and exam fee and sometime there will be no money in the house and these children end up not going to school fearing to be send hoe again, and the delay of school uniforms sometimes it takes even e yea for the DSD to bring school uniforms.”)

One of the foster children reported that:

“Hatina anotibatsira homework” (“there is no one to help us with homework”)

And this affect their education status

4.6.1.4 Inflation

While foster care may be cheaper than residential care, its start-up costs are high. It also requires a well-functioning social welfare workforce, or well-supported and monitored community systems, to operate successfully. Foster care may also be costly for individuals, with many studies suggesting that grants for foster carers are inadequate, especially when the costs of caring for a child with disabilities or other special needs are considered. The Department of Social Development (DSD) is also responsible of offering services to address the challenge of growing

food insecurity, effective social protection programmes must be implemented and scaled-up. Cash transfers are one such programme, the primary objectives of which often include poverty alleviation and food insecurity reduction. But due to inflation the money will not be enough. A foster parent mentioned that:

“Life would be very difficult if there was no foster care cash transfers, we as foster parents would be unable to meet all the needs of our children because some of us are not working. I don’t use this grant for only the needs of my foster children but for the needs of the entire household but due to inflation it is not enough.”

4.7 Other challenges faced by foster children

4.7.3 Physical abuse

Children in foster care reported that sometimes they suffer physical abuse in form of child labour corporal punishment one of the child reported that:

“Tinorohwa dzimwe nguva tinoitiswa basa rinorema” (“we sometimes are beaten and given work which are not for our age”)

4.7.2 Grief and Loss

All children who enter foster care experience grief and loss due to the separation from their biological family. This happens whether or not the child has an abusive or neglectful background. It happens even to babies, who have had nine months in utero to get used to the sounds and rhythms of their biological mother.

One of the key informant reported that:

“These children are always asking when will they meet their parents and where their biological parents is”

4.7.3 Multiple Placements

Children often experience multiple placements which happen for reasons such as foster parents leaving the program or children needing a home more suited to their specific needs. These placements make attachment and trust much more difficult for foster children.

4.8 Discussion of findings

Most children in foster care reported being emotionally affected by the separation from their biological family, indicating that they missed their biological parents and siblings. This indicates that while the foster family may provide basic needs, the lack of attachment may affect the relationship between the foster child and the parent. The study revealed that separation of foster children from their biological parents produced intense feelings of vulnerability, loneliness, emptiness and a desire for a fulfilling life. According to the findings, a time always comes in the lives of children in foster care that they wish to stay with their parents'. It is clear that children's psychological distress begins with a separation from a biological parent as they are left emotionally and physically vulnerable.

Due to the build-up of emotional trauma, feelings of loneliness, not having what they really desire in life and the unstoppable thoughts of wanting their biological parents back ended up in some foster children being depressed. For such children, depression caused them to feel that they are

nothing in the world and are not worthy in any way. While foster parents are responsible for socialising foster children, their “parenting role” is not always recognized. For example, when children sometimes felt sad for missing their biological parents or have some kind of psychological problems, they would not talk to their foster parents because they lacked attachment and parental bond. Under the circumstance, some parents, in turn, left even less time for interaction with foster children. Feelings of seclusion and discrimination have also cast a dark shadow on the psychological health and well-being of many foster children. In line with previous findings by Mutanana and Gasva (2015), such vulnerable children are at greater risk of not reporting cases of abuse or violence, including sexual abuse, against them.

Most children in foster care openly indicated that they do not have their freedom anymore. This was found to be consistent with Nambi (1997) “s study cited in Binder (2004) which reported that the collective, closed style management in foster care generally limited children's physical, emotional and social space to interact with their relatives and peers outside the foster family. Most of these regulations are based on good intentions for the children's safety. This situation within the fostering care environment contradicts with many developmental needs of young children such as the need for an opportunity to mingle with peers outside the home as well as to explore and experience different social environments. However, the restriction by foster parents is often because the foster parents are worried that the children might get into trouble outside the home, so usually, foster children are made to stay in-doors or at least without leaving the home yard. In this regard, one of the interviewed participants reported that „his life was not free at all and his social life was as good as dead“. Due to these unfavorable conditions, some children in foster homes

found it difficult to make friends outside the foster home and consequently ended up developing anti-social behaviours, low self-esteem and no confidence.

Some foster children indicated that time comes in their lives that they wished their biological parents were around. They felt life could have been much different and better had their biological parents were with them. The separation of foster children from their biological parents often forced them to take increased adult responsibilities which they are not prepared and ready for. Thus, the majority of foster children reported, for example; over-working, waking up too early and being assigned adult responsibilities by foster parents in the disguise of „training them for adulthood’. On judging that the unfairness towards them was based on foster care status, most foster children usually found no one to confide their problems and expectations, hence, ended up feeling further discriminated against and dejected.

However, not all foster children felt pains in being separated from their biological families, neither did they develop psychological and emotional stress due to their foster care status. Such foster children did not feel discriminated against and depressed, nor being confined to the foster home; hence were able to deal with the pressures and challenges of foster care life. Some of the children in this category indicated that they did not know their biological parents and siblings, therefore, did not feel the pains of separation or detachment from their biological family. This positive group of foster children seemed to have high self-esteem and confidence, and were able to socialize and make friends whenever they are given a chance to mingle with their peers. They also had time for extra-curricular activities which was noted to be necessary for relieving stress and emotional burden. However, other participants revealed that even if they felt depressed, at times they have

been able to manage it and have learnt to replace negative thinking with positive thinking that is full of hope and anticipation. This observation was found to be consistent with previous research findings by Toit (2004) which indicated that, due to personal determination, some foster children felt that they could make it in life and that there was always a possibility for a brighter life ahead

Every child should get the opportunity to go to school and a successful child's education is based on a combination of a good school and home education. In foster care, the foster parent should take care of the foster child's educational needs including paying school fees and providing the child with school stationery; should urge the foster child to study hard, supervise his or her homework, and make sure that the child gets to school on time. However, some foster children complained that there was not enough support to help them to effectively do their school work, or even study for the examinations; hence, their school performance has always been poorer than other children. This problem could also be alluded to the harsh economic environment leading to the foster family failing to cope and more often than not, forced to discriminate against foster children in the distribution of resources including educational support and attention. To complement the findings from the interviews, the researchers, who were themselves part of the research instrument as recommended by Cresswell (ibid) in a qualitative study of this nature, observed that some of the participants pretended to be strong and brave, but the researchers could tell that the concerned foster children were just pretending. Some of the foster children looked vividly sad, fearful and emotional, while some seemed to have accepted the realities of their situation and were ready to face the challenges of their foster lives head-on. A few foster children

seemed to have mixed feelings, as the researchers could, for example, observe that for some of them, a smile was followed by tears.

4.10 Chapter summary

The chapter focused on the presentation and analysis of the data found in the field. The case study was carried at Guruve. The data findings were discussed and it was found that the foster children face many social and economic challenges compromising the effectiveness of foster care.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summaries the study findings on exploring the challenges faced by foster children in Guruve District. It presents conclusions from the research findings namely the challenges of foster children, role played by foster parents, as well as recommendations towards improving foster

5.1 Summary of findings

The preceding chapters discussed the background of the study, reviewed the literature, methodology and the data presentation, analysis and discussion. The study sought to investigate the challenges faced by foster children. The study was carried out in Guruve. The study was guided by three objectives which were: to determine the need for and challenges caused by lack of attachment in children; to find out day to day relationship between foster children and parents and to establish the challenges faced by foster children in the area under the study. The critical theory was used as a guiding framework to the study. The study used the qualitative and research approach. To collect qualitative data, the research made use of in-depth interviews and questionnaire. Twelve people altogether were interviewed.

5.2 Role played by foster parents

Foster parents also have fundamental roles and responsibilities. In order for foster parents to promote a child's development, they need to provide quality care, support and supervision and that makes the foster family role broad and challenging. As a result, this implies that foster parents should discuss all their foster children's aspects since they are going to foster them. They should

provide unchanging, safe and sustaining home environments and all aspects of healthy development for foster children including their physical, social, emotional, psychological, cultural and spiritual needs. They should encourage and support the relationships between foster children and their biological children and their connectedness with social networks and groups. They should engage parents of foster children and families in a manner that is tolerant and respectful of their essential part, cultural identity, and spiritual beliefs and should also promote positive relationships where possible. Foster care matters a lot considering the fact that a large number of children are placed under foster parents; hence it is the key responsibility of those who are responsible for foster children to ensure the number, quality and stability of foster care placement of such children. Foster parents have a great contribution and impact in the provision of family-based care that have complicated histories which sometimes lead to troubled and challenging behaviours. Empowering, supporting and developing foster parents to take care of foster children in a manner that provides strength and security includes foster parents themselves being supported professionally both practically and emotionally. After committing themselves to foster care, foster parents encounter various problems as they try to take care of the needs of foster children with limited support. Foster parents are often required to provide extra care and attention to address the needs of foster children yet with limited resources and support.

5.3 Implications of the findings to social work policy and practice

The findings were similar to previous research studies which indicated that the training that is provided to foster parents and foster children is inadequate; they lack ongoing support throughout foster care placement. Therefore, it is important to implement and address more stringent changes

in policy to ensure that resources will be enough and accessible to foster parents. This may require that social workers frequently visit foster care homes to find out if all members of the foster family are still coping with the placement. This paper further provides implications for social work practice. Some foster parents identified poor relationships with the fostering agency so there is a need to increase the level of communication in order to develop more healthy relationships and positive rapport. It is important for social workers to follow-up from foster families whose foster children have been removed to ensure their emotional and psychological well-being

5.4 Conclusions of the study

Fostering plays an important role in the lives of foster children and the input it has on their daily lives is very inspiring. The fact that many foster parents especially grandparents want to help and contribute to the well-being of younger generations makes a great contribution to the society and it inspires those who would like to foster in the future. The negative experiences on the other side demotivate them because they might perceive fostering as a system that brings problems. Therefore, in order for a better foster care foster parents need to understand the dynamics of foster care placement, social workers need to make them understand care giving as it occurs in a variety of contexts the government also need to fully provide for foster care to reduce all economic challenges being faced by foster children

The foster family was generally able to provide foster children with basic needs including food, shelter and security. Lack of attachment, however, resulting from foster children's separation from their biological parents negatively affected the relationship between the foster child and the parent as there was no bond between the two parties. Foster children were often forced to take up

increased adult responsibilities they were not ready or prepared for; and on realising that the unfairness was based on their foster care status, most of them consequently felt further discriminated against and dejected.

Most foster children developed psychological and emotional problems which often produced intense feelings of vulnerability, loneliness, stress, emptiness and a desire for a fulfilling life. Most children in foster care do not have their freedom anymore, and because they found it difficult to make friends outside the foster home, they ended up developing anti-social behaviours, low self-esteem and no confidence. Discrimination and lack of freedom have cast a dark shadow on the psychological health of most foster children. The upsurge of emotional trauma, feelings of loneliness and not having what they really desired in life compounded with the unstoppable denial thoughts of wanting their biological parents back ended up in some foster children being depressed.

Some foster parents have limited time for interaction with their foster children, hence one of the common trends amongst foster children is that most of them are maladjusted and have problems in trying to cope with the pressures and challenges in foster care. Foster children who did not know their biological parents and siblings did not feel as much pain of separation or detachment from their biological family like foster children who experienced the separation or death of their parent or parents. Some foster children's educational needs were not well supported to effectively help them do their school work including studying for the examinations, hence, their school performance has always been poorer than other children. Only a few foster children seemed to have mixed feelings which ranged from acceptance to rejection of their foster-care life. Not all

foster children experience challenges in foster families as some of them have since accepted their situation and are effectively copying

5.5 Recommendations

Basing on the above findings and conclusions, the following are some of the recommendations made by the current study

- Relevant government ministries and departments should support foster care arrangements by developing and enforcing realistic policies which ensure that financial support and other sources are used for the benefit of foster families
- Non-governmental and community-based organizations should be given space to make direct interventions meant to directly benefit foster children and other OVCs
- Foster parents should be provided with appropriate and adequate training meant to provide basic psychological and emotional support to foster children and other OVCs
- Community-based support groups should be established to identify and monitor the welfare and protection of foster children and other OVCs
- Families and communities should be conscientised on the critical need to provide foster children and other OVCs with a sense of belonging and personal freedom in order to promote self-esteem and confidence in foster children
- The guidance and counselling of foster children should be enforced in all appropriate social institutions in order to espouse foster children and other OVCs' mental health. This is

based on the understanding that children's mental health is potentially critical in ensuring their adequate and normal growth and development.

5.6 Chapter summary

The chapter was focused on the research findings summary and the conclusion. It also focused on the recommendations which can help in improving foster care in Zimbabwe. Due to the findings of this research, one can be convinced that the cases of children in rural Zimbabwe in need of welfare services keep on escalating because of social and economic factors affecting the foster children need the intervention of welfare. The findings also helped to identify ways and strategies to address the social and economic factors affecting foster children.

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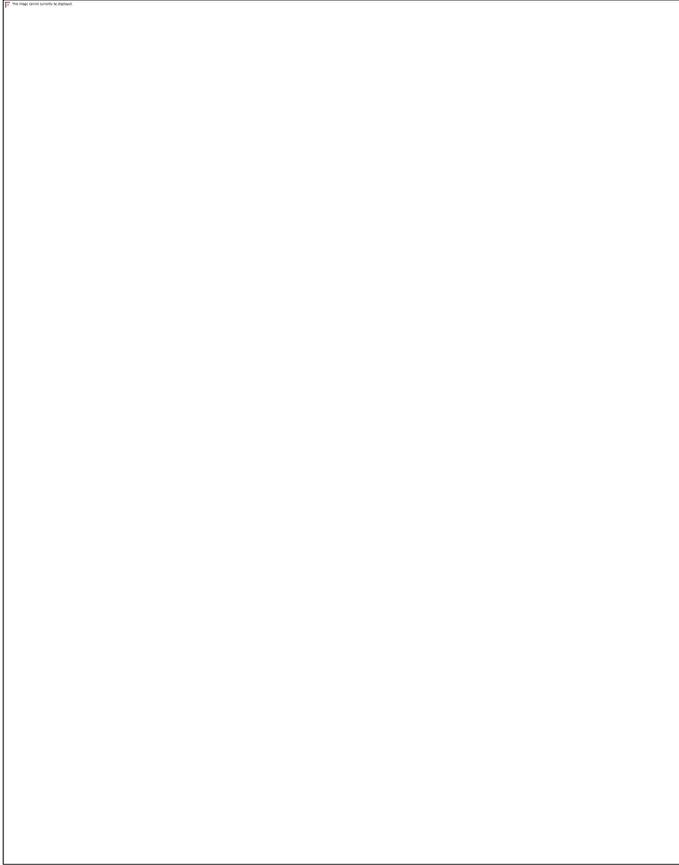
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APPENDIX1: APPROVAL LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



APPENDIX 2: TURNITIN REPORT

APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORM

I am Grace Mufuratirwa registration number B190040B I am a student pursuing a Bachelor of Science Honours Degree at Bindura University of Science Education Midlands State University majoring in Social Work. In partial fulfilment of the degree requirements, all level 4.2 students are required to write a dissertation project. I am undertaking a research project titled, “**Exploration of challenges faced by foster children in Guruve District.**” I am carrying out data collection on the subject by way In-depth interviews. Participants will make voluntary decision to be part of the research knowing that they will not benefit from it financially or in kind. The purpose of this research is for academic purposes and all interactions I shall have with the participants shall be purely professional and academic. The research will be confidential and not exposing the participants to any harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not going to be greater than any, ordinarily encountered in daily life. Please note that your answers would be used exclusively for academic purposes only.

I assure you that the information given will be treated with extreme confidentiality between the student and the examiner.

Your co-operation on this matter will be greatly appreciated.

NB. Participants has the right and freedom to quit participating in this research at any given time and also have the right upon request to be availed with the results of this study.

Thank you

For the Participant

The study has been described to me in a language that I understand and freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will remain anonymous, I have the right to withdraw from the study anytime, my participation will not negatively affect me in any way and that the participation may not directly benefit me. I also agree that the researcher can audio record the conversation.

Participant's signature.....

Date:

APPENDIX 4: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

Biographical information

- How old are you?
- How many older siblings or guardians do you have?
- At what age did you come here?
- Are your biological parents alive?

Section A: To determine the need for and challenges caused by lack of attachment in children.

1. How long have you been here?
2. Do you ever have some time to talk about life with your foster parents?
3. Do you miss home and your biological family?

Section B: To find out the day to day relationship between foster children and foster parents.

4. How is your relationship with your foster parents?
5. Do you trust your foster parents?
6. If you are having any troubles or you need guidance about life who do you ask?
7. Are you free to talk to your foster parents about anything?

8. Do you encounter any negative attitude or consequences from your foster parents?

Section C: To establish the challenges faced by foster children in the area under study

9. What are social, economic, political and cultural challenges that you are facing while living here?

10. Are you able to access health issues, educational and food security issues without any problems and anywhere you want?

11. Have you ever face any challenges of being discriminated in the community or at school?

APPENDIX 5: Interview Guide for Key Informants

Biographical information

- What is your name?
- What are your qualifications, positions and years of experience in the job?
- How long have you been working in this District?

Section A: To determine the need for and challenges caused by lack of attachment in children.

1. What are the need for attachment in children?
2. What are the dangers of lack of attachment in children?
3. How do you help those children that lack attachment to their foster parents?
4. Do those children lacking attachment be able to attain their attachment in future while still living in foster care?
5. Is there anything the department can do on the issue of lack of attachment in children?

Section B: To find out the day to day relationship between foster children and foster parents.

5. What the relationship between foster children and foster parents?
6. Do foster children respect their foster parents and vise-verse?
7. Do foster parents treat foster children as their own biological children?

Section C: To establish the challenges faced by foster children in the area under study

- 8 What are challenges being by foster children in foster care in your district?
9. Are these children able to voice their concerns?
10. Does the department tent to the challenges being faced by foster children in time?
11. How can the challenges being faced by children in foster care be improved?
12. Is the need for the other departments, ministries and non-governmental organizations besides your department to intervene in improving the foster care?
13. Does this department face any challenges in providing child protection and welfare services to foster children in trying to improve the foster care?
14. How effective are the services provided by the department to foster care in improving foster care?
15. What can be done by the government in reducing any kind of challenges being faced by foster children in Zimbabwe?

APPENDIX 6: Interview Guide for Foster Parents

Biographical information

- How old are you?
- How many biological children do you have?
- How many foster children do you take care of?
- How long have you been fostering?
- What push you or made you to foster children?
- What do you do for a living?

Section A: To determine the need for and challenges caused by lack of attachment in children.

1. Are there any foster children who are not attached to you?
2. Do these children take time to get attached to you as their guardian?
3. Are there any children who do not get attached at all?
4. What are the challenges of lack of attachment in children?

Section B: To find out the day to day relationship between foster children and foster parents.

- 6 What are your relationship with the foster children?
7. Do you treat them as your biological children?
8. Do you respect them and do they also respect you?
9. Do they give you any challenges that you might regret fostering?

10. Do have time to talk to them about life experiences?
11. Do they confide in you about their life experiences and expectations?
12. Do you know everything that goes on in their lives?
13. When they come back from school do you have them with their homework?

Section C: To establish the challenges faced by foster children in the area under study

14. What are the challenges being faced by children under your care?
15. What are the challenges that you are facing as foster parent?
16. Are the challenges you are facing as foster parents also affecting foster children?
17. Are you able to provide for these children on your own?
- !8. Do you have any challenges in providing for these children?
17. Does the Department of Social Development help in improving foster care?
18. What can be done by the responsible departments and ministries in improving foster care?

