



**THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE. A
CASE STUDY OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IN CHITUNGWIZA.**

A RESEARCH BY

POLITE RUKUDZO MUSEVE

B213272B

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS OF THE BACHELOR OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (HONORS) DEGREE
IN SOCIAL WORK AT BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION,
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES.**

Supervisor: Mr Sadomba.

JUNE 2025

DECLARATION

I **Polite Rukudzo Museve**, hereby declare that this research on 'The phenomenological experience of children in residential childcare facilities. A case study of residential childcare facilities in Chitungwiza' is my original work and has been completed under the supervision of **Mr Sadomba**.

I confirm that I have conducted this research in accordance with the ethical and academic standards of Bindura University of Science Education and that I have properly acknowledged all sources of information and assistance.

Signed.....Date.....

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: MUSEVE POLITE RUKUDZO

STUDENT NUMBER: B213272BB

TITLE PROJECT: THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE. A CASE STUDY OF RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE FACILITIES IN CHITUNGWIZA.

DEGREE GRANTED: BACHELOR OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (HONOURS) PROJECT WAS PRESENTED DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK.

YEAR GRANTED: 2025

Permission is hereby granted to the Bindura University Library to produce single copies of this project and lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purpose only. The author reserves other publication rights and neither the project nor extension extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

Signed**Date**.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project is the result of many people who have made significant contribution. Without their sincere guidance, advice and financial support, this project would not have been possible. I am indebted to many and to call attention to some whose contribution proved valuable.

I sincerely take this opportunity to thank my supervisor for his unwavering support and indispensable guidance throughout the research. He worked relentlessly towards the success of this project and I enjoyed his constructive criticism.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God for his protection, guidance, strength, knowledge and wisdom. This is also dedicated to my parents for their social and financial support throughout the course.

PLAGIARISM REPORT

MUSEVE POLITE B213272B.docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

3 %	1 %	2 %	1 %
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

- 1** Tait, Anne. "The Supportiveness of the Environment and Visual-Motor Integration of Children Residing in a Residential Child Care Facility in Mauritius", University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (South Africa), 2025
Publication 1%
- 2** Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal
Student Paper <1%
- 3** Eidson, Jacquelyn Irene. "Mentorship, Identity, and Self-Efficacy in Mothers Returning to the Workforce After an Extended Leave", Grand Canyon University, 2022
Publication <1%
- 4** Pat Dolan, Nick Frost. "The Routledge Handbook of Global Child Welfare", Routledge, 2017
Publication <1%
- 5** Submitted to Far Eastern University
Student Paper <1%
- 6** Samuel Emovon, Priscilla Gutura, Ngenisiwe Ntombela. "Support for Non-Relative Female Foster Parents in South Africa: Quality of Care and Placement Outcomes", Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development, 2021
Publication <1%
- 7** Submitted to Akademi Laut Malaysia
Student Paper

MARKING GUIDE
BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

--

Name:

Registration No:

MARKING GUIDE: UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECT

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION	Possible Mark	Actual Mark
Abstract	10	
Background to the study- what is it that has made you choose this particular topic? Include objectives or purpose of the study	20	
Statement of the problem	10	
Research questions	15	
Assumptions	5	
Significance of the study	15	
Limitations of the study	5	
Delimitations of the study	5	
Definition of terms	10	
Summary	5	
Total	100	
Weighted Mark	15	

Comments.....
.....
.....

Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction- what do you want to write about in this chapter?	5	
Conceptual or theoretical framework	10	
Identification, interpretations and evaluation of relevant literature and citations	40	

Contextualisation of the literature to the problem	10	
Establishing gaps in knowledge and how the research will try to bridge these gaps	10	
Structuring and logical sequencing of ideas	10	
Discursive skills	10	
Summary	5	
Total	100	
Weighted Mark	20	

Comments.....
.....
.....

Chapter 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction	5	
Research design	10	
What instruments are you using to collect data?	30	
Population, sample and sampling techniques to be used in the study	25	
Procedures for collecting data	15	
Data presentation and analysis procedures	10	
Summary	5	
Total	100	
Weighted Mark	25	

Comments.....
.....
.....

Chapter 4 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction	5	
Data presentation	50	
Is there any attempt to link literature review with new findings	10	
How is the new knowledge trying to fill the gaps identified earlier	10	

Discursive and analytical skills	20	
Summary	5	
Total	100	
Weighted Mark	30	

Comments

.....

.....

.....

Chapter 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction- focus of the chapter	5	
Summary of the whole project including constraints	25	
Conclusions- have you come up with answers to the problem under study	30	
Recommendations(should be based on findings) Be precise	30	
References	5	
Appendices i.e. copies of instruments used and any other relevant material	5	
Total	100	
Weighted mark	10	

Comments

.....

.....

.....

SUMMARY:-

Actual

Total

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4 _____

Chapter 5 _____


Total _____

APPROVAL FORM

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK



P. Museve Polite 22/08/25

Student Signature Date

[Signature] 22/08/25

Supervisor Signature Date

[Signature] 22/08/25

Chairperson Signature Date

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
27 AUG 2025
PRIVATE BAG 1020, BINDURA, ZIMBABWE

ABSTRACT

The research under study was done in Chitungwiza. The permission was given by the Department of Social Welfare as responsible authorities. The main objective of the study was to identify the resources and support systems that are available to children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza. The study was guided by literature from global, regional and local authorities. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interactions between children in foster care and their environment and how these complex relationships affect development over time. The study used qualitative research approach and the phenomenological research design was also utilized to understand the phenomenological experiences of children in residential childcare facilities. The sample consists of 12 children aged 10-18 years and 2 key informants who provides specialized knowledge and expertise in their field, by providing valuable insights and perspectives on the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care. Purposive sampling was used to choose participants who are expected to have direct experiences related to the lived experiences of children in foster care. In order to generate data key informants interviews and focus group discussions with primary participants was used. Data collected was analysed using thematic analysis method and the data was put into codes and themes generated from the research objectives and questions. The study found out that children in residential childcare facilities in Chitungwiza faces myriad of challenges these includes often experience emotional and social, physical and mental, financial and educational challenges that impact their psychological wellbeing. To address these challenges, various stakeholders, including policymakers, child welfare agencies and advocacy groups, have implemented a range of strategies aimed at improving the foster care system and protecting foster children. The purpose of residential child care facilities is to deliver high-quality services to children in need, fostering healing, growth, and a hopeful future. Research indicates that foster children in residential care in Chitungwiza benefit from resources and support from the government and various organizations. The researcher went on to recommend policy change to be employed in the foster care system and children's outcomes. Social workers could facilitate support groups for foster parents to discuss challenges and share strategies for improving their relationships with foster children. Social workers to offer counseling services to foster children and foster parents to help them cope with and overcome the challenges they face while living in foster care. The study concluded that the, research was written to respond to the research questions. It brought to light the phenomenological experiences of children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMTO: Assisted Medical Treatment Order

BEAM: Basic Education Assistance Module

CBOs: Community- Based Organisations

DCWPS: Department of Social Welfare and Protection Service

DSD: Department of Social Development

FBOs: Faith- Based Organisations

ICR: Initial Case Record

MPLSW: Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social Welfare

NGOs: Non-governmental Organisations

NOPs: Non-profit Organisations

ROI: Record of Information

OVC: Orphans and Vulnerable Children

SOS: Societas Socialis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
RELEASE FORM.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
PLAGIARISM REPORT	vi
MARKING GUIDE	vii
APPROVAL FORM	xi
ABSTRACT.....	xii
LIST OF TABLES	xxi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	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.....	3
1.4.RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	4
1.5.RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	4
1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	4
1.8. DELIMITATIONS	5
1.9. DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	5
1.10. DISSERTATION OUTLINE.....	6
1.11. CHAPTER SUMMARY	7
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
2.1 INTRODUCTION	8
2.2. Theoretical framework.....	8
Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979).....	8
2.3. Resources and support systems that is accessible to children in foster homes.	10
2.3.1. Emotional support.....	10
2.3.2. Financial assistance.....	11
2.3.3. Educational support	11

2.3.4. Community support	12
2.4. Challenges faced by foster children in foster home	13
2.4.1. Emotional and social challenges.....	13
2.4.2. Educational challenges.....	13
2.4.3. Financial challenges.....	14
2.4.4. Physical and health challenges.....	15
2.5. The strategies that can be implemented to improve the foster care system and protect foster children in foster homes.....	15
2.5.1. Counselling	16
2.5.2. Life skills programs	16
2.5.3. Financial support.....	16
2.5.4. Community awareness and support	17
2.5.5. Policy reforms	17
2.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY	18
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	19
3.0 INTRODUCTION	19
3.1. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY	19
3.2. RESEARCH APPROACH	20
3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN	20
3.4 STUDY SETTING.....	20
3.5. TARGETED POPULATION	21
3.6. SAMPLE SIZE	21
3.7. SAMPLING AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES	21
3.7.1. Purposive sampling	22
3.8. DATA COLLECTION METHOD	22
3.8.2. Key informants interviews Method.....	23
3.8.3. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS.....	23
3.8.3.1 Focus Groups Discussions Guide	23
3.8.3.2. Key Informant interview Guide	23
3.9. RESEARCH PROCEDURE	24
3.10. TRUSTWORTHY OF THE RESEARCH.....	24
3.10.1. Credibility	24

3.10.2. Dependability	24
3.10.3. Transferability	25
3.11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	25
3.11.1. Informed consent	25
3.11.2. Confidentiality and Anonymity	25
3.11.3. Voluntary participation	26
3.12. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURE.....	26
Familiarisation with the Data.....	26
Generating Initial Codes	26
Searching for Themes	27
Reviewing Themes.....	27
Defining and Naming Theme.....	27
Writing Report	27
3.13. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	27
3.14. CHAPTER SUMMARY	28
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	29
4.0 INTRODUCTION	29
4.1. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS	29
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF KEY INFORMANTS	30
4.2. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS	30
4.2.1. Theme 1. Resources and support systems that are available to children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza	31
4.2.1.1. Emotional support.....	31
4.2.1.2. Financial assistance.....	32
4.2.1.3. Educational support.....	33
4.2.1.4. Community assistance.....	34
4.2.1.5. Positive relationships from foster parents.	34
4.2.2. Theme 2. Challenges faced by children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.....	36
4.2.2.1. Emotional and Social challenges	36
4.2.2.1.2. Lack of freedom.....	37
4.2.2.2. Educational challenges.....	37

4.2.2.2.1. Shortage of learning materials	38
4.2.2.2.2. Disruptions of learning due relocation.....	39
4.2.2.3. Financial challenges	39
4.2.2.4. Physical challenges	40
4.2.2.5. Health challenges	41
4.2.3. Theme 3. Strategies that can be implemented to improve the foster care system and protect foster children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.	42
4.2.3.1. Counseling	42
4.2.3.2. Financial support.....	43
4.2.3.3. Community awareness and support	44
4.2.3.4. Life skills programs	45
4.2.3.5. Policy Reforms.....	46
4.3. CHAPTER SUMMARY	47
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	48
5.1. INTRODUCTION	48
5.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	48
5.2.1. Resources and support systems that are available to children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza	48
5.2.2. Challenges faced by foster children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.....	49
5.2.3. Strategies that can be implemented to improve the foster care systems and protect foster children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.	50
5.3. CONCLUSIONS.....	51
5.4. IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK	52
5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS	52
5.5.1.Foster parents.....	52
5.5.2.DSD / Ministry.....	52
5.5.3.Civil Society Organization.....	53
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCHERS.....	53
Appendix 1	62
Appendix 2.....	63
Appendix 3.....	64
CONSENT FORM.....	64

Appendix 4..... 65

Tool 1: Focus group discussions guide 65

Appendix 5..... 66

Tool: An in-depth interview guide for selected key informants. 66

Appendix 6..... 67

Tool: An in-depth interview guide for selected key informants. 67

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979).....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1, Demographic information of participants.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 2, Demographic information of Key Informants	Error! Bookmark not defined.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0. INTRODUCTION

Foster care serves as an essential intervention aimed at providing temporary housing for children who cannot live with their biological families due to various issues such as abuse, neglect or family dysfunction. In Zimbabwe particularly in urban areas like Chitungwiza the foster care system is crucial for protecting the welfare of at-risk children. However, the experiences of these children within foster homes can differ widely, influenced by factors like quality of care and the emotional and psychological support they receive. This section outlines the study's background, defining key concepts, stating the problem, outlining the study's objectives, formulating research questions, explaining the purpose of the study, discussing assumptions, clarifying the scope of the study, defining terms and summarizing the chapter summary.

1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Foster care refers to a temporary living situation for children who cannot stay with their biological parents due to issues like neglect, abuse, abandonment, or other family crises (Kelly, 2020). The primary aim of foster care is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children until they can be reunited with their parents or until a permanent living solution is found (Haugaard and Hazan, 2002). Foster care seeks to offer stable placements and the chance for children to have a substitute family. However, studies indicate that placement disruptions are a significant challenge in foster care systems in many Western countries (Fernandez and Barth, 2010).

Every year, millions of children around the world enter foster care for various reasons, including abuse, neglect, abandonment, or parental incapacity. The experiences of children in foster care have garnered increasing global attention. It is estimated that at least 2.7 million children globally reside in residential care, with many more in informal care settings (UNICEF, 2020). The HIV/AIDS pandemic, along with ongoing socio-economic challenges, has led to a rise in the number of orphans and other vulnerable children needing care (Kelly, 2020). These children often face a higher risk of adverse outcomes, such as lower educational achievement, increased mental health issues, and a greater likelihood of homelessness.

Africa has one of the largest populations of children in foster care worldwide. As reported by UNICEF in 2020, there are around 58 million orphaned children in Africa, with many others living in foster care situations. The issue of foster care in Africa is complex and varies across different countries and cultures, each having its own methods for caring for orphans and vulnerable children. Traditionally, children are expected to be raised within family units supported by extended family networks. However, due to the distressing circumstances affecting many nations, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa where HIV and AIDS are prevalent, every community has Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVCs), many of whom are now in foster care. Despite ongoing efforts to provide support, children in foster care in Africa often encounter significant challenges, including poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, and cultural and social stigma.

In Southern Africa, the number of foster families is on the rise as extended families become overwhelmed and unable to cope, according to Powel (2004). In South Africa, most foster care placements are kinship arrangements, and a report from a social worker must be considered before a child is placed in foster care (Minsi and Botha, 2016). In 2014, the South African Social Security Agency noted that over half a million children were in foster care in South Africa (SASSA, 2014). South African children and families face heightened vulnerability due to various historical, social, economic, cultural, political, and demographic factors (Martin, 2010). Factors such as poverty, substance abuse, parental irresponsibility and absence, illness, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic contribute to parental incapacity to care for their children. These issues often lead to family dysfunction, leaving parents and families unable to provide adequate care and protection for their children (Bower, 2014). Mmusi et al. (2022) highlight that foster care is confronted with numerous challenges, as the number of foster care applications is rapidly increasing, making it difficult for social workers to manage their caseloads.

Zimbabwe is predominantly a traditional society that values collective family life. In this context, children are regarded as belonging to the extended family in addition to their nuclear family. According to the Better Care Network Information on Family-Based Care in Zimbabwe (2023), alternative care options in Zimbabwe include kinship, community, foster, and institutional care. Most children in alternative care are in kinship or extended family situations, with fewer than 6,000 children in institutions and formally registered foster care homes. The

National Foster Care Baseline study indicates that in 2016, there were 512 children in foster care and approximately 4,896 in residential care in Zimbabwe (SOS Children's Village, 2022). Similar to many places around the world, children in Zimbabwe may be taken from their biological parents due to reasons such as neglect, abuse, parental incarceration, or substance abuse, rather than simply being orphaned (UNICEF, 2017).

In Chitungwiza, foster care is offered by various organizations, including Shungu Dzevana Trust Children's Home and SOS Children's Village. These organizations run foster programs that assist children in need by providing essential resources, education, psychosocial support, and a stable environment, emphasizing family-based care. There are around 48 residential care homes, each accommodating a maximum of seven foster children and at least one child, located in Seke, Zengeza, and St. Mary's. The researcher of this study became aware of these circumstances while interning in the Department of Social Development (DSD) in Chitungwiza, where her responsibilities included offering statutory social work services such as supervising foster care and facilitating reunification for foster families. She has observed numerous cases involving children exhibiting uncontrollable behavior, experiencing maltreatment, abuse, or deliberate neglect. This context prompted the current study to explore the lived experiences of children in foster care in Chitungwiza.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Foster care facilities are intended to provide a safe and supportive environment for children unable to live with their biological families. However, in Zimbabwe, particularly in urban areas like Chitungwiza, many foster children face significant challenges that affect their emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Despite attempts to create a nurturing environment, many children in foster care endure trauma, attachment difficulties, stigma, and social isolation. The existing foster care system in Zimbabwe may not sufficiently meet the unique needs of these children, which could result in long-term adverse effects on their physical, emotional, and psychological development. Understanding these issues is essential for creating effective interventions and policies to safeguard foster children.

1.3. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of lived experiences of children in foster care in Chitungwiza.

1.4.RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the resources that are available to children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.
2. To assess the challenges faced by foster children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.
3. To suggest strategies that can be implemented to improve the well-being of children in faced by children residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.

1.5.RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What the resources that are available to children in residential child care facilities Chitungwiza?
2. What are the challenges in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza?
3. What are the strategies that can be implemented to improve the foster care system and protect foster children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza?

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study holds significant importance for various stakeholders as it enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the personal experiences of foster children. It offers valuable insights into their emotions, viewpoints, and challenges, which can be utilized to enhance the foster care system and better address their needs. By amplifying the voices of foster children, this research can increase awareness of the difficulties they encounter, fostering empathy and understanding within the broader community and among potential foster parents.

Moreover, the findings may inspire civic organizations and donors to support effective foster care arrangements that promote the healthy development of these children. This will aid child welfare organizations, social workers, and other involved parties in providing suitable support services tailored to the needs of foster children, thereby reducing potential negative outcomes and advocating for children in foster care.

The study is also expected to yield important findings and recommendations that can significantly influence future decision-making concerning foster care issues. The results may

assist relevant government ministries and departments (such as the Department of Social Welfare in Zimbabwe) in developing effective guidelines and policies for the care and welfare of foster children. Additionally, the findings are anticipated to enhance the existing knowledge on fostering and serve as a foundation for future research by highlighting areas that require further investigation and aiding scholars in conducting advanced research aimed at improving the experiences of children in foster care.

1.7. ASSUMPTIONS

The study assumes that children in foster care have often faced adversities such as physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, parental mental health issues, and family breakdown. Foster parents raising these children may express their challenges and seek solutions. Social workers can be effectively guided to provide supervision services to foster parents and to understand the challenges, experiences, and coping strategies of foster children. The study will contribute to the development of policies and implications for social work practice.

1.8. DELIMITATIONS

The study will be conducted in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza, Harare Metropolitan Province, from January 2025 to May 2025. It will focus on the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care in Chitungwiza.

LIMITATIONS

The study encountered several limitations during data collection. Children participating in the research may not fully disclose their experiences due to fear of victimization. Additionally, children often exaggerate their experiences to elicit sympathy. Some participants are very young and may not be able to provide comprehensive account of their experiences.

The researcher had confidentiality issues with the participants. The participants were unwilling to complete the focus group discussion and interview because the non-disclosure agreements they signed did not allow it. The researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants that the study is being carried out for academic purposes.

1.9. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following words and phrases are key terms for the study.

Phenomenological experience

It refers to the subjectivity, personal and direct experience of individuals' consciousness, perception and awareness. It encompasses the way people experience and interpret their surroundings, thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations (Jackson and Marx, 2014).

Foster Care

Foster care is a federal, or state-run, program designed to protect children who have suffered harm at their primary residence, by removing them and placing them in a safer environment, as wards of the state (Carroll, 2002)

1.10. DISSERTATION OUTLINE

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter offers a general overview of the study, including the background, problem statement, significance, aims and objectives, research questions, assumptions, definitions of key terms, an outline of the dissertation, and a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter introduces the literature review and outlines the theoretical framework used in the study, which is based on Urie Bronfenbrenner's systems theory. It also reviews empirical studies related to the lived experiences of children in foster care and concludes with a chapter summary.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter details the research methodology, covering the research philosophy, approach, design, target population, sampling methods, data collection techniques, data presentation and analysis procedures, study trustworthiness, ethical considerations, limitations, and a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion

This chapter centers on presenting the data, interpreting the results, discussing the findings, and providing a chapter summary.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes the key findings, draws conclusions, offers recommendations based on the study's results, and discusses implications for practice, policy, and future research.

1.11. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided the background of the study. The statement of the problem was stated, purpose of the study were spelt out and the reasons that triggered the interest of this study were cleared, objectives and research questions guiding the study were also highlighted, significance of the study, assumptions, definition of terms and dissertation outline. The next chapter presents literature used to frame the study, and theoretical framework that guided the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the review of the literature related to the topic on the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care. It also focuses on the theoretical framework that guided the study and imperial review and also the summary of the chapter.

2.2. Theoretical framework

This study is based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which provides a framework for understanding child development and well-being within the context of foster care (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to Hayes et al. (2017), this theory posits that a child's development is influenced by various environments they encounter throughout their life, including biological, interpersonal, societal, and cultural factors. It offers a thorough framework for examining the intricate interactions between children in foster care and their surroundings, as well as how these complex relationships impact development over time. This model suggests that a person's environment consists of multiple interconnected systems that interact to shape how individuals grow and respond (Krishnan, 2010). The theory is structured into five nested systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979)

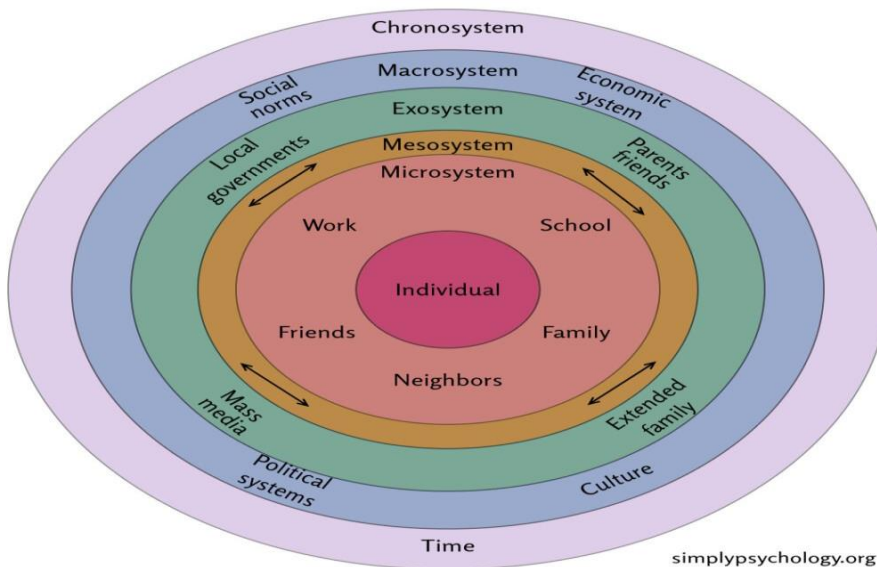


Figure 1, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979)

The microsystem, which is the innermost level, includes an individual's immediate environment, such as foster care. Children in foster care undergo significant ecological transitions, or disruptions in their microsystems (Hong et al., 2011). They are often separated from primary caregivers and other important figures such as siblings, friends, religious community members, and teachers when they leave their homes and communities (Stukes, Chipungu, and Bent-Goodley, 2004). This separation can lead to internalizing symptoms and externalizing behaviors, such as maladjustment, loneliness, and a diminished sense of self (Berrick, 2006). According to Krishnan (2010), the relationships between children and their foster caregivers, as well as the dynamics within the foster family, significantly influence children's experiences. Interactions with peers in foster care and in school settings also play a crucial role in shaping children's social and emotional development. Due to the close and direct nature of these relationships, they have a strong impact on an individual's development and behavior (Shelton, 2019).

Hayes et al. (2017) explain that the mesosystem encompasses all relationships and interactions between the microsystems, highlighting the connections between these different environments. The mesosystem encompasses the interactions between various microsystems, such as the relationships among family members, teachers, peers, and other environments like home (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Connections between children's parents, caregivers, and foster care representatives are significant within the mesosystem (Hong et al., 2011). The policies, practices, and support provided by foster care agencies can greatly influence children's experiences and outcomes. For instance, the quality of education, available resources, and social support for children in foster care can have a profound effect on their well-being; interactions between a child's foster family and their school can affect their learning and academic success.

The exosystem includes environments where the child is not directly involved but which still affect their development. Laws, regulations, and policies related to child welfare and foster care can shape the experiences of children in these systems (Hayes et al., 2017). Socioeconomic factors like poverty, healthcare access, quality childcare, and unemployment can influence the stability and quality of foster care placements. Some children may enter foster care with access to more resources, while others may be placed in under-resourced communities (Berrick, 2006).

The macrosystem refers to the larger societal and cultural influences that contribute to individual development. Shelton (2019) argues that societal and cultural attitudes toward foster care, family structures, and child welfare can affect the experiences of children in foster care. Additionally, the economic and political landscape can impact the availability of resources, funding, and support for foster care services.

Finally, the chronosystem represents the outermost layer of the model, emphasizing the importance of time in shaping individual development. Krishnan (2010) points out that frequent changes in foster care placements can disrupt children's sense of stability and security. These experiences can affect their ability to reach developmental milestones, such as forming healthy attachments. By examining the interconnectedness of these systems, ecological systems theory underscores the complexity of foster care experiences and the necessity for support services to enhance the well-being and resilience of children in foster care.

2.3. Resources and support systems that is accessible to children in foster homes.

Children in foster homes have access to various resources and support systems that cater to their unique needs, including medical care, education and other services. It is vital that foster care programmes promote the rights and needs of the child.

2.3.1. Emotional support

Recognizing the significance of mental health in foster care is crucial for the well-being and growth of foster children (Scott, 2024). These children often come from traumatic backgrounds filled with uncertainty and frequent transitions, which can greatly affect their mental and emotional well-being. They require support, patience, and empathy to aid in their emotional development. Ensuring that all children have access to specialized therapeutic and counseling services is essential for providing effective care and support (Berridge and Cleaver, 2013). Therapy offers a safe space for children to process their feelings and past experiences. According to Strebel (2004), psychosocial support is a key element in any initiative aimed at enhancing the quality of life for foster children, as it fosters a sense of belonging, which in turn helps them feel loved.

Psychosocial support involves addressing the ongoing emotional, social, and spiritual needs of children as they navigate life's challenges (White, 2002). When managed properly, foster care can offer orphans and other vulnerable children the chance to grow up in nurturing

environments, significantly improving their prospects for healthy development (Berridge and Cleaver, 2013). A study by Brown, Sebba, and Luke (2014) found that foster children generally require more emotional support than their peers. Support services for these children should focus on helping them cope with trauma and building their resilience by fostering self-esteem, nurturing secure relationships with their foster caregivers, and encouraging their engagement in school and community activities (Bostock, 2004).

2.3.2. Financial assistance

Fostering involves various costs, and financial assistance for foster parents is essential to cover necessities such as food, clothing, medical care, and educational expenses, ensuring that every child receives the care they need. As noted by Strebel (2004), foster parents are provided with financial support to help manage the costs associated with caring for a child. This support may include a monthly stipend, as well as additional funds for healthcare, education, and other related expenses. In Zimbabwe, financial assistance for foster children is mainly sourced from the national budget through the child welfare fund, as outlined in the Children's Act (UNICEF, 2020). According to SOS Children's Village (2022), various organizations, including Shungu Dzevana Trust Children's Home and SOS Children's Village, also provide foster care in Zimbabwe. These organizations run foster programs that offer children in need basic necessities, education, psychosocial support, and a stable environment, emphasizing family-based care.

2.3.3. Educational support

Educational support is vital for foster children, who often encounter unique challenges that can hinder their academic performance. Many enter the foster care system already behind in school due to adverse conditions in their biological homes, compounded by trauma from separation and frequent school changes, which can lead to ongoing educational delays and gaps in learning (Shirk and Strangler, 2004). Teachers can play a crucial role in providing resources and stability for foster children, helping to create a safe and inclusive school environment. Positive relationships with teachers can be a significant and consistent source of support in their lives. One-on-one tutoring can assist foster children in catching up academically and boosting their confidence (Okpych, 2012).

In the United States, Shirk and Strangler (2004) highlight that tuition waivers and educational aid offered at the state level through various programs and legislation serve as excellent examples of

support for foster children. These children may benefit from educational programs such as tuition assistance and special education services (Okpych, 2012). In Zimbabwe, educational support for foster children includes access to basic education through initiatives like BEAM, which covers school fees and uniforms, as well as assistance from organizations such as SOS, Mavambo Trust, and Shungu Dzevana (UNICEF, 2020). Providing educational support is essential for foster children, as it lays the groundwork for future success, fosters stability and well-being, and helps them navigate challenges. Young children should have access to early childhood services, while older children require targeted educational and transitional support as they age out of care.

Research indicates that children in foster care who receive comprehensive support services tend to have a more positive outlook towards their foster families and achieve better outcomes (Höjer et al. 2013). For instance, a foster care program in Georgia, operated by Every Child, not only addressed the basic needs of children but also provided educational and recreational support, while facilitating contact with their biological families when suitable.

2.3.4. Community support

Community organizations and groups are essential in assisting foster families and children. These resources may include support groups for foster parents, mentoring programs, and donation centers that supply basic necessities and comforts (Höjer et al. 2013). Community-based and organization-based support are crucial strategies that foster parents use to mitigate and overcome challenges in caregiving. Furthermore, Höjer et al. (2013) emphasize that foster care is a collective community responsibility. Public awareness, volunteer involvement, and community engagement are vital for the success of foster care programs. By understanding and supporting foster care initiatives, the broader community helps create a nurturing and inclusive environment. Research in South Africa by Gono (2015) highlights that various structures, including the Department of Social Development (DSD), schools, NGOs, non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, and faith-based organizations, support foster parents. These organizations provide material and service assistance to foster parents and their children, significantly helping to address challenges related to the care and well-being of the children. Fostering a supportive community that recognizes and uplifts foster children promotes healing, builds confidence, and paves the way for a brighter future.

2.4. Challenges faced by foster children in foster home

Children in foster care have faced a myriad of challenges these includes often experience emotional and social, physical and mental, financial and psychological challenges.

2.4.1. Emotional and social challenges.

Children in foster care encounter a variety of challenges that affect their mental health (McLaughlin, 2013). These emotional and psychological difficulties include trouble adapting to new foster homes, insufficient emotional support, and issues related to their sense of identity and belonging. According to Worden (2005), factors such as frequent relocations and the presence of unfamiliar caregivers, to whom the child has no emotional ties, can lead to a range of psychological and emotional struggles for foster children.

A study conducted in rural Uganda revealed that foster children living with non-biological parents experienced high levels of psychological distress (Perlmatter and Hall, 2012). These issues manifested as unhappiness, mood swings, antisocial behavior, anxiety, depression, and anger. The severity of these psychological problems increased as the children became more aware of the disparities in their life opportunities compared to their peers.

Due to frequent placements, youth often miss out on forming lasting relationships with individuals who truly understand them and can provide a sense of security. A consistent, long-term caregiver is crucial for the healthy development of children who lack parental care (Stott and Gustavsson, 2010). Instability in relationships negatively affects children, leading to poor academic performance, low self-esteem, substance abuse, incarceration, and behavioral issues that may not be directly related to their initial entry into foster care (Stott and Gustavsson, 2010). In essence, young people suffer significantly when they do not have a stable environment.

2.4.2. Educational challenges

Education is one of the most important assets a child can possess, as it facilitates personal growth, social development, and future success. However, not all children have access to quality education or the necessary support. Foster children often require additional educational assistance due to school changes, missed classes, and unstable home environments (Courtney et al., 2011). The instability experienced by children in foster care greatly affects their academic performance. There is a negative correlation between the number of placements a young person

has experienced and their educational achievement (Stott & Gustavsson, 2010). It is estimated that every time a child changes schools, typically when moving from one foster home to another, they lose four to six months of academic progress (Legal Center for Foster Care and Education, 2008). Consequently, if a child is in foster care for two years and changes homes three times, they may lose around 12 to 18 months of educational advancement in that brief period. Children in foster care often lack stability, which leads to frequent changes in their living situations. Often leads to changes in neighborhoods and schools, making it difficult for children to maintain relationships and succeed academically (Okpych, 2012).

Online education also impacts children in foster care. More research is needed to understand how online learning affects these students as a whole, how their needs are addressed without face-to-face instruction, and the extent to which their academic performance is influenced (Stott & Gustavsson, 2010). As a result, many foster children may struggle with low intellectual capabilities due to stress and depression, which can hinder their academic success. Some challenges faced by foster children include a lack of support and emotional connection with their foster parents, as well as limited access to help with schoolwork when they encounter difficulties, often because foster parents are busy with work or lack a strong bond with the child (Bertman, 2001).

2.4.3. Financial challenges

Children in foster care frequently do not have access to the same resources as their peers who are not in foster care. Financial constraints often hinder foster parents from adequately meeting the needs of these children (Tanga, Khumalo, and Gutura, 2017). Foster children may lack essential items such as food, clothing, and healthcare, and the foster care grants provided are typically insufficient to support or supplement the family's income.

The negative experiences that many foster children endure often stem from limited resources or neglect from some foster parents (Powel, 2004). Additionally, due to economic difficulties and other internal issues within the foster family, not every child receives the attention they require and deserve, which is particularly detrimental for foster children. This situation can exacerbate the psychological harm experienced by these children, negatively impacting their overall growth and development (Stott and Gustavsson, 2010).

2.4.4. Physical and health challenges

In numerous foster care situations, children are removed from their biological families due to abuse, maltreatment, or neglect, which can result in both physical and mental health challenges for the child.

In many foster care cases, children are removed from their biological home due to maltreatment, abuse, or neglect which likely the child will experience physical or mental challenges. Foster children may face physical challenges from their foster parents, relatives, and siblings, and they can also experience abuse at school. According to McLaughlin (2013), children with disabilities in foster care are particularly vulnerable, facing a higher risk of maltreatment and a greater need for healthcare services. Some of these children may have been removed from their biological families due to neglect or abuse, as those families were unable or unwilling to provide the necessary support. A study by Hodder (2020) indicated that nearly half of the children in foster care have special healthcare needs, and their situation may worsen if their foster parents cannot meet those needs. Additionally, foster children may encounter nutritional issues, such as food insecurity, unhealthy eating habits, and dietary restrictions. They might also live in substandard conditions, including overcrowding, poor sanitation, or a lack of basic necessities.

Children in foster care tend to have more chronic health issues and behavioral, emotional, and developmental problems compared to their peers, as noted by Ringelsen, Casanueva, Urato, and Cross (2008). They further explained that foster children often require referrals to various specialists, including dentists, ophthalmologists, speech therapists, and mental health professionals, as well as occupational and physical therapists. Agyarko (2007) conducted a study in Namibia that found mild trauma was common among foster children, likely due to experiences such as witnessing the separation or death of a parent. The study also indicated that children in foster care report higher levels of stress and depression compared to those in intact nuclear and extended families.

2.5. The strategies that can be implemented to improve the foster care system and protect foster children in foster homes.

To tackle these issues, various stakeholders including policymakers, child welfare agencies, and advocacy groups have introduced several strategies aimed at enhancing the foster care system and safeguarding foster children. These strategies focus on improving the quality of care,

supporting the well-being and stability of foster children, and promoting accountability and transparency within the system.

2.5.1. Counselling

Counseling and therapy are essential for the emotional and mental health of children in foster care, assisting them in dealing with the challenges and traumas they may have faced (Human Rights Watch, 2014). These children often encounter distinct and significant behavioral issues, largely influenced by their past experiences. For instance, some have lost their parents, others may not even know their biological parents, and some have suffered from abuse or neglect. Adjusting to a new home with different rules and routines is typically a difficult process for foster children (Lamminem, 2020).

To help foster children succeed, it is important to provide additional support services, such as mental health counseling, educational assistance, and extracurricular activities. According to Phaka (2015), the professional support services offered by caseworkers and placement agencies to foster parents and children are vital components of organization-based support. These services help both foster parents and the children in their care to manage and overcome the challenges they encounter.

2.5.2. Life skills programs

As noted by McLaughlin (2013), foster children often lack essential life skills and preparation for independence. They should be taught the importance of hard work, responsibility, hygiene, discipline, prayerfulness, and organizational skills, as well as practical skills like sewing, making bangles, knitting, and tailoring. It is crucial for children to acquire these life skills as they grow. A study by Forber-Pratt et al. (2013) found that children learned valuable life skills from their foster families, including cooking, washing dishes, and understanding the value of hard work. In countries like Zimbabwe, children in residential care facilities participate in gardening and carpentry programs (UNICEF, 2020).

2.5.3. Financial support

Financial assistance for foster parents is crucial for many families. The Financial Empowerment Toolkit (2014) emphasizes that financial constraints are the main challenge faced by foster parents and children. Tanga, Khumalo, and Gutura (2017) argue that the inability to meet

children's needs due to financial limitations often leads to foster parents struggling to fulfill their responsibilities. Supporting this, a study by Van Deventer and Wright (2017) revealed that in Zimbabwe, caregivers were reluctant to take in additional children because of poverty and insufficient financial support.

2.5.4. Community awareness and support

Höjer et al. (2013) emphasize that foster care is a collective responsibility of the community. The success of foster care programs heavily relies on public awareness, volunteer support, and community engagement. By recognizing and backing foster care initiatives, the broader community helps foster a nurturing and inclusive environment. Additionally, community-based and organization-based support are vital strategies that foster parents use to address and manage challenges related to care giving (Gono, 2015). In South Africa, research indicates that various structures supporting foster parents include the Department of Social Development (DSD), schools, NGOs, non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, and faith-based organizations (Gono, 2015). These entities offer material and service assistance to foster parents and their children, significantly helping to address issues concerning children's care and well-being.

For foster care programs to thrive, it is essential for government officials, alternative care providers, NGOs, families, community members, police, healthcare providers, teachers, and anyone interacting with the child to understand the potential benefits and risks of foster care, as well as to work towards dispelling any misconceptions and stigma associated with it (Forber-Pratt et al. 2013). Various experiences from different countries illustrate the positive effects that awareness-raising initiatives can have on the implementation of foster care programs. For instance, in Japan, municipalities that embraced foster care and recognized its advantages over residential care reported higher rates of foster care placements (Human Rights Watch 2014).

2.5.5. Policy reforms

A crucial aspect of enhancing the lives of children in residential care facilities involves policy reforms. At the beginning of the orphan crisis, Zimbabwe had a well-established social welfare system supported by effective legislation aimed at the care and protection of children. The primary legislation is outlined in the Children's Protection and Adoption Act, which the Department of Social Services (DSS) within the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social

Welfare is responsible for implementing (UNICEF, 2004). While children may require advocates to help them navigate challenges, it is also important for them to feel empowered and encouraged to participate in decision-making processes (Piel & Lacasse, 2017).

2.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter focuses on reviewing literature related to the study by exploring lived experiences of children in foster care, and the theoretical framework. Furthermore, this chapter also reviews literature on the lived experiences of children in foster care; it also answers the research questions. The next chapter presents the research methods and the research design.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this study, offering a comprehensive overview of the research process, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques employed to investigate the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care in Chitungwiza. The procedures are elaborated upon in the subsequent subsections, beginning with the research approach, design, target population, sample selection, sampling methods, and data collection techniques, which include interviews and focus group discussions, research reliability, ethical considerations, and a summary of the chapter.

3.1. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Research philosophy refers to the foundational beliefs and assumptions that shape a researcher's approach to studying a phenomenon, essentially serving as a framework for interpreting reality and generating knowledge. This philosophy influences how data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted in a research study (MacMillan, 2012). The study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy. As noted by McLeod and Evans (2024), interpretivism asserts that social reality is subjective and constructed through human interpretation and meaning-making. Interpretivists believe that understanding reality occurs through social constructs such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and tools (Myers, 2008). This approach allowed foster children, foster parents, and social workers to articulate their social realities by sharing their phenomenological experiences in Residential Child Care Facilities in Chitungwiza.

The philosophy acknowledges that individuals in society experience and comprehend reality in diverse ways and have unique motivations for their actions (Alharahshel and Pius, 2020). The study found that foster children in these facilities have varied experiences and reasons for their behaviors. Different interpretations of children's experiences in foster care prompted the researcher to conduct this study to explore the phenomenological experiences of children in Residential Child Care Facilities in Chitungwiza. Interpretivism supports the collection of qualitative data through various techniques, including face-to-face interviews and focus groups, as well as observations (McLeod and Evans, 2024). The researcher utilized focus group discussions with foster children and conducted face-to-face interviews with key informants, employing open-ended questions to gain a deeper insight into the participants' experiences in foster care. The study followed a qualitative research approach.

3.2. RESEARCH APPROACH

The researcher employed a qualitative research approach to gain insights into the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care in Chitungwiza. According to Durrheim (2004), qualitative research examines the nature of phenomena, including their qualities, various forms, the contexts in which they arise, and the perspectives from which they can be understood. Fisher (2013) notes that qualitative research aims to uncover the behaviors and perceptions of a target audience regarding specific topics or issues. This type of research provides rich, detailed, and contextual insights into the lives of children in foster care, capturing their unique experiences, feelings, and viewpoints, thus offering a deeper understanding of their circumstances. It typically involves in-depth studies of small groups to inform and support the development of hypotheses. The outcomes of qualitative research are descriptive rather than predictive, meaning that the experiences of children in foster care in Chitungwiza are to be detailed for quality assessment and future improvements to the system.

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design, as defined by MacMillan (2012), is the plan or framework for conducting a research study. It outlines the overall approach and methods for collecting and analyzing data on the phenomenological experiences of children in residential childcare facilities in Chitungwiza, aimed at answering research questions. Durrheim (2004) describes research design as a strategic framework that connects research questions with the execution of the research strategy.

The researcher utilized a phenomenological research design, focusing on exploring the lived experiences of children in residential childcare facilities in Chitungwiza. The units of analysis were the foster children within these facilities. Phenomenological research design emphasizes common themes arising from lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This type of study highlights the phenomenon by examining personal experiences through interviews with individuals who have encountered it; therefore, the researcher will conduct interviews and focus group discussions to delve into the participants' personal experiences.

3.4 STUDY SETTING

The study took place in the Chitungwiza district of the Harare Metropolitan Province in Zimbabwe, specifically within residential childcare facilities. The researcher selected this location due to the numerous challenges faced by many foster children in these facilities, which

significantly affect their emotional, psychological, and social well-being. The researcher also visited the foster care facilities, while she was an intern at Chitungwiza DSD and observed some foster children were facing challenges while living in care facilities. The study focused on the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care.

3.5. TARGETED POPULATION

The targeted population, as described by Punch (2009), refers to the specific group of individuals that the research aims to study and draw conclusions from. Creswell and Creswell (2022) define the study population as those individuals who possess certain characteristics relevant to the research. In this study, the target population consists of children aged 10 to 18 years residing in various foster care facilities in Chitungwiza. Key informants for this research will include foster parents and social workers, as these individuals can provide in-depth insights into foster care issues. By focusing on these populations, the researcher can obtain valuable information regarding the experiences of children in foster care in Chitungwiza.

3.6. SAMPLE SIZE

Cohen et al. (2007) describe a sample as a subset of a larger population selected by a predetermined method. Sample size refers to the number of participants included in a study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In this research on the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care in Chitungwiza, the sample will consist of 12 children aged 10 to 18 years, a crucial demographic for social and emotional development, capable of articulating their experiences in foster care. Additionally, the sample will include 2 key informants, a foster parent and a social worker, who can provide detailed information about each child's background, needs, experiences, and well-being through regular assessments. This manageable sample size allows the researcher to conduct a thorough analysis of the data, identify codes, and develop themes (Creswell and Creswell, 2022).

3.7. SAMPLING AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Sampling is the process of selecting subjects or participants for a study (DeVos et al., 2012). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) explain that sampling techniques involve gathering and analyzing information from the population. According to Creswell and Creswell (2022), there are two sampling methods: probability (or random sampling) and non-probability (or purposive

sampling). This research on the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care in Chitungwiza will employ purposive sampling.

3.7.1. Purposive sampling

Creswell (2014) defines purposive sampling as a method often used to enhance knowledge by intentionally selecting participants who are considered rich sources of data. In this study on the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care in Chitungwiza, purposive sampling will be applied to both primary participants and key informants, though with different contexts for each group. For children aged 10 to 18, purposive sampling will be used to select participants who are expected to have direct experiences related to the realities of living in foster care. Purposive sampling is also used for key informants to specifically identify participants possessing expert knowledge relevant to the matter.

3.8. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Creswell and Creswell (2022) describe data collection methods as techniques for gathering information from various sources to address research questions, test hypotheses, or evaluate programs. This research employed qualitative data collection methods involving foster children and key informants to investigate the lived experiences of children in Residential Child Care Facilities in Chitungwiza. Interviews with key informants were conducted to gain specialized knowledge and insights into the experiences of children in foster care. Additionally, focus group discussions were utilized to further understand these experiences.

3.8.1. Focus group discussions

Cohen et al. (2011) define a focus group interview as a structured discussion aimed at gathering perceptions on a specific topic in a supportive and non-threatening atmosphere. Focus group discussions were held with foster children to explore their experiences living in residential care facilities in Chitungwiza. The researcher communicated in the local language (Shona) to ensure that the children could express themselves clearly. Notes were taken to document the information shared. The researcher organized focus group discussions with 12 foster children, purposefully selected from two Residential Child Care Facilities in Chitungwiza, dividing them into two groups of six participants each.

3.8.2. Key informants interviews

Key informant interviews are a qualitative research approach used to collect data from individuals with specialized knowledge or expertise in a particular area (UCLA Center for Health Policy Research Health, 2024). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including a social worker from Chitungwiza DSD and a foster parent from one of the residential facilities, who provided first-hand insights into the experiences of children in foster care. The researcher sought to gather in-depth information on foster care issues. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to one hour, conducted in English, with notes taken to record the responses. The researcher also addressed any concerns by carefully planning the interview sessions, preparing thoroughly, and fostering good relationships with the respondents to ensure the collection of reliable and valid data.

3.8.3. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The data collection tools that were used in this study were key informant interview guide and focus group discussion guide. Key informant interview guide and focus group discussion guide focuses on open-ended questions to acquire different experiences of children in foster care.

3.8.3.1 Focus Groups Discussions Guide

The researcher utilized a focus group guide that included open-ended questions related to the phenomenological experiences of children in residential childcare facilities in Chitungwiza. This guide allowed the researcher to clearly articulate the research questions and objectives, facilitating discussions that could reveal issues not typically addressed in one-on-one interviews. Prior to participating in the discussion, research participants were provided with a consent form.

3.8.3.2. Key Informant interview Guide

For the key informant interviews, a semi-structured interview guide was employed, featuring both open and closed questions to gain a deeper insight into the experiences of participants in foster care in Chitungwiza. This guide consisted of open-ended questions aimed at eliciting responses on specific topics, while also allowing interviewees to share additional information based on their own knowledge and perspectives, as well as to reflect on their practices and assumptions (UCLA Center for Health Policy Research Health, 2024).

3.9. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

In terms of research procedure, the researcher sought and received permission from Compensation House, Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare Head Office to conduct the study. Following this, data collection took place in residential childcare facilities in Chitungwiza, with careful attention to ethical considerations.

3.10. TRUSTWORTHY OF THE RESEARCH

Trustworthiness of the research, it refers to the level of confidence in the data gathered, its analysis, and interpretation, ensuring that the findings are accurate, reliable, and representative of the subject matter being examined (Connelly, 2016).

3.10.1. Credibility

Credibility, as defined in research, pertains to the belief in the validity of a study's conclusions (Connelly, 2016). It encompasses the researcher's reflections and efforts to ensure high-quality data collection and a representative sample (Roller & Lavrakas, 2018). In this study, the researcher established credibility by drawing conclusions from a variety of sources and employing both interviews and focus group discussions for data collection.

3.10.2. Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of research results, as well as the thoroughness of the documentation of research methods, which enables readers to review, audit, and critically assess the process (Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams, & Blackman, 2016). It is deemed successful when similar results are obtained from comparable subjects under similar conditions (Cope, 2014). Additionally, dependability raises questions about whether the findings, interpretations, and conclusions accurately represent the experiences of the participants (Amankwaa, 2016). In terms of trustworthiness, dependability is essential because it indicates that the study's conclusions are reliable and can be reproduced. In this study, the researcher ensured dependability by collaborating with knowledgeable and experienced foster parents to verify or review the coding and to conduct thematic analyses of the interview and focus group transcripts

3.10.3. Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability to apply the findings of a study to similar events, situations, and settings (Morris & Burkett, cited in Mohajan, 2018). In this study, the researcher provided comprehensive data to enhance the transferability of the findings to comparable contexts (Amankwaa, 2016). A detailed description and sufficient information about the foster parents raising foster children were provided while maintaining their anonymity and confidentiality.

3.11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2022), ethical considerations involve assessing the moral implications and guidelines that govern research conduct. In this study, the researcher adhered to several ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and voluntary participation.

3.11.1. Informed consent

Informed consent is the process through which researchers inform potential participants about the risks, benefits, and other relevant aspects before they voluntarily decide to participate in a study (Tracy, 2013). In this research, the researcher ensured that participants were well-informed about the study and its implications, allowing them to willingly agree to take part. Obtaining informed consent from all participants was crucial for conducting ethical research.

3.11.2. Confidentiality and Anonymity

Participants were assured that their responses, personal identities, and personal information would be treated with the confidentiality they deserve and would only be used for the purposes of this study (De Vos et al., 2014). This measure was intended to protect participants from any potential harm. Pseudonyms were employed to safeguard the identities of the participants. The researcher demonstrated a strong commitment to maintaining a high level of confidentiality regarding the information gathered. The researcher displays beyond reasonable doubt that the information gathered shall be treated with a high degree of confidentiality. The researchers informed the participants that all their responses were to be kept strictly confidential and were only going to be used for research purposes only.

3.11.3. Voluntary participation

This text discusses the concept of voluntary participation in research, emphasizing that individuals choose to engage in an activity freely, without any coercion or pressure (De Vos et al., 2014). In this study, participation was entirely voluntary, and no participant was forced to continue against their will. The researcher briefly explained the study's purpose to the participants and made it clear that they could withdraw at any time if they wished.

3.12. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The study employed a thematic data analysis approach to present and analyze information collected from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Data presentation involves visually representing data sets to effectively communicate information to an audience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). According to Hair (2010), data analysis is the process of evaluating, inspecting, modelling, and transforming raw data into a usable format, aiming to uncover meaningful insights and add value to the research. Thematic data analysis was used in this study to interpret the data. Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) define thematic analysis as a qualitative research method that identifies and interprets patterns or themes within a data set, often leading to new insights and understanding. The goal of thematic data analysis is to identify meaningful patterns across the data that address the research problem. Dawadi (2020) notes that this approach can yield insightful and reliable findings. The thematic analysis process consists of several stages:

Familiarisation with the Data

Dawadi (2020) explains that thematic data analysis begins with the researcher becoming familiar with the data. This initial phase allows the researcher to identify potential themes that may emerge from the data. It is a critical step that informs the subsequent analysis process. The researcher reviewed the data collected from focus groups and interviews with foster children in Chitungwiza to become acquainted with the material before generating initial codes.

Generating Initial Codes

Once familiar with the data, the researcher proceeds to generate initial codes based on the information, revisiting notes from interviews or focus group discussions that address the research questions. Dawadi (2020) highlights that this step aids in developing a general understanding of the data and identifying possible themes.

Searching for Themes

In this phase, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher starts with a comprehensive list of codes identified throughout the data set. The primary aim of this phase is to uncover patterns and relationships within the entire data set (Chamberlain, 2015). The researcher analyzes the codes to determine how different codes can be combined to create overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher analyses the data to find common patterns across the codes from the data collected from focus groups and interviews of participants on the phenomenological experiences of foster children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.

Reviewing Themes

At this stage, researchers fine-tune and adjust the themes to ensure that they accurately reflect the data and are clearly differentiated from one another (Dawadi, 2020). Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend that themes be evaluated for coherence, consistency, and differentiation. In this study, the themes were examined to confirm their relevance to the research objectives and research questions.

Defining and Naming Theme

This phase involved identifying the core essence of each theme and determining what specific aspect of the data each theme encapsulates (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher identified the final themes that are connected to the objectives and research questions.

Writing Report

The concluding phase of the analysis involved documenting the findings. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a report on thematic analysis should persuade readers of the analysis's value and validity. The steps of thematic analysis were applied in the following chapter, where the results were presented using all the established steps and principles of the method.

3.13. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study encountered several limitations during data collection. Children participating in the research may not fully disclose their experiences due to fear of victimization. Additionally, children often exaggerate their experiences to elicit sympathy. Some participants are very young and may not be able to provide a comprehensive account of their experiences.

Another limitation is the potential bias of respondents; the sample size was small and may not accurately reflect the broader population. These factors could impact the validity of generalizing the results to the larger population of foster care. Furthermore, the sample was not randomly selected. The researcher chose foster children who had spent some time in residential care and who were identifiable, accessible, and willing to participate in interviews.

Confidentiality issues also arose with participants. Many were hesitant to engage in focus group discussions and interviews because the confidentiality agreement they signed restricted this. The researcher had to clarify the study's purpose to the participants, emphasizing that it was for academic purposes.

3.14. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter was about the research design and the methodology that was utilized to carry out this study. The qualitative research approach was employed in order to answer critical questions of the study. This type of approach was most significant for this kind of study that was interested in the experiences of children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza. This paradigm gave an opportunity for the detailed understanding of the children and foster parents' experiences in foster care. The sampling procedure used for this study was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was known for being able to purposely ear-mark participants, which was used to identify the participants that were expected to produce the richest data. The study had a total of 14 participants, 12 children participated in focus group discussions, 1 foster parent and 1 social worker from Chitungwiza DSD with a service length of more than five years. Data was analysed through thematic data analysis. Ethical issues were taken into account and confidentiality with anonymity was strongly kept throughout the study. The following chapter focused on data presentation, analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This phenomenological study examined the experiences of twelve foster children living in residential care facilities in Chitungwiza. In this chapter, the data is presented, analyzed, and discussed, with findings organized around themes derived from the research objectives and questions. Each theme is further divided into sub-themes that delve deeper into the foster children's phenomenological experiences in these facilities. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with two key informants and focus group discussions with twelve foster children. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data, and the research was informed by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. The participants in the focus groups and interviews were purposefully selected from foster children residing in the residential care facilities in Chitungwiza.

4.1. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

PARTICIPANT TITLE	AGE	GENDER	YEARS IN FOSTER CARE
CHILD 1	12	F	12
CHILD 2	16	F	16
CHILD 3	14	F	14
CHILD4	10	F	4
CHILD 5	15	F	1
CHILD 6	11	F	9
CHILD7	14	M	1
CHILD 8	13	F	5
CHILD 9	13	F	3
CHILD 10	12	M	2
CHILD 11	10	M	2
CHILD 12	11	M	1

Table 1, Demographic information of participants

This section contains the demographic information of foster children in Residential Child Care Facilities in Chitungwiza. Analysing demographic data was necessary to assess any influence the characters might have on the research findings. The demographic data that was analysed consists of age, gender and number of years at the residential care facilities. The study shows that participants were from the age group of 10-16 years. This age group was suitable because the participants were able to articulate well on their phenomenological experiences at the residential child care facilities. There were 8 girls and 4 boys; the study shows that girls were more than boys on this age group. Finally the demographic data consists of number of years at the residential child care. The findings highlighted that some of the participants came to the child care facilities when they were babies and have spent all their life at the facilities.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF KEY INFORMANTS

PARTICIPANT TITLE	AGE	GENDER	EXPERIENCE (YEARS)
SOCIAL WORKER	34	F	6 YEARS AT THE DSD
FOSTER PARENT	56	F	18 AS A FOSTER PARENT

Table 2, Demographic information of Key informants

The above demographic data is of key informants, comprising of social worker from Chitungwiza DSD and a foster parent at one of the Residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza. The social worker is a lady aged 34 years with 6 years working at Chitungwiza DSD and the foster parent is also a lady of 56 years with 18 years of working as a foster parent. These key informants were important because they possess specialized knowledge and expertise in their field, by providing valuable insights and perspectives on the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care in Chitungwiza district.

4.2. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This section uses themes and sub-themes to present and discuss the study's findings. The study's conclusions were based on the data that was gathered from 12 participants from focus groups and 2 key informants who gave their consent to participate in this study.

4.2.1. Theme 1. Resources and support systems that are available to children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.

4.2.1.1. Emotional support

The study reveal that emotional support is a support systems that is available to children in residential child care facilities. Foster children highlighted that:

“Sometimes we are offered counselling session and career guidance at school through the Guidance and Counselling Club.” (FGD Child 3)

Similarly another research participant made the following remarks

“Sometimes the Friendship Bench support group come to our residential care facilities to offer us talk therapy and counselling services.” (FGD Child 2)

Also the Key informant of the study had this to say:

“There are many support groups in Chitungwiza which offers children in foster care counselling and therapy sessions, examples are Friendship Bench and Ndinewe Foundation.” (Key informant 1)

The results indicated that foster children in residential care services in Chitungwiza received emotional support from various organizations. This aligns with the views of Berridge and Cleaver (2013), who argue that ensuring all children have access to specialize therapeutic and counseling services is essential for effective care and support. Therapy offers a safe space for children to process their feelings and past experiences. Strebel (2004) further explains that psychosocial support is a crucial element of any program aimed at enhancing the quality of life for foster children, as it fosters a sense of belonging. Additionally, Scott (2024) emphasizes that recognizing the significance of mental health in foster care is crucial for the well-being and development of these children. The study's findings corroborate research by Brown, Sebba, and Luke (2014), which found that foster children generally require more emotional support than their peers. Overall, the findings underscore the necessity for emotional support for foster children in residential care facilities in Chitungwiza to help them manage their emotional challenges.

4.2.1.2. Financial assistance

From the study outcomes financial assistance is another support systems that is available to children in residential child care facilities. Foster children highlighted that:

“I found support from my foster parent since I come to the foster care when I was a month old now is 12years. I don’t even know my biological parents everything I need is provided by my foster parent and churches.” (FGD Child 1).

On a similar note another research participant made the following remarks:

“Sometimes we get some donations in the form of money from churches in Chitungwiza, one of them is Seventh Day Adventist Church were we go.” (FGD Child 8).

Also the Key informant of the study had this to say:

“We get support and resources from government, my biological children, donors from NGO and church, community well-wishers as well working through making drinks like ice lolo and selling freezits.” (Key informant 1)

In addition another key informant made this remarks:

“There are available resources for children in foster care in form offoster care grants, donations from NGOs, educational assistance from Basic Educational Assistance Module (BEAM) and groceries from DSD Headoffice, AMTO from DSD” (Key informant 2)

The findings presented above indicate that financial support is accessible in residential child care facilities, provided by the government and various organizations. Strebel (2004) agrees with this conclusion, noting that foster parents receive financial assistance to help cover the costs associated with caring for a child, which may include healthcare, education, and other expenses. Additionally, UNICEF (2020) highlights that financial aid for foster children mainly comes from the national budget through the child welfare fund, as outlined in the Children’s Act. Furthermore, SOS Children’s Village (2022) points out that foster care in Zimbabwe is supported by several organizations, such as Shungu Dzevana Trust Children’s Home and SOS Children’s Village, which offer foster programs aimed at helping children in need by providing essential resources, education, psychological support, and a stable environment, with an emphasis on

family-based care. The study's findings confirm that there are resources and support systems available for children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.

4.2.1.3. Educational support

The respondents were asked questions on the kind of educational support available to children in foster care. These were the responses from foster children:

“Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) pay our school fees.” (FGD Child 3)

Similarly other research participants made the following remarks:

“Our foster parent bought our stationary, school uniforms and school shoes.” (FGD Child 6)

“My teacher helps me with extra school work free of charge and I am improving in my academic performance.” (FGD Child 11)

To add more another research participant made the following remarks

“Sometimes my foster parent pay for my extra lesson from the money she gets from her ice-lolo business.” (FGD Child 2).

Also the key informant of the study had this to say:

“There are available resources for children in foster care in form of foster care grants and educational assistance from the government through Basic Educational Assistance Module (BEAM)” (Key informant 2)

In addition another key informant had this to say:

“We get support and resources from government through BEAM and uniforms and stationaries are provided by SOS and Shungu Dzevana Trust Children`s Home.” (Key informant 1).

The study's findings indicate that educational support is a vital resource for foster children in residential care facilities in Chitungwiza, as emphasized in the research. This aligns with Shirk and Strangler (2004), who state that educational support is essential for foster children, who often encounter specific challenges that can affect their academic achievement. The research also reveals that foster children receive educational assistance from the government and various

charitable organizations. This is consistent with Shirk and Strangler's assertion that in the United States, tuition waivers and state-level educational aid through programs and legislation serve as excellent examples of support for foster children. Additionally, Okpych (2012) shares a similar perspective, noting that foster children can benefit from programs such as tuition assistance and special education services. UNICEF (2020) also agrees that in Zimbabwe, educational support for foster children includes access to basic education through initiatives like BEAM, which covers school fees and uniforms, along with support from organizations like SOS, Mavambo Trust, and Shungu Dzevana, among others. These findings clearly demonstrate that foster children receive educational support from both the government and charitable organizations.

4.2.1.4. Community assistance.

From the study outcomes community assistance is another support systems that is available to children in residential child care facilities. Foster children highlighted that:

“Sometimes people from the community of Unit A in Chitungwiza and Youth from SDA church came to help our foster parent doing household chores,” (FGD Child 4).

On a similar note another research participants made the following remarks:

“People from the community and churches can offer food, clothes or household items” (FGD Child 11).

The responses indicate that foster children receive resources and support from churches and community networks. This aligns with Gono's (2015) study, which highlights that in South Africa, Community-Based Organizations and Faith-Based Organizations are among the structures that assist foster parents. These organizations offer material and service support to both foster parents and their children. Bronfenbrenner's model suggests that these various interconnected systems constitute a child's environment, all of which interact to influence and shape children's development and responses (Krishnan, 2010).

4.2.1.5. Positive relationships from foster parents.

From the study findings it is revealed that some of the participants who have been fortunate enough to have been placed on foster care reported positively about their experience. Here are some of their responses:

“I feel happy living with my foster parent, because she treats me well. My biological parents treated me badly; I was not going to school when I was living with them.” (FGD Child 8).

Additionally another research participants made the following remarks:

“Ever since my placement on foster care, I have enjoyed the experience of having a place I can call home, where I have a mother, father and othersiblings” (FGD Child 7).

Also the key informant of the study had this to say:

“Some foster children will not want to leave the foster care when they reach the age of 18, they don’t want to return back to their biological parents and it will also affect us as foster parents because we would have created a bond with the children at the care facility.”(Key informant 1)

On a similar note another key informant of the study had this to say:

“Issues of attachment and bonding, in trying to remove the child from the foster parent to their biological parents become a challenge. These children still want to stay at the care facility rather going to their biological families” (Key informant 2)

The results regarding this topic suggest that many foster children are content living with their foster parents, as they often receive better treatment than from their biological parents. Some even expressed a desire to remain in the foster care system. Krishnan (2010) emphasizes that the relationships between children and their foster caregivers, as well as the dynamics within the foster family, play a crucial role in shaping the children's experiences and behaviors. These findings align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, as noted by Hayes et al. (2017), which states that a child's development is influenced by various environments they encounter throughout their lives, including biological, interpersonal, societal, and cultural factors. Additionally, Berridge and Cleaver (2013) argue that well-managed foster care can provide orphans and other vulnerable children with the opportunity to grow up in nurturing homes, enhancing their chances for healthy development. This research underscores that foster care enables foster children and their caregivers to form lasting relationships that are difficult to sever. In conclusion, foster children in residential care facilities have established positive relationships with their foster parents.

4.2.2. Theme 2. Challenges faced by children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.

The purpose of this theme is to explicate context-specific challenges that are faced by foster children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza. The participants then shared what they perceived to be the challenges they encounter at the residential child care facilities. The challenges that were experienced by foster children are highlighted in the following sub-themes:

4.2.2.1. Emotional and Social challenges

The study findings divulged that foster children and key informants noted that social and emotional challenges are one of the challenges affecting the experiences of children in residential child care facilities. These are some of the response from participants:

“I experienced challenges in adjusting to a new school and making friends, some of the girls mocked me when I gave a wrong answer in class and they did not want to play with me.” (FDG Child 1).

To add more another research participants made the following remarks:

“It was difficult to make new friends and I had to return to the previous foster care to play with my old friends.” (FDG Child 4).

The research findings emphasized the challenges associated with relocation. One residential care facility had to move from Unit B to Unity A in Chitungwiza, requiring the children to switch schools, make new friends, and adapt to a different environment. This transition can significantly affect children both socially and emotionally. These results align with Worden (2005), who states that issues like frequent changes in living arrangements and caregivers who are unfamiliar and to whom the child has no emotional bond can lead to various psychological and emotional difficulties for foster children. Children in foster care often experience instability; regular changes in placements typically result in shifts in neighborhoods and schools, making it harder to maintain relationships and succeed academically (Okpych, 2012). Similarly, Krishnan (2010) points out that frequent changes in foster care placements can disrupt children's sense of stability and security. The experiences of children in foster care can influence their ability to reach developmental milestones, such as forming healthy attachments.

4.2.2.1.2. Lack of freedom

Children in foster care need freedom to explore, social, create new friends and share learning discussions with other children from outside the residential child care facility. Some of the participants from the study highlighted another issue of lack of freedom.

“I need freedom as auntie does not allow visit or socialize with peers and there to many restrictions.” (FGD Child 5).

Similarly another research participants made the following remarks:

“Our foster parent put across too many rules and regulations. It feels like we are living in a cage.” (FGD Child 7).

Additionally another research participants made the following remarks:

“Sometimes we have less freedom to make choices about daily lives and our lives are being controlled by others.” (FGD Child 2).

The findings also highlights that children in foster care experience a lack of freedom. This finding aligns with Nambi's (1997) study, as referenced in Binder (2004), which indicated that the collective and restrictive management style in foster care often confines children's physical, emotional, and social opportunities to engage with relatives and peers outside their foster families. Supporting this, Gasva and Mutanana (2016) note that many of the rules set by foster parents stem from good intentions aimed at ensuring the children's safety. However, these restrictions often arise from the foster parents' concerns that the children might encounter trouble outside the home, leading to foster children typically being required to stay indoors or at least within the confines of the yard. Consequently, it can be concluded that foster children in residential care facilities in Chitungwiza face significant challenges related to their lack of freedom during their time in such settings.

4.2.2.2. Educational challenges

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. The current study findings highlighted that foster children in Residential child care facilities face educational challenges.

4.2.2.2.1. Shortage of learning materials

From the study findings it is revealed that foster children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza lack learning resources that will enable them to excel in their studies. Some of the foster children highlighted that:

“I need to have access to personal textbooks to read at home and a cell phone for research purposes and for projects at school and to be available in groups were homework and other learning materials are sent.” (FGD Child 2)

Similarly another research participants made the following remarks:

“We need internet access to do homework and researches for school projects, sometimes our foster parent`s phone will not have bundle to do researches.” (FGD Child 8)

Moreover another research participants made the following remarks

“My school performance is always poor because I don`t have money to pay for extra lessons” (FGD Child1, 3 and 4).

The current study revealed that foster children expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of support available to help them effectively complete their schoolwork or prepare for exams, leading to consistently lower academic performance compared to their peers. According to Berridge and Cleaver (2013), this issue may also be attributed to the challenging economic conditions that hinder foster families' ability to cope. Foster children often lack the same resources as non-foster children. Additionally, Stott and Gustavsson (2010) note that online learning impacts foster children, indicating a need for more data to enhance online education for them. Furthermore, many foster children experience low intellectual capacity due to stress and depression, which contributes to their poor academic achievements. Common challenges faced by foster children include insufficient support and attachment to their foster parents, as well as limited access to assistance with schoolwork when they struggle, often because foster parents are busy with work or lack a strong emotional bond (Bertman, 2001).

4.2.2.2.2. Disruptions of learning due relocation

The research findings highlighted issues of disruptions of learning due relocation. One of the residential care facility had to relocate from Unit B to Unity A in Chitungwiza and, this in-turn affects children educationally.

Some of foster children further elaborates that:

“I became lost in education as other children at the school that I was enrolled in had covered other areas in the school curriculum and I ended up losing interest in school.” (FGD Child 11)

On a similar note another research participants made the following remarks:

“I had to leave my favourite teacher who understands me, at previous school I was doing some extra lessons for free and if I did not have a pen or an exercise book, the teacher will give me.” (FGD Child 6).

The findings indicate that the learning of foster children is negatively impacted by frequent relocations. According to the Legal Center for Foster Care and Education Uganda (2008), it is estimated that every time a child switches schools, typically due to moving from one foster home to another, they lose four to six months of academic progress. Foster children often experience instability; regular changes in their living situations frequently result in shifts in neighborhoods and schools, making it difficult for them to maintain relationships and achieve educational success (Okpych, 2012). These findings highlight that disruptions in learning caused by relocations are a significant challenge for foster children in residential care facilities in Chitungwiza.

4.2.2.3. Financial challenges

The study showed that one of the major challenge facing children is lack basic needs like adequate food and school stuff. Foster children and key informants highlighted these issues:

“We lack basic needs like adequate food and school stuff at our foster homes.” (FGD 6).

Similarly another research participants made the following remarks:

“There other educative activities done at school which needs money, like Educational tours and we will not be part of it, due to shortage of money.” (FGD 8).

In addition key informant of the study made the following remarks

“There is shortage of funds to care for the children as the foster care grand of US\$20 per month per child is not consistent. When you have a large number of children in your care and the responsibilities are also many and the resources are few, you will end being stressed and under pressure.” (Key informant 1)

The findings presented above clearly indicate that financial challenges are a significant challenge for foster children in care. This aligns with the research by Tanga, Khumalo, and Gutura (2017), which revealed that children in foster care often lack essential items such as food, clothing, and healthcare. The foster care grants provided are typically insufficient to support or supplement the family's existing income. Some foster parents reported that they struggle to meet their responsibilities in caring for the children due to the inconsistent monthly government assistance of only US\$20 per child. Similarly, Powel (2004) points out that the negative experiences faced by many foster children are often due to limited resources. Furthermore, given the current harsh economic conditions in the country, it has become increasingly challenging for many foster parents to provide all the basic necessities that children require daily (Stott and Gustavsson, 2010). These findings conclude that foster children in residential care facilities face financial challenges that may adversely affect their well-being.

4.2.2.4. Physical challenges

Physical and health challenges are also another significant challenge that foster children in Residential child care facilities face. Some of the participant from the study highlighted the of issue abuse due to disability:

“Some of the learners mocked me due to my disability and does not want to play with me and I also have a belief that my biological parents abandon me because of my disability.” (FGD Child 2).

Correspondingly another research participants made the following remarks:

“I feel frustrated when I can't do things like other children.” (FGD Child 12).

The research indicates that foster children with disabilities experience abuse, stigma, and isolation in school settings. This aligns with McLaughlin (2013), who notes that children with

disabilities in foster care are particularly vulnerable, encountering risks of maltreatment, social isolation, and an increased demand for healthcare services. Similarly, Hodder (2020) discovered that nearly half of the children in foster care have special healthcare needs, which may worsen if their foster parents are unable to address these needs. Additionally, foster children may encounter nutritional issues, including food insecurity, unhealthy eating habits, and dietary restrictions, and they may also experience abuse and isolation at school. Overall, these findings suggest that foster children in residential care facilities face abuse, isolation, and stigma due to their disabilities.

4.2.2.5. Health challenges

From the findings it is revealed that foster children experience difficulties in accessing medical care while at the foster care. These were different sentiments from foster children:

“I never had difficulties because when I have a headache or period pains, my foster parent bought painkillers for me. “(FGD Child, 12)

Similarly another research participants made the following remarks:

“When I was sick with tonsils I was not sent to any medical facility and when I had flue aunt prepare some natural remedies for me.” (FGD Child 6)

On a similar note key informant of the study had this to say:

“Often times when I take children to hospitals or clinics, they usually complained that the AMTO is rather no functional as the government is not paying for the health care services rendered through this scheme and because of this sometimes we will have to pay cash to get the children treated. Lack of finances makes it difficult for me to send children to private clinics and I use home remedies to treat minor illnesses” (Key Informant 1).

The above findings reveal that foster children residing in child care facilities in Chitungwiza face challenges in obtaining healthcare. Supporting this, Ringelsen, Casanueva, Urato, and Cross (2008) point out that children in foster care experience more chronic health issues, as well as behavioral, emotional, and developmental challenges compared to their peers. They further explain that foster children often require referrals to various specialists, including dentists, ophthalmologists, speech therapists, mental health professionals, and occupational and physical

therapists. However, the Assisted Medical Treatment Order, intended to help these children access medical care, is currently not being accepted by several hospitals and clinics. The research findings indicate that foster children in residential care facilities in Chitungwiza struggle to access healthcare services.

4.2.3. Theme 3. Strategies that can be implemented to improve the foster care system and protect foster children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.

There are a number of sub-themes that emerged to demonstrate the kind of social support services and strategies that can be implemented to improve the foster care system and protect foster children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza. The sub-themes that arose under this theme are presented and discussed below.

4.2.3.1. Counseling

Children's emotional and behavioral problems are a significant predictor of the success of foster care outcomes. In the current study, participants acknowledged that foster children needed counseling. They may be stressed due the challenges they face at the foster care facility. These were some of the response4s from key informants:

“Counselling helps me talk about my feelings and worries, and it makes me think that someone is there for me.” (FGD Child, 2)

In addition another research participants made the following remarks:

“I like talking to a counsellor because she doesn't judge me.”(FGD Child, 5)

On a similar note another key informant of the study had this to say:

“I need counseling in my life. I have a lot of challenges that needs counseling. For example when you have a large number of children in your care and it is your responsibility to provide the needs of the children, sometimes you will end up not providing for the needs of children.” (Key informant 1)

The study findings indicate that both children and foster parents require counseling. This is supported by Phaka (2015), who states that offering additional support services, such as mental health counseling, helps foster children and their caregivers thrive. These services assist foster

parents and the children in their care in managing and overcoming the difficulties they encounter while providing care. Moreover, Human Rights Watch (2014) emphasizes that counseling and therapy are essential for supporting the emotional and mental well-being of children in foster care, aiding them in dealing with the challenges and trauma they may have faced. Additionally, Mnisi and Botha (2016) point out that the poor health of foster parents can adversely impact their interactions with their foster children. The research findings highlight that foster children in residential care facilities also require counseling services to help them cope with and overcome the challenges they face while living in foster care.

4.2.3.2. Financial support

The research findings revealed that foster children and foster parents need financial support to improve the foster care system in residential child care facilities. These were some of the responses from participants:

“I need money for food, uniforms, school bags, school shoes and stationary.” (FGD Child, 4)

Similarly another research participant made the following remarks:

“I also want to go on school trips, but they cost a lot of money and I also need money to pay for extra lessons.” (FGD Child, 11)

Furthermore another research participant made the following remarks:

“I feel like I’m different from other children at school because I have different things from them and it really affects me.” (FGD Child, 12)

Correspondingly another key informant had this to say:

“The help of money is important, because foster care grant is not enough to cater for the financial needs of the foster children each child is given an amount equivalent to \$20usd in local currency, which is not enough to cater for the needs of children and the donors are few ”(Key informant 1)

Moreover another key informant had this to say:

“The government needs to do more to assist foster parents because the foster care grants are inconsistent.” (Key informant 2)

The research results indicated that financial constraints are the main challenge encountered by foster parents and foster children. It was also found that foster care grants, when converted to local currency, may be diminished by inflation and might not be sufficient to meet the basic needs of children. These findings align with those of Tanga, Khumalo, and Gutura (2017), who argue that the inability to secure adequate finances for children's needs is a key reason why foster parents often struggle to fulfill their responsibilities. Similarly, a study by Van Deventer and Wright (2017) revealed that in Zimbabwe, caregivers faced difficulties and were reluctant to take on additional children due to poverty and insufficient financial assistance. The research highlights that foster children in residential care facilities require financial support to manage and overcome the challenges they encounter while in foster care.

4.2.3.3. Community awareness and support

Foster children suggested that community awareness and support improve the foster care system in residential child care facilities. There is need for the community to help foster children in foster care to improve their well-being. Foster children elaborated that:

“I think it would be good if children in school understand what it is like to be living in foster care” (FGD Child, 2).

Similarly another research participants made the following remarks:

“I like to participate in church events because my foster parent has taught me to be prayerful.” FGD Child, 8).

Additionally another research participants made the following remarks:

“I wish to be well up in life so that I may help other foster children in foster care accessing education and basic needs.” (FGD Child, 7).

The findings indicate that community awareness and support play a vital role in the lives of foster children by offering assistance, resources, services, emotional backing, and role models.

Höjer et al. (2013) emphasize that foster care is a collective responsibility. Public awareness, volunteer involvement, and community engagement are crucial for the success of foster care programs. By understanding and supporting these initiatives, the community contributes to creating a nurturing and inclusive society. Additionally, Human Rights Watch (2014) notes that several countries have experienced the positive effects of awareness-raising activities on the implementation of foster care programs. For instance, in Japan, municipalities that embraced foster care and recognized its advantages over residential care saw higher rates of foster placements. The study findings suggest that by providing community support, we can positively influence the lives of foster children, as demonstrated by the thriving residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.

4.2.3.4. Life skills programs

The research findings revealed that children need foster care need to be taught life skills to prepare them for future.

“I want to learn how to save money and budget it would help me when I grow older.” (FGD Child, 7).

Similarly another research participants made the following remarks:

“We have learnt hygiene, discipline, prayerfulness and sewing from our foster parent.” (FGD Child, 10)

In addition another research participants made the following remarks:

“I want to learn skill that will help me secure a job when I am older.” (FGD Child, 9)

The findings indicate that while children have acquired various life skills from their foster parents, they still require additional training from specialized individuals to better prepare them for the future. McLaughlin (2013) emphasizes that foster children often lack essential life skills and the necessary preparation for independence. Key life skills that should be taught include the importance of hard work, responsibility, hygiene, discipline, prayerfulness, organizational skills, as well as practical skills like sewing, making bangles, knitting, and tailoring. Additionally, Forber-Pratt et al. (2013) highlight the importance of children developing life skills during their formative years. In this study, children reported learning skills from their foster families, such as

cooking, washing dishes, and understanding the value of hard work. Furthermore, UNICEF (2020) points out that in countries like Zimbabwe, children in residential care participate in gardening and carpentry programs. These findings underscore the necessity of providing life skills training to foster children to promote their independence and prepare them for future careers.

4.2.3.5. Policy Reforms

The research findings revealed that there is need to change policies, sometimes these policies are hindering living conditions of children in foster care. These are some of the response from foster children and key informants:

“My foster parent is a good person sometimes we can feel she stressed when we are facing financial problems.” (FGD Child, 5)

On a similar note another research participants made the following remarks:

“I have a fear of what will happen when I leave foster care, will I still be helped.” (FGD Child, 2)

Furthermore another key informant had this to say:

“A child cannot benefit from social grants while being on a place of safety unless they have a court order, and these are most cases where a child is removed from a harmful environment and placed temporary in foster care facilities waiting for the final decision on where to place the child. In addition to improve the quality of foster care, the government needs to engage with foster parents, social workers, and child care professionals about what works, what does not, and how things can be improved.” (Key informant 2)

Additionally another key informant made the following remarks:

“When there is a donor who wants to assists, I refer them to the DSD so as to provide a thorough assessment which is according to the law, sometimes the donors will not want to follow the long process when they want to assist and they will end up not offering assistance. There is also need for the government to revise this AMTO order so that children can get the medical attention they need, when they need it, without hindrance.” (Key informant 1)

This research highlights significant issues within the Foster Care system that require attention, emphasizing the importance of policy reforms in enhancing the lives of children in foster care. One major concern is the lack of support for children transitioning out of the system. According to Peter (2011), when children legally age out of foster care at 18, they are often left without a support network to help them establish a stable life. Reilly (2003) further notes that many children exiting foster care are unprepared for independent living, which can lead to negative outcomes such as involvement in prostitution, drug abuse, crime, and, in severe cases, suicide. The current study aligns with the views of Hong et al. (2015), who argue that the policies, practices, and support from foster care agencies significantly impact children's experiences and outcomes. Similarly, Hayes et al. (2017) point out that laws and regulations governing child welfare and foster care can shape the experiences of children in these systems. Additionally, the Health Care assistance policy needs to be reevaluated, as the Assisted Medical Treatment Order, intended to facilitate access to medical care for children, is not being accepted by many hospitals and clinics. The findings indicate that policy reforms are crucial for improving the welfare of children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.

4.3. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings of the study and discuss the findings. The findings were discussed in line with the literature review from Chapter 2 of the study and the theoretical framework. The data for this study was analysed using the thematic analysis method. The following chapter closes the study as it focuses on the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a summary of a research study that investigates the phenomenological experiences of children living in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza, offering an in-depth analysis of their lived experiences. It concludes with recommendations for various stakeholders and implications for social work practices based on the findings related to the experiences of foster children.

5.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The research is structured into five chapters aimed at understanding the phenomenological experiences of children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza. The first chapter introduces the research, outlining its background and emphasizing the focus on the experiences of these children. It also states the study's objectives, which include identifying available resources and support systems for children in residential care, assessing the challenges faced by foster children, and proposing strategies to enhance their well-being. Chapter two reviews relevant literature on the phenomenological experiences of children in residential care and discusses the theoretical framework guiding the study, specifically Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. This theory offers a comprehensive perspective on the intricate interactions between foster children and their environments, highlighting how these relationships influence development over time. Chapter three details the research methodology, explaining the data collection methods and analysis procedures used to explore the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care in Chitungwiza. Chapter four presents the data collected through interviews and focus group discussions, analyzing and discussing the findings based on themes derived from the research objectives and questions.

5.2.1. Resources and support systems that are available to children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.

This study indicates that foster children in residential care facilities in Chitungwiza receive resources and support from the government and various organizations. They benefit from emotional support through initiatives like Friendship Bench, Ndinewe Children's Trust, and school-based guidance and counseling clubs, which provide therapeutic and counseling services. These services are essential for delivering effective care and support to foster children. The

findings also show that these children receive basic education funded by government programs such as BEAM, which covers school fees and uniforms, as well as support from organizations like SOS, Mavambo Trust, and Shungu Dzevana. Financial assistance is another form of support available to foster children in these facilities. Foster care grants are allocated through the national budget via the child welfare fund, as stipulated by the Children's Act. Each child receives a foster care grant, and additional financial support comes from various organizations, including Shungu Dzevana Trust Children's Home and SOS Children's Village, which run foster programs that provide children with essential needs, education, psychosocial support, and a stable environment. Community support is also crucial for the welfare of foster children, with assistance coming from churches and local networks. The findings suggest that many foster children are content living with their foster parents, feeling they are treated better than by their biological parents, with some expressing a desire to remain in foster care.

5.2.2. Challenges faced by foster children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.

The study findings reveal that children in residential care facilities in Chitungwiza face numerous challenges that affect their psychological well-being. It was noted by both foster children and key informants that social and emotional difficulties are significant challenges impacting the experiences of these children. Foster children often experience instability due to frequent changes in placements, which can lead to shifts in neighborhoods and schools, making it hard to maintain relationships and achieve educational success.

The current study emphasized that foster children reported insufficient support for their schoolwork and exam preparation, resulting in consistently poorer academic performance compared to their peers. Additionally, children in foster care typically lack the same resources available to non-foster children. The study also highlighted that the value of foster care grants in local currency can diminish due to inflation, often falling short of meeting the basic needs of the children. A lack of finances to fulfill the needs of children is central to foster parents usually failing to carry out their responsibilities. Some foster parents highlighted that, due to the harsh economic conditions that are currently prevailing in the country, often times they are left incapacitated to fulfill their mandate of providing for the children under their care, as the monthly assistance from the government which is pegged at US\$20 per month per child only is not consistent.

Physical and health challenges represent a significant issue for foster children in residential care facilities in Chitungwiza. Research indicates that foster children with disabilities experience abuse, stigma, and isolation in school settings. These children are particularly vulnerable, facing a heightened risk of maltreatment, social isolation, and an increased demand for healthcare services. The findings also highlight that foster children often struggle to access necessary healthcare, frequently requiring referrals to specialists such as dentists, ophthalmologists, speech therapists, mental health professionals, and occupational and physical therapists. Additionally, it was found that the Assisted Medical Treatment Order, intended to facilitate access to medical care for children, is not being accepted by many hospitals and clinics.

5.2.3. Strategies that can be implemented to improve the foster care systems and protect foster children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza.

Several social support services and strategies can be implemented to enhance the foster care system and protect children in residential care facilities. The study's findings indicate that both children and foster parents require counseling. Counseling and therapy are vital for supporting the emotional and mental health of children in foster care, helping them cope with the challenges and trauma they may have faced. These services assist foster parents and the children in their care in managing and overcoming the difficulties they encounter.

The research suggests that increasing community awareness and support can significantly improve the foster care system in residential facilities. The findings emphasize the importance of community involvement in the lives of foster children, offering them assistance, resources, services, emotional support, and positive role models. The research also indicates that foster children need to be taught life skills to prepare them for the future. While they have learned various skills from their foster parents, there is still a need for specialized instruction to further equip them for life ahead.

The research identified central issues within the foster care system that require attention, and it highlights the importance of policy reforms in enhancing the lives of children in foster care. There is a need to revise certain policies that may be negatively impacting the living conditions of these children. Specifically, the government should reconsider the AMTO order to ensure that children can receive the medical care they need promptly and without obstacles.

5.3. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this research was written to respond to the research questions. It brought to light the phenomenological experiences of children in residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza. The following conclusions were drawn.

The purpose of residential child care facilities is to deliver high-quality services to children in need, fostering healing, growth, and a hopeful future. Research indicates that foster children in residential care in Chitungwiza benefit from resources and support from the government and various organizations. This support encompasses emotional, educational, financial, and community assistance. Additionally, it has been found that children in these facilities often develop positive relationships with their foster parents. Berridge and Cleaver (2013) also emphasize that well-managed foster care can provide orphans and other vulnerable children with the opportunity to grow up in nurturing environments, enhancing their chances for healthy development.

However, children in foster care face numerous challenges that affect their psychological well-being. These challenges lead to negative experiences for children in residential care in Chitungwiza, including emotional, educational, financial, and health-related issues. Many of the adverse experiences encountered by foster children stem from limited resources or neglect by some foster parents (Powel, 2004). Additionally, economic difficulties and other internal factors within foster families mean that not every child receives the attention they need and deserve, further exacerbating the psychological harm to these children, which can hinder their normal growth and development (Stott and Gustavsson, 2010).

To tackle these issues, various stakeholders, such as policymakers, child welfare agencies, and advocacy groups, have introduced strategies aimed at enhancing the foster care system and safeguarding foster children. These strategies include counseling, financial assistance, community awareness initiatives, life skills training, and policy reforms designed to improve the foster care system. For foster care programs to be effective, it is essential for government officials, alternative care providers, NGOs, families, community members, law enforcement, healthcare professionals, teachers, and anyone else involved with the child to understand the potential benefits and risks of foster care, as well as to work towards dispelling misconceptions and stigma associated with it (Forber-Pratt et al., 2013).

5.4. IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

The research on the experiences of children in residential care facilities in Chitungwiza has important implications for social work practice. The Department of Social Development and other stakeholders should launch extensive community awareness campaigns to combat the stigma surrounding children in foster care and highlight the needs of those in residential facilities. Social workers could facilitate support groups for foster parents to discuss challenges and share strategies for improving their relationships with foster children. Social workers to offer counseling services to foster children and foster parents to help them cope with and overcome the challenges they face while living in foster care. Policies, frameworks, and societal values significantly impact the well-being of these children, and social workers should advocate for reforms to address policies and laws that negatively affect children in foster care, as some of these regulations can worsen their living conditions.

5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Informed by findings, the following recommendations were made to the following:

5.5.1.Foster parents

The study recommends that:

- Foster parents should be patient and understanding, recognizing that children may require time to adapt to their new surroundings and to build trust.
- Psychological support should be provided to both foster children and parents to help maintain good mental health and cope with the challenges of living in residential care.
- Foster parents should receive effective training to equip them with the skills necessary to provide quality care to the children.

5.5.2.DSD / Ministry

The study recommends that:

- Social workers conduct timely home visits to monitor foster care placements and the living conditions in residential facilities.

- Social workers should implement community education programs about foster care and the challenges faced by children in these situations to encourage more people to assist them.
- Policies should be developed that prioritize the needs and well-being of children, ensuring that foster care programs promote their rights and incorporate insights from this study
- The government should allow NGOs to provide support and care for foster children in residential facilities with minimal interference.
- The government should increase foster care grants to align with current economic challenges.

5.5.3.Civil Society Organization

Civil societies organizations are advocates of social justice, thus the following recommendations were suggested:

- Advocate for policy changes that prioritize the needs and well-being of children.
- Provide skills and resources to empower foster children, preparing them for independent living after leaving foster care.
- The findings may inspire civic organizations and donors to support effective foster care arrangements that promote the healthy development of these children

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCHERS

- The findings are anticipated to enhance the existing knowledge on fostering and serve as a foundation for future research by highlighting areas that require further investigation and aiding scholars in conducting advanced research aimed at improving the experiences of children in foster care.
- The researcher used qualitative method, for future study the researcher suggest the integration of qualitative approach to check the extend of the challenges and expectations of situations in residential child care facilities.

REFERENCES

- Agyarko, R.D (2007). *The Impact of HIV and AIDS on younger people in Africa*. Geneva. World Health Organisation
- Amankwaa, L. (2016). *Creating protocols for trustworthiness in qualitative research*. Journal of Cultural Diversity, 23(1):121-127.
- Avery, R. J. (2010). An examination of theory and promising practice for achieving permanency for teens before they age out of foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32, 399– 408. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.10.011>.
- Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh (2009). *Introduction to Research in Education*. (8thEd). Amazon Books. Belmont.
- Berrick, J. D. (2006). Neighborhood-based foster care: A critical examination of location-based placement criteria. *Social Service Review*, 80(4), 569-583
- Bertman, S. L. (2001). *Caring for Foster Children*. New York. Baywood Publishing Company Inc.
- Berridge, D., & Cleaver, H. (2013). *Foster Home Breakdown*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Binder, L.M. (2004). *Children and the Development of Emotional problems*. Chichester. John Wiley and Sons.
- Bostock, L. (2004) Resource guide 6: *Promoting resilience in fostered children and young people*. London, UK: Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)
- Bower, C. (2014). *Initial complementary report to the African Committee of Experts in response to South Africa's initial country report on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child*. Cape Town: Parliamentary Programme of the Community Law Centre

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard university press.
- Brown, H. C., Sebba, J., & Luke, N. (2014). *The role of the supervising social worker in foster care: an international literature review*. Oxford: University of Oxford. Rees Centre for Research in Fostering and Education.
- Dawadi, S. (2020). Thematic analysis approach: A step by step guide for ELT research practitioners. *Journal of NELTA*, 25(1-2), 62-71.
- Carroll, K. (2002). *The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 and the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program: Technical Assistance Brief*. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges: Reno, NV.
- Casale, M., Wild, L., & Kuo, C. (2013). ‘‘They give us hope’’: *HIV-positive caregivers’ perspectives on the role of social support for health*. *AIDS care*, 25(10):1203-1209.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K (2007). *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Cohen, L, Manion, L, & Morrison, K (2011). Surveys, longitudinal, cross-sectional and trend studies. *Research Methods in Education*, 7th edition. Abingdon: Routledge, 261-264.
- Connelly, N. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research. *Medical-surgical nursing: official journal of the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses*, 25(6):435-436.
- Cope, G.D. (2014). Methods and Meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(1):89-91.
- Courtney, M.E., Lee, J., & Perez, A. (2011). Receipt of help acquiring life skills and predictors

- of help receipt among current and former foster youth. *Children and youth services Review*, 33(12), 2442-2451.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. (4th Ed.). Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2022). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th Ed.). Sage.
- Dawada, S. (2020). *Thematic Analysis Approach: A Step by Step Guide for ELT Research Practitioners*. ELTA Journal 2020
- DeVos, A. S., Strydom, H., Fouche, C B., and Delport, C. S. L. (2014). *Research at grassroots for the social sciences and human services professions* (4th Ed). Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Fernandez, E., & Barth, R. P. (2010). *How does foster care work: International evidence on outcomes*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Fisher, P. A. (2013). *Early adverse care, stress neurobiology, and prevention science: Lessons learned*. *Prevention Science*, 14(3), 247–256
- Fu, F., Luix. And Zhou, S., (2022). Research on Outdoor Space Design Strategy of SOS Children's Village. Based on Psychology of Troubled Children. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10, p.870288.
- Forber-Pratt, I., Loo, S., Price, S. and Acharya, J. (2013) Foster care in India: An exploratory

- survey of the community perceptions prospects for implementation of foster care in a developing nation: A study in Udaipur, Rajasthan, India. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35.
- Gasva, D and Mutanana, N. (2016). *An Exploration of the Challenges faced by Foster Children in Hwange District of Matabeleland North Province in Zimbabwe: Quest for Improved Care for Children in Foster Care*. North Asian International Research Journal of Social Science & Humanities ISSN: 2454-9827 Vol. 2, Issue 4 April 2016
- Gono, M. (2015). *The Experiences, challenges and coping resources of AIDS orphans heading households in an urban Aarea in the Free State*. Pretoria, University of South Africa (MSc Mini Dissertation).
- Hair, J F (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis*. Pearson College Division.
- Haugaard, J.J., & Hazan, C. (2012). Recognizing the Treating Uncommon Behavioral and Emotional Disorders in Children and Adolescents Who Have Been Severely Maltreated: Reactive Attachment Disorder. *In Child Maltreatment: A Collection of Readings*, (pp. 286-295) SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Hayes, A.F., & Rockwood, N.J (2017). Regression-based statistical mediation and moderation analysis in clinical research: Observations, recommendations, and implementation. *Behaviour research and implementation. Bhaviour research and therapy*, 98, 39-57.
- Höjer, I., Sebba, J. and Luke, N. (2013). *The impact of fostering on foster carerers' children-an international literature review acknowledgements*. University of Oxford. Rees center.
- Hong, J. S., Algood, C. L., Chiu, Y. L., & Lee, S. A. P. (2011). An ecological understanding of kinship foster care in the United States. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 20(6), 863-872.
- Human Rights Watch (2014) *without dreams: Children in alternative care in Japan*. USA:

Human Rights Watch.

Jackson, D. and Marx, G., December 3, 2014, *Ten years in residential treatment: One girl's story*, Chicago Tribune, Retrieved from <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-youth-treatmentcleanna-m>

Kelly, J. (2020). Feds lay out minimum expectations for child welfare courts during coronavirus. Chronicle of Social Change. <https://chronicleofsocialchange.org/youth-services-insider/feds-lay-out-minimum-expectations-for-child-welfarecourt>.

Krishnan, A.,(2010). Product scent and memory. *Journal of consumer research*, 37(1), 57-67.

Lamminen, L.M, (2020). *Practice Innovations*, Vol, 5, No 1, 2020.

Martin. P. (2010). *Government-funded programmes and services for vulnerable children in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Martinez, R. (2012) *Study on the process and implementation of the Foster Care Program aimed at improving family reunification of children and adolescents*. New York: UNICEF

McGoron, L., Gleason, M. M., Smyke, A. T., Drury, S. S., Nelson, C. A., Gregas, M. C., Zeanah, C. H. (2012). *Recovering from early deprivation: Attachment mediates effects of caregiving on psychopathology*. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 51, 683–693. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2012.05.004>

McLaughlin, L. (2013). *New law extends foster age to 21*. *The Daytona Beach News Journal*. Retrieved June 6, 2013 from <http://www.daytonanewsjournal.com>.

McMillan, J. H. (2012). *Educational research: Fundamentals for the consumer*. Boston: Pearson.

Mmusi, F. I., Malan, H., & Herbst, A. (2022). Parenting behavior and attitudes of a group of

- South African foster parents caring for adolescents presenting with risk behavior. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 1-12.
- Mnisi, R., & Botha, P. (2016). Factors contributing to the breakdown of foster care placements: the perspectives of foster parents and adolescents. *Social Work*, 52(2), 227-244.
- Moon, K., Brewer, T. D., Januchowski-Hartley, S. R., Adams, V. M., & Blackman, D. A. (2016). *A Guideline to improve qualitative social science publishing in ecology and conservation journals*. *Ecology and society*, 21(3):1-20.
- Mutanana, N., & Gasva, D. (2016). Challenges Affecting the School Retention of the Girl Child in Hurungwe District of Mashonaland West Prince in Zimbabwe. *North Asian International Research Journal of Multidisciplinary*, 2(9), 1-16.
- Nambi, J. (1997). The psychological effect of orphanhood: a study of orphans in Rakai district. *Health transition review*, 105-124.
- Nowell, L. S. Norris¹, J. M., White D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). *Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria*. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16, 1–13.
- Okpych, N. (2012). Policy framework supporting youth aging out of foster care through college: Review and recommendations. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(7), 1390-1396.
- Peter, J. (2011). *Improving Family Foster Care*. New York: Sage Publications Inc.
- Phaka, M.E. (2015). *The experiences of elderly women (Gogothers) in assisting orphans and vulnerable children in affected by HIV and AIDS at Musina in the Limpopo Province*. Pretoria, University of South Africa (MSc Mini-Dissertation).
- Powel, G.M. (2004). *The Care of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in Southern Africa*. Pretoria. UBE
- Punch, K.F.(2009). *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative approaches*.

London:Sage.

Ringelsen, H., Casanueva, C., Urato, M. & Cross, T. (2008). *Special health care needs among children in the child welfare system*. Pediatrics 122(1).

Roller, M.R., & Lavrakas, P.J. (2018). A total quality framework approach to sharing qualitative research data: Comment on Dubois et al. *Qualitative Psychology*, 5(3):394– 401.

Shelton, L.J., (2019). Undocumented Latinx college students perceptions of campus climate. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 56(1). Pp.92-104.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2015). Interpretative phenomenological analysis as a useful methodology for research on the lived experience of pain. *British Journal of Pain*, 9(1), 41-42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2049463714541642>

Scott, T., & Gustavsson, N. (2010). Balancing permanency and stability for youth in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32, 619–625. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.12.009>

Strebel, A. (2004). *The development, implementation and evaluation of interventions for the care of orphans and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe*, Capetown : HSRC Press

Stukes Chipungu, S., & Bent-Goodley, T. B. (2004). Meeting the challenges of contemporary foster care. *The future of children*, 75-93.

Tanga, P. T., Khumalo, P., and Gutura, P. (2017). Three decades of HIV/AIDS pandemic: Challenges faced by orphans in Tembisa, South Africa. In N Dumais (Ed.), *HIV/AIDS—Contemporary challenges*. Croatia: Intech.

Tracy, J.S. (2013). Qualitative research methods. *Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact.1st ed*. U.K: Wiley Blackwell.

UNICEF. (2020). *Every child is protected from violence and exploitation, global annual results report. Innocenti publications.* UNICEF office of research - Innocenti, Florence.

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research Health (2024). DATA Program – *Data, Advocacy and Technical Assistance.*

White, E.G. (2002). *Child Guidance*, Hargetown, MD : Review and Hearld Publishing Association

LIST OF APENDICES

Appendix 1

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

P. Bag 1020
BINDURA, Zimbabwe
Tel: 263 - 71 7531-5, 7623-4
Fax: 263 - 71 7534

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Date: 24 April 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to introduce the learner, Polite Buluwa Mawo,
Registration Number B213272B, who is a BSc Social Work student at
Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in
your organisation.

May you please assist the student to access data relevant to the study, and where
possible, conduct interviews as part of a data collection process.

Yours faithfully


S.E. CHIKWOTO
CHAMPION

11 APR 2025

Appendix 2

Official communications should
Not be addressed to individuals

Telephone: 703711 / 790721-4
Harare



ZIMBABWE

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR AND SOCIAL
WELFARE
Compensation House
Cnr S.V Muzenda and Central Avenue
HARARE

23 APRIL 2025

POLITE R. MUSEVE(B213272B)
BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

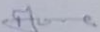
REF: LETTER OF APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY
TITLED 'THE PHENOMENOLOGY EXPERIENCE OF CHILDREN
IN FOSTER CARE. A CASE STUDY OF RESIDENTIAL CHILDCARE
FACILITIES IN CHITUNGWIZA.

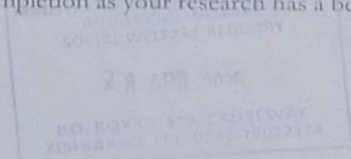
Receipt of your letter with the above mentioned matter is acknowledged.

Please be advised that permission is hereby granted for you to carry out research
titled 'The phenomenology experience of children in foster care. A case
study of residential childcare facilities in Chitungwiza.'

Permission is granted **STRICTLY** on condition that the research is for academic
purposes only in pursuit of your BSc Honours 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.


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



Appendix 3

CONSENT FORM

My name is Polite Rukudzo Museve and I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education studying towards an Honors Degree in Social Work. I am carrying out research entitled, the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care. A case study of residential childcare facilities in Chitungwiza. This study is being carried out in partial fulfillment of my study. Please be assured that the information you provide shall be used for academic purposes only.

1. Your participation in this research is voluntary as you will not be forced to participate.
2. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time.
3. Your personal information will be kept confidential.
4. Your identity will not be disclosed to ensure anonymity.
5. You will receive no payment for participating in this study.
6. Your participation in this study is of paramount importance in assisting other children living in foster care.

Ihave read and fully understood the purpose of the study and I agree to participate.

.....

.....

Signature (participant)

Date

Appendix 4

Tool 1: Focus group discussions guide

Introduction

My name is Polite RukudzoMuseve and I am a student with the Bindura University of Science Education studying towards an Honors Degree in Social Work. I am carrying out research entitled, the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care. A case study of residential child care facilities in Chitungwiza. I am kindly asking you to participate in this survey by answering the questions below. Your responses shall be strictly handled with confidentiality they so deserve.

1. What kind of support do you feel you need most while living in residential child care facility?
2. Are there any resources or services that you have found particularly helpful during your time in residential child care facility?
3. What do you wish you had more access to or support with while living in residential child care facility?
4. What challenges do you encounter while living in the residential child care facility?
5. How do you usually get help when you are struggling with something in your residential child care facility?
6. Have you experienced any challenge in adjusting to a new school or community?
7. Have you ever experienced disruptions in your education due to placement changes or other factors?
8. Have you experienced difficulties in accessing medical care while in residential child care facility?
9. What had been the most difficult part of living in residential child care facility you find?
10. What are the strategies that can be implemented to improve your well-being in the residential child care facility?

Appendix 5

Tool: An in-depth interview guide for selected key informants.

Introduction

My name is Polite RukudzoMuseve and I am a student with the Bindura University of Science Education studying towards an Honors Degree in Social Work. I am carrying out research entitled, the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care. A case study of residential childcare facilities in Chitungwiza. I am kindly asking you to participate in this survey by answering the questions below. Your responses shall be strictly handled with confidentiality they so deserve.

1. What kind of resource or services are typically available to children in residential child care facility?
2. What are some common challenges you have observed among children residential child care facility?
3. How do you access the needs of children in foster care and development plans to address them?
- 4, Are there any systemic or structural challenges that hinder your ability to provide effective support to children in residential child care facility?
5. What are the strategies that can be implemented to improve well-being of children in the residential child care facility?

Appendix 6

Tool: An in-depth interview guide for selected key informants.

Introduction

My name is Polite Rukudzo Museve and I am a student with the Bindura University of Science Education studying towards an Honors Degree in Social Work. I am carrying out research entitled, the phenomenological experiences of children in foster care. A case study of residential childcare facilities in Chitungwiza. I am kindly asking you to participate in this survey by answering the questions below. Your responses shall be strictly handled with confidentiality they so deserve.

1. What kind of support do you feel you need to better care for a foster children in residential child care facility?
2. What kind of emotional support or guidance do you offer to the children in your care?
3. How you access resources or services for the children in your care?
4. What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced in providing care for a foster children?
5. How do you handle behavioural or emotional challenges exhibited by a foster child?
6. What are the strategies that can be implemented to improve well-being of children in the residential child care facility?