EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING FOSTER CARE BACKLOGS AT BOTLOKWA IN CAPRICORN DISTRICT OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE

By

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RESEARCH DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

in the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
(School of Social Sciences)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

SUPERVISOR: DR S.F RAPHOLO

2020

DECLARATION

I, Agnold Masilo Mokgalapa, declare that this document is my own work and that all sources that I have quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Mokgalapa Agnold Masilo   Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the following important people in my life:

- My Mother, Beauty Moyahabo Mokgalapa for the role that she has played in my life from infancy through to when I reached a point where I can stand for myself. She taught me that education is power and encouraged and supported me to go to school and to be educated.
- To my grandmother, Moloko Ramohlola for the continuous support she showed me throughout my studies and taught me that education is the key to success.
- To my trio aunties, Dr Kholo Ramarope, Winnie and Lady Jane Ramohlola, for their love and unwavering support they showed me and continue to show me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank all people who contributed to making this research study possible. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the contributions made by:

- The Lord, for providing me with the strength, wisdom and persistence to deliver this dissertation;
- My supervisor, Dr S.F Rapholo, who encouraged and guided me unwaveringly; without him I would have never started and ended this research study;
- Miss Mafa Prudence for proofreading;
- Mr Matlakala Frans for technical assistance;
- The Department of Social Department for granting me permission to collect data on their premises;
- The language editor, Prof SJ Kubayi.

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ABSTRACT

Foster care is the best method of alternative care for children that need care and protection. It offers children an atmosphere and environment that recognise their economic, social, educational, health and cultural needs without discrimination. The fundamental objective of foster care is to make sure children are protected and grow up in a safe and healthy environment. Notwithstanding the positive impact that comes with it, it has been confirmed worldwide that foster care suffers from serious deficiencies to an extent that the rights of children are compromised. The Department of Social Development is no exception to foster care backlogs, which result in foster care placement applications accumulating and families' quality of life being affected and compromised. Social workers are inundated with high caseloads on a daily basis. The study employed qualitative and collective case study design. The non-probability, convenient sampling technique was followed to select twelve statutory social workers at Botlokwa Department of Social Development satellites. Out of these social workers, eight were female and four were male. Data was collected by means of literature review and semi-structured in-depth interviews guided by an interview schedule with open-ended questions. The data was analysed thematically with the help of the Nvivo programme. The study unearthed factors such as shortage of social workers, social auxiliary workers and supervisors, system deficiencies within the children's court fraternity, insufficient tools of trade, multiple work responsibilities and lack of cooperation from clients as contributing to foster care backlogs. The findings also revealed that in order to cope with these backlogs, some social workers engage in unethical conducts such as comforting clients with lies and not attending to foster care files. Instead, they write process notes and use their own resources to execute their roles and help one another to deal with the backlogs. Therefore, it is recommended that specialisation in foster care, foster care file audit, hiring more social workers, effective working relationship between foster care stakeholders, adopting a computerised reminder system for files due for review, convenient court dates and amendment of form 30 and the advertisement of unknown fathers can be efficient measures to mitigate foster care not only at Botlokwa, but also within the Department of Social Development nationwide. The researcher therefore concludes that foster care backlogs within social work offices is real, and that to curb it requires collaborative efforts

by role players, particularly the Department of Social Development and the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development.

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of child protection is prevailing across the globe. Every child has the right to be provided with a safe and secure environment. Section 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (SA, 1996), state that children need special protection because they are among the most vulnerable members of society. They are dependent on others, their parents and families or the state when these fails, for care and protection. South Africa as a nation has an obligation to value, respect and protect this right. Gelders (2011) states that in South Africa only, one in three children live with both biological parents. There are several factors contributing to the high number of vulnerable children and orphans in the country. One of the main factors is the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which has a great influence in the increased statistics of vulnerable children and orphans. Moreover, an estimated number of 1.9 million children have lost one or both parents due to HIV/AIDS. According to Halkett, (2003), given the high number of destitute children because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, substitute care for children who require protection is necessary. Therefore, social workers are the hope of all the destitute children across the streets of South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2009).

In South Africa, many social workers are employed by the Department of Social Development (DSD). These social workers, among other things, implement the policies and programmes that are, for example, targeting social injustices such as the eradication of poverty, unemployment and HIV/AIDS. The demand for social services in South Africa is overwhelming. Social workers cannot fully meet this demand due to lack of capacity. According to the Department of Social Development (2009), the lack of capacity within the social work fraternity is because social workers do not last longer in the profession. Some move to the private sector while others go oversees to other professions.

In order to adequately tackle the social phenomenon of vulnerable children and orphans caused by HIV/AIDS, there is a need for a good working relationship between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development to thoroughly screen and appoint suitable foster parents who will take care of such children legally so. However, social workers face a challenge of supervising foster care placement as stipulated in Section 46 (f) of the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 as amended (SA, 2005). This is due to a high workload as they provide generic social work services to the communities. This results in many foster care cases lapsing and later becoming a backlog, which is also a challenge that the Department of Social Development is currently facing.

1.2 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The concepts below have the following meaning in this study:

1.2.1 Backlog

Collins English Dictionary (2002) define backlog as the work that has not being finished and still needs to be given due consideration. Therefore, in this study, a backlog refers to cases which have not been attended to within a period of six months, including lapsed court orders.

1.2.2 Child

According the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 as amended (SA, 2005), a child is any person under the age of 18. On the other hand, the Child Justice Act No. 75 of 2008 (SA, 2008) defines a child as any person under the age of 18 years and, in some situations, means a person who is 18 years or older but under the age of 21 years. For the purpose of this study, the definition of the Child Justice Act was adopted.

1.2.3 Foster care

Foster care, according to Section 180 of the Children's Act No. 28 of 2005 as amended (SA, 2005), is defined as the placement of a child in need of care and protection to any

person who is not the biological parent. This is a result of an order from children's courts. Therefore, this study adopted this definition.

1.2.4 Social Worker

Social worker refers to a duly registered person authorised in terms of the Social Service Profession Act to practise the profession of social work, as stipulated in act No.110 of 1978 (SA,1978). In this study, the abovementioned definition will be used.

1.3 MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

The researcher was motivated to conduct this study after having practised as a social worker in Botlokwa One Stop Centre in Capricorn District, Limpopo Province wherein he noticed that foster care court orders lapse predominantly. This is sometimes due to the social workers' workload as they practise generic social work. So far, there have not been strategies in the Department of Social Development to address this problem and as a result, many children are affected and their best interest is compromised. To this point, the researcher developed interest to engage in research about foster care backlogs in Botlokwa.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The HIV/AIDS pandemic orphaned an overwhelming number of children not only in South Africa, and therefore the demand for alternative care in the form of foster care escalated to a shocking degree. This situation makes the backlog worse particularly in the processing of applications of foster care, and as a result, the best interests of the children is compromised and negatively impacted (Dhludhlu, 2015). The Department of Social Development devised means to minimise the backlogs but the problem is continuing (Ngwenya, 2011).

A progress report by the Department of Social Development (2017) pointed out that 478 158 children were receiving foster care services. In South Africa, 39 102 foster care backlog cases were recorded in all the nine provinces. By November 2017, these cases

had to be eliminated and reported to the high court in Pretoria. The latter could not materialise on account that new extension orders lapsed every month due to the two years order cycle for each child. Furthermore, 49 534 foster care orders were supposed to be extended before December 2017, and another overwhelming 30 232 would lapse between January and March 2018. According to the said report, Gauteng and Limpopo Provinces had the risk of not being able to meet the deadline. The two provinces had the highest number of children in foster care.

Social workers find it difficult amidst high caseloads to submit all the essential documents and attachments that are needed by court to extend foster care orders in time (October, 2017). Consequently, the orders will lapse and the child best's interest is compromised. Social workers are obliged to investigate and assess each case by visiting each family. From each family visit, they need to write reports, take the report for canalisation, approach the children's court for appointments and later present them. This results in a turnover time for foster care placements of up to 18 months. After the court has approved the placement of the child, social workers have to supervise the foster care placement as encapsulated in section 46(f) of the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 as amended (SA, 2005), thereafter write reports on the child's development and justify any extension beyond two years (October, 2017). Social workers mentioned various challenges that hinder their progress in addressing the issue of foster care backlogs. The challenges include lack of tools of trade, too much administrative work, high caseloads and confusion by presiding officers who interpret Children's Act differently (Ngwabi, 2014; Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017). As a result of these challenges, the progress for opening and finalisation of foster care cases will be delayed and the extension of court orders for children already in the system will also be affected. There is limited scientific research on foster care backlogs in South Africa. Yet the problem still prevails and puts social workers under pressure. Based on the abovementioned, the researcher developed interest to explore experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlogs in a scientific manner.

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following were aim and objectives of this research project:

1.5.1 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to explore experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlogs at Botlokwa in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province.

1.5.2 Objectives of the study

To accomplish the aim of this study, the following objectives became important:

- To identify factors contributing to foster care backlogs.
- To establish social workers' coping strategies on foster care backlogs in the Department of Social Development.
- To develop social workers' suggestions on how to mitigate foster care backlogs.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored on Talcott Parson's structural functionalist theory. According to this theory, society is a multifaceted system whose parts work in collaboration to bring about cohesion and stability. According to Mohammed and Osuala (2014), functionalism is inextricably tied up with the question of order, stability and cohesion, and integration is maintained in society by its parts. In the context of this study, these parts refer to different departments in South Africa which play a major role in the foster care system.

Foster care is an on-going process that involves different role-players. As a result, if one of the involved role-players fails to play its role, then a backlog is bound to exist. In some instances, a backlog can result from a malfunction and delay of one department. For example, social workers may struggle to provide information and attachments to court in time due to lack of compliance amongst foster families. This theory was useful to identify role players that are playing a significant role in addressing backlogs in foster care cases.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Findings of this study will help the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development and the Department of Social Development when putting on strategies in place to address foster care backlogs in an eloquent and enthusiastic manner. The findings will also help social workers and other academics in the field of foster care to close the gap through empirically scientific evidence about contributing factors to foster care backlogs as well as developing ways to deal with this problem. The study will also be beneficial to policy makers and programme developers to improve service delivery regarding the management of foster care placement.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study had the following limitations:

- The study anticipated to interview 20 social workers but reached data saturation at 12 participants.

1.9 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study is organised in this manner:

Chapter 1: General orientation to the study

Chapter one is about the general orientation of the study and reference is made to the theoretical framework, rationale for the study, problem statement, the goal and objectives of the study.

Chapter 2: Research methodology

Chapter two deals with the research methodology thus research approach, research design, population and sampling methods, data collection, data analysis, ethical consideration as well as the limitation of the study.

Chapter 3: Literature review

Chapter three provides detailed literature review. Background of foster care in South Africa is given, the theoretical framework, factors contributing to backlogs and legislative framework governing foster care, role players in foster care and the effects of foster care backlogs towards clients, social workers and the profession of social work as whole.

Chapter 4: Qualitative data presentation, analysis and interpretation

Chapter four presents empirical findings of the study.

Chapter 5: Summary of the major findings, conclusions and recommendations

Chapter five is the final chapter of the report and outlines how the goal and objectives of the study were achieved. Furthermore, it summarises key findings of the study from which conclusions are drawn and presents recommendations of the study.

1.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter gave a general overview of the study by explaining key concepts, motivation of the study, problem statement, theoretical framework, aim and objectives of the study as well as research methodology. The next chapter focuses on research methodology.

CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with operational framework, which guide and direct the research project which was conducted for this study. The research methodology can best be defined as the methods, techniques, and procedures that are employed in the process of implementing the research design or research plan as well as the underlying principles and assumptions that underlie their use (Myers, 2009). According to Fouché and Schurink (2011), research methodology is the process involving the application of a variety of standardised methods and techniques in pursuit of knowledge. The essence of the research methodology is that it stipulates how the researcher possibly may go about practically studying what s/he believes can be known (Durrheim in Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). The most common methodologies in social research involve qualitative, quantitative, as well as participatory research approach. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used a qualitative approach to understand social workers' experiences regarding foster care backlogs. This chapter also deals with research approach, research design, the population that was considered during this study and sampling techniques that were used. Data collection methods and data analysis methods are discussed in this chapter. Ethical issues underlying this research project are discussed in detail to demonstrate that participants in the study were handled in accordance with research expectations.

2.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The research followed the qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is a method used by researchers to understand the meaning people or groups attribute to a social or human phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). According to Silverman (2011), the qualitative approach focusses on how people see things and their behaviour as well as how they interact with one another in a particular social environment. When working from a qualitative perspective, a researcher attempts to gain a first-hand, holistic understanding of the

phenomena and data collection is shaped as the investigation progresses (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). According to Fouche and Schurink (2011), in a qualitative research, data is collected in a natural environment that is sensitive to humans and with naturalistic observation rather that controlled measurement. This approach helped to gain valuable knowledge on experiences of social workers of foster care backlogs in Botlokwa in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province. According to Makhubele (2008), a qualitative research emphasises processes and meanings that are not thoroughly examined or measured in terms of quantity, intensity and frequency. It uses techniques aimed at gaining insight into underlying issues surrounding a research problem by gathering non-statistical feedback and opinions rooted in people's feelings, attitudes, motivations, values and perceptions.

2.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is a plan or blueprint of how one intends to conduct the research (Babbie & Mouton,2011). In contrast, Alston and Bowles (2003) refer to a research design as the way in which data is to be collected, analysed and disseminated. The type of sampling as well as method of collecting data must be included in a research design. According to Grinnell (2001), research design includes the conceptualisation of the research problem in the dissemination of findings. The way the research has been designed informs the above-mentioned methodological approaches. Silverman (2011) states that an effective research design is dependent upon a method of data collection chosen, avoiding too many data collection methods, and making sure that the researcher does not collect too much information.

The researcher opted to use a collective case study design to explore experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlogs at Botlokwa in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province. Collective case studies choose cases to compare each case and concepts to validate and extend theories (Fouche & Schurink, 2011). The above-mentioned case study was appropriate in this study because it enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of experiences of social workers from various service points in Botlokwa, namely; Ramokgopa Multi-Purpose, Botlokwa One Stop Center, Matoks Clinic, Eeisleben

Clinic, Makgato Clinic, Nthabiseng Clinic and Mphakane Tribal. As already indicated above, this study was exploratory in nature. Monette, Sullivan and Dejong (2002) argue that explorative the research design involves the how and why part of the situation. It does not only describe, but also looks at the causes of the event (Marlow & Boone, 2005). According to Wiid and Diggenis (2013), the main aim of exploratory research is not solely to gain relevant data, but to gain thorough knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study. It is often used when information is needed about a problem. In this study, interest was on exploring experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlogs in order to understand this phenomenon from their perspectives.

2.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING METHODS

2.4.1 Population

The study population was drawn from social workers providing services at Botlokwa in Capricorn District, Limpopo Province. According Neuman (2000), population of the study denotes the people to which the study is focused, and the sample is drawn from. In the same breath, Strydom (2011) refers to population as individuals who possess specific characteristics of the study.

Botlokwa social work services has satellite offices in Ramokgopa Multi-Purpose Community Center, Makgato Clinic, Botlokwa One Stop Center, Nthabiseng Clinic, Mphakane Tribal, Matoks Clinic and lastly Eisleben Clinic. The researcher therefore selected social workers from all the above-mentioned areas of operation to participate in this study.

2.4.2 Sample and sampling size

This research has followed a non-probability sampling method where the convenient sampling technique was used to select 12 social workers (Botlokwa One Stop Center [4], Ramokgopa Multi-Purpose Community Center [3], Eisleben Clinic [1], Matoks Clinic [1], Nthabiseng Clinic [1], Makgato Clinic [1] and Mphakane Tribal [1]). According to Dudley

(2011), convenient sampling refers to the selection of people who can easily be found to participate in the study. Descombe (2010) defines convenient sampling as a built upon selection which suits the researcher. The researcher has opted to use the convenient sampling technique due to the busy schedule of social workers at the research site, and that this research should not have tempered with such schedules. According to Johnson and Christensen (2012), researchers use convenient sampling when they include in their sample people who were convenient to find and are prepared to participate in the study. Thus, in this study, the researcher selected social workers at Botlokwa in the Department of Social Development who were available to participate in this study project. Participants who could thoroughly reflect and explore their experiences about foster care backlogs were selected to participate. The principle of data saturation was adopted to select the number of participants. The following criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of participants in the study were followed:

- **Inclusion criteria**

Social workers who are registered with the South African Council for Social Services Profession who are working in the Department of Social Development in the decentralised offices in Botlokwa Capricorn District, namely Ramokgpa Multi-Purpose, Makgato Clinic, Botlokwa One Stop Center, Nthabiseng Clinic, Mphakane Tribal and Matoks Clinic participated in this study. The researcher included participants who had two years or more of providing foster care services in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province.

- **Exclusion criteria**

Social workers who did not have over two years of experience in foster care did not meet the criteria, therefore did not participate in the study. Social workers who were not providing services at decentralised offices in Botlokwa Capricorn District were not included in this study. Social workers who were not recognised by the council did not participate in this study.

2.5 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were adopted in this study as a method of data collection. Semi-structured interviews are normally conducted to understand participants' opinions and perceptions of a phenomenon (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport, 2011). Before interviewing participants, the researcher prepared a set of questions that will be followed. These set of questions serve as guidelines to ensure order. Semi-structured interviews help the researcher to have detailed discussions with participants rather than asking straightforward and close ended questions. The interview was guided by the questions and a schedule. An interview guide containing open ended questions afford participants the opportunity to express themselves in terms of how they view foster care backlogs. The researcher had individual interviews with participants and each interview lasted between fifteen (15) minutes to twenty (20) minutes. Data collection was conducted for a period of a week.

According to Wengraf (2011), semi-structured interviews involve questions which have been set beforehand. However, the questions should allow for discussion so that the phenomenon under discussion can be clearly expressed. According to Silverman (2010), the interview guide contains questions used by the researcher to guide the flow of research with participants.

The researcher used an audio tape recording device and field notes to collect data. Descombe (2010) revealed that in data collection, researchers are advised not to rely on their memories because it is not reliable. They may forget what participants said. Therefore, the researcher used a tape-recording device and field notes to complement what he has captured in his memory. The concurrent use of two approaches to collect data is supported by Descombe (2010), who stated that field notes involve taking notes during the interview about the location and atmosphere of the research and aspects such as non-verbal cues. Descombe further states that audio recordings help the researcher to have exactly what participants have said (verbatim). This is reliable because the researcher will refer to recordings. By using these two approaches, the researcher has obtained permission from participants by signing a written consent form.

2.6 DATA ANALYSIS

According to De Vos (2005), data analysis is the process of organising the mass data collected by the researcher to make sense and to categorise into themes. Schurink, Fouche and De Vos (2011) describe qualitative data analysis as dissecting the mass data collected and identifying the data that will be beneficial to achieve the objectives of the study. Not every data collected is important; some will be reduced.

Babbie (2007) defines qualitative data analysis as an analysis that does not examine numbers but interpretation of what the researcher observed in order to discover underlying meanings and their relationships. All the audio tape-recorded interviews were transcribed in the same way participants put it (verbatim). Themes derived from the questions posed to participants during the semi-structured interviews conducted with research participants were used to group raw data. The researcher transcribed the data himself. Creswell's (2009) method of data analysis cited in Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi and Wright (2010) was applied during this research. Steps for analysing data according to Creswell (2009, cited in Botma *et al.* (2010), were:

- *Step1*: The researcher transcribed the audiotaped interviews. Thereafter, read all of them to elicit a sense of the whole. The entire transcripts were read carefully, and notes of the ideas were made as they come to mind.
- *Step 2*: The researcher selected one interview transcript randomly and perused it carefully in order to grasp its underlying meaning, asking questions while writing his thoughts in the margins of the transcript.
- *Step 3*: After completing this task for several participants, the researcher made a list of all topics and categorised similar topics together. The researcher listed the topics in columns, organised them as 'major topics', 'unique topics', and 'leftovers'.
- *Step 4*: The researcher then set up a fitting abbreviation for each of the identified topics.
- *Step 5*: The researcher established the most descriptive wording for the topics and translated them into themes.
- *Step 6*: The researcher made a final decision on the abbreviation for each theme.

- *Step 7*: The researcher assembled the data belonging to each theme or category in one place and conducted a preliminary analysis.
- *Step 8*: The researcher recorded the existing data.

2.7 QUALITY CRITERIA

In research trustworthiness refers to the way in which research can be trusted and relied upon. It ensures that findings of the research represent the reality that was presented by participants about the phenomenon (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010). In qualitative research, trustworthiness encompasses the following concepts: transferability, credibility, dependability and conformability.

2.7.1 Transferability

According to Mertens (2010), transferability is a concept that enables the researcher to demonstrate that findings of the research are applicable to similar situations or other contexts. The reader has the responsibility to determine the degree of similarity of the characteristics of the research site and the reader's own site (Lodico *et al.*, 2010). To ensure transferability of findings, triangulation of various sources of data was applied.

2.7.2 Credibility

According to Mertler and Charles (2011), credibility refers to the truth and accuracy of research findings, and whether findings can be trusted from the perspective of participants in the research. Lodico *et al.* (2010) state that credibility refers to whether participants' perceptions of the setting or events link to the researcher's interpretation of their perceptions in the research report. The researcher ensured the credibility of findings by verifying with participants if the interpretation by the researcher is actually the experiences that participants expressed during the interviews.

2.7.3 Conformability

According to Shenton (2004), conformability refers to the extent to which results of the research can be confirmed and corroborated by other researchers. Confirmability in this

regard attempts to ensure that findings reflect perceptions and experiences of participants other than that of the researcher. Thyer (2001) established that reflexivity is a procedure in which the researcher recalls all preconceptions that may render the study compromise the interpretations and validity of findings. The researcher had a journal during data collection to note down his own assumptions, ideas and feelings that may influence and jeopardise the findings of the research.

2.7.4 Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which procedures and method used in the research can be repeated by another researcher following the same methods, same participants and come about the same findings (Shenton, 2004). This consistency of findings promotes the concept of reliability. The researcher of this study used notetaking and audio recording with the consent of participants.

2.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethics refers to essential principles that must be followed in social research (Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001). In the context of this study, reference is made to informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, management of information and safety precautions that will be taken to protect participants from harm. It is of paramount importance in the research to take into consideration the worth and dignity of people participating in the study (Gilbert, 2008). The following ethical practices were observed:

2.8.1 Permission to conduct the study

The researcher obtained ethical clearance to conduct this study from Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) of the University of Limpopo (**TREC/133/2019: PG**) and Limpopo Department of Social Development where participants were selected.

2.8.2 Informed consent and voluntary participation

Informed consent is a procedure that is used in the research by the researcher to ensure that participants understand their role and agree to be part of the study without being

forced to partake (Franklin, Rowland, Fox & Nicolson, 2012). Research participants should base research on freely given informed consent (Sin, 2005). Participants should be told every information regarding the study before they are involved. This information involves risks that come with the study, the benefits of partaking and as well as how the study is going to done. For this study, the researcher clarified to participants in terms of their rights to participate in the study and told them they could withdraw their participation at any time of the study. Furthermore, participants were provided with informed consent form to willingly agree in writing that they have decided to take part in the study.

2.8.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

In research, confidentiality and anonymity are intertwined. The information brought about by participants should never have to be linked or associated with their names (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006). The researcher maintained the principle of confidentiality of participants' identity and information they provided. They were anonymously addressed, no information about the participants was shared with the third party. To maintain the principle of confidentiality of findings of this study, the researcher kept all the notes and recording devices in a lockable storage, which were only accessed by him and the supervisor. Such will be kept in the storeroom of Social Work department of the University of Limpopo for a period of five years and later be discarded.

2.8.4 Protection from harm

According to Tamin (2013), sometimes the research process can make participants feel emotional and stressed. Therefore, the researcher needs to come up with mechanisms should emotions be evoked. The questions of the researcher may be emotional to participants or may remind them of emotional memories. In this study, the researcher was conscious of sensitive topics that could cause emotional reactions from participants, for example by not asking questions that could trigger emotions from the participants. The researcher was prepared to refer participants to professionals for counselling should they experience any emotional harm however, the research did not cause any emotional reaction to social workers. The researcher engaged the employer (the Department of

Social Development) for permission to interview the employees (Social Workers) to avoid them being victimised.

2.8.5 Deception of participants

According to Burns and Grove (2003), deception involves misleading participants about the real purpose of the research or other knowledge that might temper with the results. Participants who are unaware of the real purpose of the research will behave more naturally. The researcher of this study did not deceive participants and had no intentions whatsoever to deceive them to partake in the study.

2.8.6 Release and publication of the findings

According to Bless *et al.* (2006), participants should be told about findings of the study without contravening the principle of confidentiality. The researcher mentioned that participants will be informed about findings of the study as well as the milestones in order not to deviate from the principle of confidentiality. Article papers will be harvested from this study for publication in international peer reviewed journals accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter described the methodology that was utilized to understand social workers' experiences regarding foster care backlogs. Detailed description of the research approach and design, subject selection, and instruments was provided. The research procedure explained how research was collected and analysed and subsequently followed by the limitations of the study. The next chapter will focus on literature review.

CHAPTER 3

THE DYNAMICS OF FOSTER CARE IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Fortune (2017), the system of foster care in South Africa puts the lives hundreds of thousands of children at risk as the system cannot adequately respond positively to the needs of these children. The constitutional rights to family care and shelter is also overlooked. Worldwide, foster care is considered the best and worthwhile method of caring for children who need care and protection outside their maternal home. This is because more often than not it takes place in a context supportive to the needs of children. According to Boning and Ferreira (2013), it is an undisputed fact that foster care has various benefits for children who need care and protection. However, foster care practice in South Africa faces some serious difficulties and has dire consequences to the life of children. The researcher confirms what Boning and Ferreira assert from his personal experience as a social worker that there are limited resources necessary to execute foster care services.

The foster care placement of children derives from many contributory factors. Ngwenya (2011) mentioned that the HIV/AIDS pandemic has left many children without parents and without visible means of support. Consequently, these children are placed in foster care which is already strained by the number of children who need care and protection. After the death of parents, children are left orphaned, sometime in the care of relatives, usually the maternal grandmother. The relatives or primary care-givers then go to social workers throughout the country seeking assistance to have the orphaned children legally placed in their foster care system, or with regards to claiming of the estates of the deceased. As a result, social workers end up with unmanageable caseloads (Manukuza, 2013). Therefore, a backlog in social workers' offices in the processing of foster care applications and foster care reviews affect the life of children who need care and protection because they do not receive the necessary attention they require.

Nationwide, the Department of Social Development introduced various innovative ways to curb the problem of backlog, but the problem is perpetual (Dhludhlu, 2015). These innovative strategies include, among others, the hiring of more social workers, coming up with project plan for foster care and having family finders by the South African Social Security Agency (Department of Social Development, 2017). The researcher believes that the reason hired social workers cannot completely deal with the backlog is that they do not have adequate resources to perform foster care. These resources include but not limited to cars, telephones and copying machines.

The continual rising of foster care cases over the past decade has led to a rise in caseloads within offices of social workers, and an overburdened the system (Fortune, 2016). Children's rights are of paramount importance and their best interests come first in every decision that involves them. Because of this, child protection agencies need to ensure that children who need care and protection are placed in foster care under the supervision of a designated social worker in terms of section 46(f) of Children Act No. 38 of 2005 as amended. The designated social worker who renders supervision services must ensure that foster care orders are renewed timeously. Proudlock (2014) postulates that if child protection agencies fail to tighten up their foster care systems when it comes to renewing foster care court orders, the best interests of children become compromised.

3.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON FOSTER CARE BACKLOG IN SOUTH AFRICA

The profession of social work plays a critical role in dealing with the social needs of South African society (Department of Social Development, 2009). Many social workers in South Africa are employed by Social Development to implement social policies and programmes aimed at social problems such as foster care backlogs. However, social workers are faced with an overwhelming demand for social services such as foster care. It is difficult for them to cope with these demands. Khoza (2011) supports the above statement that in South Africa, there is large a number of children who are without visible means of support, and the foster care system is overwhelmed resulting from an increasing demand for foster

care services. The lack of capacity in social work is evident, and social workers who are currently employed by social development cannot be retained for a long time in the profession. They move to other related professions with better salaries (Department of Social Development, 2009).

According to Ngwenya and Botha (2012), social workers have been battling with foster care; and it is difficult for them to manage it since there is too much demand for this service. The backlog in foster care applications has been an issue of the Department of Social Development. Consequently, applications for placement are accumulating, causing unmanageable caseloads. Ngwenya (2011) and Manukuza (2013) found that foster care cases take longer to be processed and finalised in children's courts because social workers are faced with a high caseload from high demand for services. As a result, it is difficult for them to give each case time it deserves.

The Department of Social Development (2017) progress report highlighted that in 2016/2017 financial years, 478 158 children nationally were registered for foster care and receiving services. The foster care backlog in the nine provinces of South Africa (Limpopo, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, North West, Northern Cape, Free State, Eastern Cape, Western cape and KwaZulu Natal) is standing at 39 102. According to the said report, social workers find it hard to adequately eradicate the foster care backlog because new extension orders lapsed every month due to the two-year order cycle for each child. Apart from the backlog for new applications for foster care placement, 49 534 foster care orders had to be extended before December 2017 and another overwhelming 30 232 would lapse between January and March 2018. The South African Social Security Agency [SASSA] (2018) reported that by December 2018, foster care beneficiaries were standing at 345 560. As at 2019 March, the number of foster care grant were standing at 386 021. The above reflect the extent to which foster care services are greatly in need in South Africa and will continuously be beneficial.

3.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINING FOSTER CARE BACKLOGS IN SOUTH AFRICA

This chapter is guided by the structural functionalist theory founded by Talcott Parson in 1930 to zoom into the nature of foster care backlogs in South Africa. Talcott Parson views the society with different kinds of systems that work together to bring about stability, cohesion and unity. If one part of the society is dysfunctional, then other parts of the society get affected. According to Karki and Gartoula (2015), structural functionalism is a theory that seeks to explain how the society functions by focusing on the relationship between different social systems or social institutions that have a significant role in the society. The systems referred to are government, law, education and religion, among others. According to the Merton (2010), structural functionalism has a lengthy history in both biological sciences and social sciences. Structural functionalism, especially in the work of Talcott Parsons, was mostly dominant as a sociological theory.

Functionalists tend to view social and political systems in a more integrated manner, thus focusing on the relationship between systems. Giddens and Sutton (2017) state that social practices have a significant and sustaining role to play in the maintenance of the society. Each function of a system is important in the survival of the whole system. In this study, the focus is on social systems that contribute to foster care to be integrated and functional. Giddens and Sutton (2017) describe two distinctive types of functional analysis, that is, traditional and formal analysis. Traditional functional analysis is the most commonly used, and is based on the premise that all social patterns work to maintain the integration and adaptation of the larger system. The formal functional analysis is called formal because it does not include a theoretical orientation or a substantive hypothesis about events; rather, it examines the relationships between elements. Formal analysis contrasts with the traditional type of analysis in that its proponents reject the attributes of "integration" and "adaptation" in favour of an examination of the equilibrating or feedback functions in systems (Fisher, 2010). The researcher is of the view that formal analysis focuses on the relationship between departments that help makes foster care viable and

functional, while traditional analysis only focusses on the balance between these departments in the same line formal analysis fits the discussion.

The structural functionalist theory entails the cultural system, social system, political, behavioural organism and personality system (Ritzer & Smart, 2011). In terms of the social system, Talcott Parson talks about the relationship between actors and social system. The actor has a primary role to develop the social system. On the other hand, the social system controls the function of the actor. During the life cycle of one individual, people play various roles and do the practices. In the context of this study, foster care is an on-going process that involves different role-players (systems) before, during and after the placement of the child with a suitable foster parent. In South Africa, these role players include amongst others, social workers, educators, community development workers, medical practitioners if need be, presiding officers, home affairs officers and SASSA administrators, just to mention few. If any of these role-players or systems fail to play their role, then foster care backlog is bound to be real and affect the adaptation of the child concerned. Unfortunately, primary administrators of foster care in general are designated social workers working for the Department of Social Development. Such backlog primarily affects them. The above-mentioned statement is corroborated by the Management of Foster Care in South Africa (2010), that various South African departments play a critical role in the performance of the foster process and finalisation. These include the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, Department of Social Development; South African Social Security Agency, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and the South African Police Services, all of which work in collaboration with one another. The collaboration of departments in foster care service delivery reflects the integration of stakeholders (Lombard & Klein, 2006). If any of these stakeholders as indicated above can fail to execute their roles in terms of foster care management, then the likelihood is that foster care backlogs will continually prevail.

According to the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997), collaboration and partnership within government, civil society and the private sector is key to the delivery of effective and efficient service to the society. Social services such as foster care require

collaboration between relevant stakeholders such as social workers, legal practitioners, teachers and nurses, to mention but few (LaLiberte, Crudo, Kovan and Watson, 2012). Lombard (2008) emphasises that intervention in the developmental approach is based on integration and partnership of service users, relevant stakeholders and relevant departments as mentioned above.

Even though the structural functionalist theory will serve as a lense in guiding this chapter, one should take note that it has weaknesses. Structural functionalism neither explains social change nor account for structural conflicts (Lockwood, 2007). Therefore, referring to the structural functionalist theory as static is inaccurate. In the context of this study, structural functionalism does not account for why there is a change in a certain department, but rather it can tell which the department is dysfunctional.

There are many criticisms that have been levelled against the structural functionalism theory by proponents of other social theories such as conflict theorists, Marxists, feminists and postmodernists. According to conflict theorists, functionalism's concept of systems focuses much attention on collaboration and integration and does not account on the independence and conflict among the systems that make up a society. Holmwood (2005) suggests that Parsons' theory missed the concept of system contradiction. It did not account for those parts of the system that might have tendencies to malfunction. According to Holmwood (2005), it was these tendencies that come to the surface as opposition and conflict among actors. However, Parsons thought that the issues of conflict and cooperation were very much intertwined and sought to account for both in his model (Holmwood, 2005). Impediments for the continuous foster care backlogs are being overlooked by using the structural functionalist approach. For example, a shortage of resources for social workers such as vehicles, stationery and offices to conduct foster care services.

3.4 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK ON FOSTER CARE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The following pieces of legislation have been promulgated by parliament to guide the placement of children in need of care and protection in South Africa and the extension of orders under the supervision of social workers.

3.4.1 The Constitution of Republic of South Africa 108 of 1996

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (SA, 1996) safeguards the rights of children in terms of Section 28 (2), which declares the best interests of the child as paramount important. According to the Department of Social Development (2011), the Constitution of South Africa uses a human rights-based approach to build capacities of people to claim and exercise their rights while duty bearers meet their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil those rights. Chapter two of the said Constitution addresses children's rights and grants special protection for children. The Constitution further sets out minimum standards regarding social and economic rights, including social security, social assistance and social services. Section 28 (1) states that every child has the right (a) to a name and a nationality from birth; (b) to family care or parental care and to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment; and (c) to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services. Thus, every child who needs care and protection in terms of section 150 (1) of the Children's Act No 38 of 2005 as amended has the right to be placed in foster care with a suitable foster parent recommended by a designated social worker.

The Bill of Rights in the Constitution upholds human rights for all and applies to both adults and children. Furthermore, section 28 1(d) states that every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation. The researcher is of the view that the lapsing of orders and delayed placement of children in need of care and protection does not take into account the best interests of children. This affects their well-being and that of their caregivers who are not their biological parents as they also have their own parental rights and responsibilities over their own children.

3.4.2 Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended

The Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 as amended is an all-inclusive piece of legislation with the purpose of affording children the necessary care, protection and assistance to ensure that they can develop to their full potential (Department of Social Development, 2010). This Act came into being upon realisation by the people of South Africa that the previous Child Care Act No. 74 of 1983 was not about nation building but division. Children were treated according to the colour of their skin. In other words, it racially isolated blacks (including Indian, Coloured and African) from the rest of the population (Dawes, 2009). Upon realisation that some parts of the Child Care Act was unfair, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 came into being to bridge the gap. The researcher is of the view that the decree of the Children's act No. 38 of 2005 as amended means that each child should be treated accordingly without looking at their background, and that there should be equal distribution of social services such as foster care services.

The Children's Act No, 38 of 2005 as amended differs significantly from the previous Child Care Act No. 74 of 1983, and sufficiently addresses challenges of the 21st century. It is in alignment with the principles of developmental social welfare as envisioned in the 1997 White Paper for Social Welfare. The main strength of the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 as amended stems from its unwavering commitment to prevention and early intervention services.

In the new children's act, programmes aimed at stopping abuse or neglect of children have, for the first time, been contemplated. This was not included in the old act. Prevention and early intervention services are cost effective because they reduce the demand for more costly services such as state alternative care in children's homes (Proudlock & Jamieson, 2008). They are also an investment in human capital because they ensure that children develop to their full potential. According to Dawes (2009), one of the just features contemplated in the new Act is the realisation of the importance of services to vulnerable families and children to reduce the abuse and neglect. The previous act focused on statutory care and not early intervention. The intention of the new

legislation is to shift emphasis to early intervention while strengthening statutory processes.

According to Earle (2008), instead of putting all social services to social workers, the new Children's Act replaces some references to social workers with the term "social service professionals". This is to make sure that all services which are being provided by social workers can be done by other social service practitioners such as child and youth care workers and community development workers, to mention few. The above-mentioned practitioners will deal with the assessment of partial care centres, drop-in centres for registration, and the monitoring of long-term foster-care placements. Having various social service practitioners will help in the division of labour. This will make services more accessible in poor and rural communities where social workers are scarce.

This act has weaknesses in terms of regulating foster care in South Africa. Since the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 (as amended) has been in operation, problems have emerged about temporary safe care post-removal processes, grounds for finding orphans and vulnerable children who need care and protection; the change-over to a court-based system for deciding on extension of placements and over-reliance on the foster care system to provide income support to families caring for orphaned and abandoned children (Sibanda, 2013). All these challenges stem from weaknesses in the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 with regards to pre-statutory, statutory and post-statutory processes.

The extension of placement orders as provided for in Sections 159 and 186 of the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 as amended used to be managed by social workers without having to take files back to court, which is not the case according to this act. According to this act, the social worker has to present the case back to children's court. Sometimes it delays, more especially when presiding officers are not available and ultimately, the extension order expires, resulting in backlogs. Sometimes presiding officers themselves delay the process as they demand a lot of documents, which might not be attached to the report because the act does not specify which documents to attach. This is supported by Loffell (2011) that courts require voluminous documents to be attached to section 159

(extension of orders) reports. As a result, this puts overwhelming pressure on social workers who are already suffering from high caseloads. For various reasons, social workers find it difficult to have all the exhibits to be attached to the report ready by the court date. It is therefore unavoidable for orders to lapse.

3.4.3 United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

South Africa joined the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and has committed itself to the realisation of rights of children. It therefore must secure their safety (Department of Social Development, 2005). The UNCRC is one of the international treaties that ensure the social, economic, health and civil rights of all children (Van Dyk, 2012; UNAIDS, 2001). Numerous countries are part of the UNCRC and therefore they are duty bound to abide by all the standards and principles set out by the convention. South Africa committed itself to follow the Convention's guiding principles which, among others, include that all children have the right to life and that in all policies and decisions regarding children, the principle of best interests should be paramount (Van Dyk, 2012). The researcher is of the view that while social workers are placing foster children with foster parents, they should consider the best interests of the child by allowing the child to give his/her side of the story. For example, the child should indicate whether s/he will be comfortable staying with the selected foster parents.

To ensure that the principles contained in the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child are adhered to, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children came into effect in November 1999 (OAU, 1999). In addition to the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child mentioned above, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child also envisaged that the child occupies a space cognisance to the social, educational and health needs of children, and that they should grow up in an environment that is loving and has happiness. Social workers should ensure that children are placed with a suitable foster parent, and the principle of best interests should be considered. Thus, all children have the right to survival, protection, development and participation in every decision that involves them (Smart, 2003; Van Dyk, 2012). Both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African

Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child recognise the importance of a family environment in the healthy upbringing of a child. Therefore, foster care is and always will be the best and viable form of protection of children when the natural family care fails.

3.5 CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS ON FOSTER CARE BACKLOGS

Foster care backlogs in South Africa is a result of numerous factors. As such, this section will provide a critical review of contributory factors to foster care backlogs in the context of South Africa.

3.5.1 High caseloads and shortage of social workers

According to Ngwenya (2011), Sibanda and Lombard (2015) and Mosimege (2017), high caseloads, shortage of social workers and unequal distribution of cases to the area social workers contribute backlog of cases. The Code of Conduct for the Public Service guards against the unfair and unequal distribution of files to social workers (Public Service Commission, 2002), which postulates that the supervisor should guard against unfair and unequal work distribution and should promote fairness to make sure that quality work is produced. Cases are unevenly distributed amongst social workers, and consequently, other social workers end up with more cases than others. The researcher concurs with the above authors as he has observed and noticed, while practising as a social worker in the Department of Social Development at Molemole Municipality in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province, that foster care files are allocated to social workers according to areas of operation without considering the volume of work per officer. The researcher strongly holds the view that the shortage of social workers in the department and the unequal distribution of cases contribute enormously to foster care backlogs. Furthermore, thorough monitoring or checking of the number of social workers' caseloads by management in different regions of operation may also be compromised. Despite foster care placement as one of the key performance areas within the Department of Social Development, social workers have other responsibilities such as rendering other social services and interventions at different levels, such as community work, group work,

statutory cases, just to name a few. To support the above, Fortune (2016) argues that many children are suffering, and foster care orders lapse as social workers are overburdened with high caseloads and cannot always provide adequate amount of monitoring or supervision of such cases. According to Ngwenya (2011), the issue of high caseload in social workers' offices is overwhelming and stressing because social workers handle more than 80 cases each day. The researcher's opinion based on the above information is that social workers are presented with high volumes of cases and are expected to manage all of them. The researcher feels that the foster care backlog issue is rooted in the multitasking and overloading of social workers with more cases by the supervisor.

In South Africa, the number of employed social workers is relatively low as compared to the social demand (Sibanda & Lombard, 2015; Mosimege, 2017). Chibba (2011) argues that there is an outflow of social workers to other countries in search of better working conditions and salary packages. However, other social workers move into the private sector and other professions such as psychology, sociology and criminology. The active recruitment of South African social workers, in particular, by the United Kingdom has created visible and felt cracks in service, especially in child welfare where statutory services have suffered the worst consequences, so much that the National Department of Social Development in South Africa has declared social work as scarce skills (Mosimege, 2017). The South African Institute of Race Relations (2012) put it on record that there is a lack of social workers in South Africa, particularly in the government sector and NGO. The then Minister of the Department of Social Development in South Africa (Zola Skweyiya) stated that South Africa needs almost 16 000 social workers to address issues related to foster care because the country lost many social workers to other countries in search of better working conditions and better salaries (Khumalo, 2016).

3.5.2 Shortage of presiding officers and lack of consistency among presiding officers

In their study, Sibanda and Lombard (2015) found that most presiding officers do not apply same standards when placing a child in foster care. The Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 has regulations in terms of how presiding officers must conduct foster care. However, many of them use their discretion in dealing with child care cases. In addition to the above statement, Maloma (2013) argues many of the presiding officers in different courts have their own way of interpreting the act related to children matters. Thus social workers find it difficult to adjust to presiding officers' modus operandi. This therefore frustrates them in that they are always concerned about specific procedures of one court to another.

The other challenge that social workers encounter with presiding officers in different children's courts is about exhibits that go with the foster care comprehensive report. There is definitely no standardised/uniformity in terms of handling foster care placement by different presiding officers in different children's courts. Sibanda and Lombard (2015) state that when the social worker attends children's courts to present foster care placement, more especially section 159 and 186 reports for the extension of orders in terms of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended, presiding officers in some children's courts have a set of attachments (exhibits) that they require, which is not the case in other children's courts. Therefore, it is within the powers of presiding officers to decide on how to handle the placement of a foster child. This predicament makes it very difficult for social workers to manage foster care caseloads in spite of their shortage. As a result, it creates foster care backlogs.

Sibanda and Lombard (2015) found that social workers deal with presiding officers who have no sufficient knowledge of the provisions of the Children's Act No 38 of 2005 and who are not experienced in working with children. The researcher's experience is that presiding officers and social workers have different meanings of needs of children in terms of care and protection. As a result, social workers' recommendations are dismissed in Children's courts. According to the Children's Act No 38 of 2005 (as amended), a child

is in need of care and protection if the child has been abandoned or orphaned and is without any visible means of support; displays behaviour which cannot be controlled by the parent or care-giver; lives or works on the streets or begs for a living; is addicted to a dependence-producing substance and is without any support to obtain treatment for such dependency; has been exploited or lives in circumstances that expose him or her to exploitation; lives in or is exposed to circumstances which may seriously harm his or her physical, mental or social well-being; may be at risk if returned to the custody of the parent, guardian or care-giver of the child as there is reason to believe that he or she will live in or be exposed to circumstances which may seriously harm his or her physical, mental or social well-being; is in a state of physical or mental neglect; is being maltreated, abused, deliberately neglected or degraded by a parent, a care- giver, a person who has parental responsibilities and rights or a family member of the child or by a person under whose control the child is.

According to Sibanda and Lombard (2015), there are no pressing officers who specifically deal with children matters in South Africa. Instead they rotate from civil and criminal matters, and thus render them not competent in matters related to foster care. Since the coming into effect of the Children's Act, there has been a lot of instability in rendering child protection services (Hall & Proudlock, 2011; Loffell, 2011; Proudlock & Debbie, 2011). The researcher is of the view that presiding officers' different ways of handling children's court cases put pressure on social workers as they do not know what is expected of them about the attachments on the foster care placement report for children's court inquiry. Loffell (2011) states that some presiding officers do not understand the specifications of the Children's Act in terms of foster care placement. As a result, some read the act during children's court proceedings whilst others quickly seek clarity from their colleagues on how certain issues on foster care placement are handled. Some even ask social workers what they should do. Therefore, there is a need to jointly capacitate presiding officers and social workers about the Children's Act specifications in terms of finalising the placement of a foster child or renewing a court order. The researcher is of the view that this might minimise foster care backlogs that social workers are facing.

The other challenge within the justice fraternity is that there is an insufficient number of presiding officers in children's courts. This statement is supported by Hall and Proudlock (2011), who argue that social workers end up being in court for long hours to present just one case. The researcher is of the view that this state of affairs is frustrating for social workers because they are ordered to be in court by 8 am, when they only get attended to at 12 pm. At times, when a presiding officer who had ordered a report is not at work on a particular day, cases are postponed because other presiding officers do not want to attend the case because of their own caseloads. This situation results in foster care cases not given full legal attention as specified by the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended. As a result, the best interests of the child become compromised.

3.5.3 Poor cooperation of clients

Ngwenya (2011) revealed that many clients are not cooperative with social workers. Some are not trustworthy because the information they give sometimes is false. In terms of the Children Act, when the client relocates, the area social worker must be notified to make new arrangements with the social workers where the client resides. The researcher noted that foster parents are only concerned about foster care grants at the expense of the social wellbeing of foster children. In other instances, foster parents do not share details with social workers when they relocate. It is only when the foster grant has stopped that they go to social workers to find out the cause of the problem. Maloma (2013) concurs with the fact that clients are not trustworthy but manipulative. Social workers spend days locating clients who provided false addresses. They do not bring outstanding documents such as death certificates of parents and school reports in time. Such conduct contributes to backlogs. Furthermore, Meintjies, Budlender, Giese and Johnson (2003) warned that to avoid being told lies by clients, social workers need to verify every information provided before everything could be finalised. It is evident that poor cooperation of some of the clients contributes to the backlog because social workers must wait for documents and waste time trying to locate clients whose intentions contradict the rights of the children. The researcher observed that sometimes clients do not answer their phones when outstanding documents are needed to finalise cases.

Ngwenya (2011) and Maloma (2013) discovered that due to lack of knowledge, some clients relocate from their rural homes to urban areas with the hope that things are done quicker there than in rural areas. As a result, there is an increase in the number of foster care applications. When clients do not inform social workers about their plans to relocate, this creates a backlog and duplication of social services (Portfolio Committee on Social Development, 2009). It is apparent that the relocation by clients without informing social workers, and poor cooperation by clients, among others, add a burden to social workers because their case cannot be processed in court without proper and required documentation.

3.5.4 Lack of support and training from management and supervisors

Sibanda and Lombard (2015) revealed that support from social workers in aspects such as foster care is necessary. There is not enough supervision and proper training in legislation and policies regarding foster care for old and newly employed social workers. According to McKendrick (2001), in all methods of social work such as community work, group work, and case work, social workers are expected to be competent and knowledgeable. The researcher is of the view that when social workers are provided with proper training and workshops regarding foster care, they will be well informed and competent, and the issue of backlogs will be minimal. Social workers are given files to work on without proper supervision and training. Maloma (2013) recommends that management should keep regular contact with social workers to assist them with their daily challenges which, among others, include foster care.

A lack of training is evident when social workers do not feel it is necessary to subject relatives of foster children to the same rigorous screening procedure that they impose on non-related foster applicants. The literature suggests, however, that foster placements with relatives are not always in the child's best interests. Louw and Joubert (2007) conducted a study on experiences of children orphaned by AIDS. They maintain that family members are not always suitable for consideration as foster parents, and therefore advocate for improved foster parent assessment.

In an endeavour to ensure that objectives set out in the public service commission are achieved, which is to render satisfying and competent service to the public, supervisors together with managers, should ensure that social workers at all levels are well equipped with the necessary skills and tools (Public Service Commission, 2002). The researcher believes that social workers should continue to be supervised at all levels so that they remain competent and perform their tasks as effectively as possible. When social workers do not receive proper training in line with child protection, the more the confusion and delay in the processing of foster care applications, thus the backlog. In terms of the Code of Conduct for the Public Service (Public Service Commission 2002), supervisors should identify new social workers in-services needs so that the workshops are in line with the needs of social workers who need skills. The researcher is of the view that supervisors should allay social workers' fears, and give guidance and direction to foster competency. In this way, children's best interests will be given the necessary consideration.

Ngwenya (2011) and Sibanda and Lombard (2015) realised that there is a need for the training of social workers on the Children's Act 38 of 2005, because some them find it difficult to perform their functions. Social workers are not well trained on the Children's Act 38 of 2005 because some are still familiar with the old Act, and are not yet familiar with the new Act. September and Dinbabo (2008) mentioned that a paradigm shift is needed, acknowledging that old ways of doing things may not be the best. Patel (2005) adds that the transition from old ways of doing things to new ways is always challenging and create confusion. As such proper training is necessary for adjustment.

3.5.5 Lack of resources

The deficiency of essential resources in social workers' offices is real. This has been confirmed by the Report of the Portfolio Committee on Social Development (2009) and Sibanda and Lombard (2015). One of the worrying challenges faced by the Department of Social Development is the issue of shortage of resources. Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017) mentioned that the department must invest in resources that will help social workers perform their daily functions without any delay. Resources that are significant in this regard include computers, transport for home visits and telephone lines to

communicate with clients. The issue of resources is not only a challenge within statutory social workers. According to Alpaslan and Schenk (2012), infrastructure plays a crucial role in any department. The government should ensure that there is space for offices, electricity, toilets as well as a waiting area for clients. The researcher has noted that many social workers share offices. When clients come to the office, one social worker must go out as clients do not feel comfortable when the office is full of social workers.

Alpaslan and Schenk (2012) mentioned that for the Department of Social Development to deal with the issue of transport, they should provide subsidised motor vehicles so that social workers could not be hindered to perform their functions where a motor vehicle is a need. The researcher observed that social workers have difficulty in conducting home visits due to lack of transport. As a result, social workers end up failing to gather the necessary information to write child home circumstances reports. Lombard and Klein (2006) discovered that a lack of resources results in a poor service delivery, and as such society loses hope in social workers. The lack of resources within child protection means that children's rights are compromised. The researcher is of the view that failure to provide foster care services by social workers due to lack of resources compromise the best interests of the children as envisaged by the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended.

Maloma (2013) found that social workers share limited resources to conduct their daily duties. At some point, social workers use their own resources to provide services. However, it is discouraging for social workers to work with minimal resources and receive lower salaries. The researcher has observed that social workers share one car for home visits. When the car is not available, it means that urgent cases that need home visits will not be attended. The Department of Social Development lacks resources to adequately carry out stipulations of the Children's Act, foster care in particular. The shortage of social workers poses a huge challenge for the South African foster care system (Kok, 2012). The former and late minister of Social Development, Zola Skweyiya identified the shortage of magistrates trained as presiding officers of child welfare, stationery, cars and the shortage of dedicated children's courts as further challenges to foster care. The shortage of social workers, children's courts, presiding officers of children's courts and

foster parents, coupled with the high caseloads facing social workers, all contribute to the huge backlog in foster care cases (De Jager, 2011). The researcher is of the opinion that without the necessary resources, foster care backlogs will always be a challenge and thus lives of foster children remain under threat.

Kok (2012) and Maloma (2013) mentioned that foster care workers in smaller towns experience more challenges with regard to resources such as stationery, infrastructure, shortage of magistrates trained as presiding officers of child welfare and shortage of dedicated children's courts. The researcher concurs with this statement in that in Botlokwa Capricorn District, they rely upon one magistrate's court, which caters for many communities for different cases, including foster care.

3.5.6 Poor administration

The administrative system used in the social work department is weak and creates space for more backlogs (Ngwenya, 2011). It could take up to five to six months before a file could be ready for court. From the very first day that clients report the case, the social worker should provide them with a list of all required documentation. This will make the process faster and avoid going up and down. Documents such as parents' death certificates, school reports and documentation of prospective foster parents should be communicated. The researcher noted that it takes approximately three months for a social worker to receive form 30 and to send out an advert to locate the surviving parent of the child as part of essential requirements for foster care placement. Khoza (2011) mentioned that sometimes foster files are allocated to vacant posts, meaning that these files are allocated to social workers who resigned or have been shifted to other areas. It is the researcher's observation that when social workers move to other areas, they abandon their previous files and cases. Therefore, under such culture or practice, it is inevitable for the cases to lapse. The Department of Social Development (2009) introduced the project of Supatsela as a key strategic objective to speed up service delivery. It was introduced and expected to be used to deal with backlogs, among others, but it is contributing to the backlog. "Supatsela" refers to the process of capturing files before they could be handed over to social workers. During the process of capturing, some files get

missing due to the high number of files submitted. The researcher is of the view that the process of "supatsela" is not a viable means to address the backlog. Instead it creates more problems because it could take up to 5 months after being captured for social workers to receive the file.

3.6 ROLE PLAYERS IN FOSTER CARE

This section of the chapter provides a critical discussion of role players in the application and finalisation of foster care placement.

3.6.1 Social workers

Social workers provide assessment the first day the client reports a case. This occurs where information regarding the background and circumstances is being assessed and to determine if such child is liable for foster care. At this stage, the social worker screens potential foster parents by looking at their health, environment, income and family composition. After the assessment has been performed, the social worker shall make an informed decision whether pursuant to the Children's Act, the child needs care and protection. Should the social worker find that the child needs care and protection, proper measures shall be taken to ensure the safety of such child. As set out in the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 as amended (SA, 2005), when the circumstance of the child proves that they are in need of care and protection, social workers need to place them in an environment that recognises their health, educational and social needs.

The social worker is then responsible for writing a report about the circumstances of the child together with the prospective foster parents. Then, the social worker presents the report to the courts under the direction of the presiding officer who then decides whether to accept the social worker's recommendations and issue a legal court order placing the child in the care and protection of appropriate foster parents in terms of section 156 of the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 as amended. If the presiding officer of the children's court accepts the social worker's recommendation that the child concerned be placed in foster care, s/he orders that the child be placed with the foster parent who is found to be fit and suitable by the social worker. After the child is placed in foster care, social workers have

the responsibility to render supervision services to the family involved in terms of section 46 (f) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended. The supervision, among others, includes checking the relationship between the foster parent and the child, and if the environment where the child resides is responsive to the child's educational, health and social needs. Once foster children reach the age of the majority (18 years) whilst at school, they review the order according to section 176 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended to grant the child a placement until the s/he turns 21 to enable him or her to complete education. In instances where the social worker finds that the appointed foster parents do not take care of the child as expected by the said act, the social worker again must write 171 reports to transfer the foster child from their current foster placement to the care of another person or placement. It is worth mentioning that social workers write different reports depending on the circumstances of the child. These reports include when the social worker finds it necessary for the prospective foster child to undergo an HIV test, and for the child who has absconded foster placement.

2.6.2 Presiding officers, Interpreters and Clerks of court

Presiding officers play a fundamental role in placing children who need care and protection in foster care. According to Ngwabi (2014), when the social worker is satisfied that indeed the child needs care and protection, the reports are handed over to the attention of the presiding officer. In terms of section 155 (8) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended, the presiding officer issues an order that places the child in foster care. In the same wavelength, Sibanda and Lombard (2015) revealed that presiding officers are also responsible for the extension of placement orders which is provided for in sections 159 and 186 of the said act. Loffell (2011) argues that previously, the extension of orders was done by social workers. The coming into operation of the Children's Act transferred the powers to presiding officers. This has resulted in backlogs in foster care. Presiding officers conduct all their roles in partnership with clerks of court, interpreters and social workers (Guidelines for the Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa, 2010). Children's courts must be chaired by a trained and sensitive presiding officer who understands the needs of the child and is familiar with relevant legislation, in this case the Children's Act (38/2005) as amended. According to indicators for child

protection recommended by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC, 2006), there is no percentage of presiding officers who have attended any form of training on child care and development, family matters and length of experience in years as presiding officers in children's courts. The assumption in this regard is that presiding officers of children's courts should have some specialised knowledge and qualities to deal with children's matters. In addition to the abovementioned statement, Sibanda and Lombard (2015) revealed that social workers deal with presiding officers who are not knowledgeable about Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended, and who are not experienced in working with children. This results in recommendations from social workers not taken by court. The researcher holds the view that presiding officers in children's courts should attend workshops and training about issues related to children in need of care and protection so that they are on par with social workers.

Pursuant to the Guidelines on the Management of Statutory Services (2012), the role of the interpreter in children's court is to guard against language barriers. This is to say that s/he ensures that foster parents together with the foster child understand what is being discussed in children's courts. For example, if the applicant is a Venda speaking person, the interpreter should make sure that the applicant understands the original language to avoid confusion. The researcher observed that it will be a futile exercise for foster parents and children to attend children's courts in which there is a language barrier. Thus, the interpreter plays a crucial role in children's courts.

All the matters falling within the jurisdiction of children's courts must be brought to clerks of children's courts (Guide on the Management of Statutory Services, 2012). In the finalisation of foster care cases which require the attention of children's courts, clerks of court work together with social workers and presiding officers to make sure the files brought to court by social workers comply with the fundamental requirements of the Children Act No.38 of 2005 as amended (SA, 2005). The clerks of court are also responsible for making sure that files are well consolidated and are ready for court. In the same wavelength, clerks ensure that all the court orders issued by the presiding officer are placed in the correct files of different applicants. Social workers rely on clerks of court

about the next court proceedings/ the next date of children's courts. It is therefore enough to mention that clerks of court act as middlemen between social workers and children's courts.

3.6.3 South African Social Security Agency

According to Ngwabi (2014), after the presiding officer had issued the court order highlighting that the child is found to need care, the social worker will submit the order to the attention of the South African Social Security Agency practitioners to administer the grant of the said child. This phase includes the foster parent applying for a foster grant, which is a financial contribution from the state to assist foster parents to meet the needs of the child in accordance with section 8(a and b) of the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004. An application for the grant is made with a court order at the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) offices after a verdict from the children's court. SASSA is responsible to ensure that the grant is payable to the rightful appointed foster parents. The social worker shall make sure that the grant is to the advantage of the child found to need care and protection (Guidelines for the Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa, 2010).

3.6.4 Department of Education

According to section 29 (1) (a) of the South African Constitution, everyone has the right to a basic education. Section 29(1) (b) of the Constitution states that everyone has the right to further education, and that the state must make such provision progressively available and accessible through the Department of Education. According to the Guide on the Management of Statutory Services (2012), the Department of Education is mandated by the Constitution of South Africa to provide education at all levels. It is noteworthy that the Department of Education in collaboration with the Department of Social Development (social workers) plays a critical role in the life of foster children. The researcher has experienced in his past placement as a social worker at the Department of Social Development that the Department of Education assists social workers with school letters and children's school progress reports as these are basic requirements for finalisation of foster care cases in children's courts. According to the Guidelines for the

Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa (2010), no foster care case may be finalised without a school letter from the Department of Education. As such foster care will not be complete without the help of the said department.

The Department of Education and social workers are both meant to promote the well-being of children and their families, and each system has its own perspective on and approach to working with children (Altshuler, 2003). Nonetheless, effective collaboration among these two systems can help in meeting the educational, physical and mental health needs of children in foster care (Zetlin, Weinberg & Shea, 2006). It can move systems away from authoritative to shared decision-making that advocates for the child, which can help to ensure that the physical, mental, emotional and educational needs of the child in foster care are addressed. Collaborating more effectively also enables systems to identify and overcome barriers that hinder the educational success of these children, resulting in improved sharing of critical information, and more timely school enrolment. According to Altshuler (2003), before a walk through the doors of a school, he or she has already experienced many traumatic and disruptive events, including the original abuse, removal from the home, separation from siblings, having to tell the story to strangers, meeting social workers, and meeting new foster parents. To enhance each child's experience of continuity and security, social workers and the Department of Education must work together.

Zetlin *et al.* (2006) assert that schools and social workers can adopt policies that ease the school transitions of children in foster care and improve their chances of academic success. This can include but not limited to policies that are useful in supporting successful school transitions; policies that ensure immediate enrolment even if there are missing required documents of the child; policies that expedite convening a special education meeting if the child needs to receive services immediately; and policies about information-sharing that clarify what information can be shared about the child and with whom. The above authors identify the following as additional strategies that the Department of Education can employ to promote educational stability and academic success for children in foster care: holding regular meetings with an education team of

school staff and social workers to discuss the child's educational progress and needed resources and services. Based on the researcher's experience as a social worker, after the successful placement of the child in foster care, social workers provide supervisory role as well as continuum care. As part of this, the social worker together with the Department of Education should ensure that the environment is responsive to the child's educational needs, and where there is a problem about the child, the social worker must try to resolve the problem.

3.7 THE CONSENQUENCES OF FOSTER CARE BACKLOG

Foster care backlogs have a variety of negative side effects not only on clients but on social workers and the profession of social work as a whole.

3.7.1 Consequences for social workers

In studies by Dawes (2003) and Ngwenya (2011), it was found that foster care backlogs make social workers to have low confidence and hated by communities they serve. The community expects proper service delivery from social workers, and when this is delayed they cannot be trusted. Maloma (2013) concurs with the above statement that social workers do not have the zeal and motivation to work amidst high caseload and backlogs. They always work under pressure because service delivery is paramount to them. The quality of their work is affected, which makes them feel disrespected and undermined by other professionals such as psychologists, nurses and policemen, to mention but few. Sithole (2010) and Dlamini and Sewpaul (2015) aver that the profession of social work has reached the lowest level in South Africa; social workers cannot pride themselves with their profession. Their morale and confidence has reached the lowest level.

Foster care backlogs have a far-reaching consequence to service users; and the quality of service is affected (Ngwenya, 2011). According to Dawes (2003), when social workers are confronted with this backlog, some of the procedures set out in the act are compromised and not followed. The only service being delivered is that of making a grant available for the support of the child and neglect the social functioning of the children concerned. This statement is supported by Maloma (2013) that social workers work under

pressure, and instead of producing quality service, they only provide quantity service to their clients. The researcher has also witnessed that social workers are concerned about the number (quantity) of clients they have contacted than the impact (quality) they make in the lives of their clients. This is supported by Jooste (2009), that social workers handle more than hundred cases each day and as such incompetency ensues because not every file can be given due consideration.

3.7.2 Consequences for foster parents and foster children

Foster parents and foster children are negatively affected by the foster care backlogs, hence Ngwenya (2011) found that these backlogs have a negative impact on service delivery; to that, end both foster parents and children suffer. Dawes (2003) avowed that social work caseloads have increased by number of children in foster care to a point where it is difficult to render proper service. According to the researcher, the abovementioned statement indicates that due to high numbers of foster care cases, social workers are unable to give full attention to their clients as they are supposed to, as outlined in section 46(f) of the Children's Act No.38 of 2005. In accordance with regulation 66 of the Children's Act, social workers are obliged to empower their clients and clarify the roles of all stakeholders within foster care (Guidelines for the Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa, 2010). The researcher postulates that when foster parents and children's roles and expectations are clarified by social workers, this will eliminate confusion to clients. According to Kok (2012), foster parents should be recruited, empowered and trained by social workers in their role as foster parents. De Jager (2011) mentioned the two main needs of foster parents that have been identified internationally, that is the need for training and the need for support. Foster parents are expected to be able to deal with medical, emotional, developmental and behavioural issues that might surface while caring for their foster children, but due to the high number of cases flocking to social workers' office, this is impossible. In the same breath, there is a need for good working relationships between social workers, foster children and foster parents (De Jager, 2011). The researcher believes that once the social worker fails to finalise a foster care case, the client-worker relationship is likely to be bitter. Such atmosphere could negatively affect the level of service delivery. In support of the statement above, Boning

and Ferreira (2013) revealed that due to backlogs, foster children are emotionally and socially disturbed, and social workers have less time to intervene on account that they have high caseloads. The researcher as a social worker observed that foster parents are going to and fro offices of social workers to consult about challenges they face as foster parents. They are not given the necessary attention due to high caseloads faced by social workers. Therefore, social work services involve not only statutory services such as foster care, but also intensive psychosocial intervention and support for both foster parents and the children concerned.

3.7.3 Consequences for the profession

According to Ngwenya (2011), the profession of social work is slowly fading away; in the long run people will not consult social workers. The Department of Social Development has forced social workers to work based on the number of clients they serve rather than quality services. This statement is supported by Dawes (2003) that since social workers are appraised on numbers of the client they have seen, they no longer render quality services. The researcher is of the opinion that clients and other professionals lose trust and respect for the social work profession because social workers cannot perform their task to their full potential due to the constraints of high caseload they are confronted with.

According to Meintjies, Budlender, Giese and Johnson (2003), the idea of social workers is that they do case work, group work and community work; but instead they are pressured down in foster care cases. This makes therapeutic interventions very minimal. This may result in a situation which does not create and promote opportunities for professional development amongst social workers. Social workers are expected to abide by ethical principles regardless of the consequences of foster care backlogs; they must at all cost and times protect the profession of social work and do what is expected of them. The South African Council for Social Service Profession (SACSSP)'s Code of Ethics (2005) stipulates that social workers must accord appropriate respect to the fundamental rights of individuals and provide services as stipulated by the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended. It is apparent that values of social work such as that of competence are contradicted and not practised in an appropriate manner due to the backlog. The

researcher reckons that clients' needs are compromised as social workers cannot effectively provide services. For example, once the child is placed in foster care, social workers do not have much time to do supervisory roles as expected. As a result, this tarnishes the image of the profession of social work as some children are placed in an environment which is not responsive to their needs.

3.8 CONCLUSION

Children in South Africa serve as the country's most vulnerable entities. The success of society at large rests on the ability of the State to provide care to its children. If children are not part of a country's fundamental realisation to providing for their needs, then all other needs realised would not be progressively met. This study adopted the structural theory to explore experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlogs. Furthermore, legislative framework influencing foster care, factors influencing foster care backlogs, the impacts of backlogs to social workers and the overall welfare of children were discussed. Foster care therefore serves as a pivotal tool in South Africa to ameliorate difficulties experienced by children in need of care and protection. The next chapter will be about the presentation, analysis and interpretation of qualitative data.

CHAPTER 4

QUALITATIVE DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTREPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents, analyses and interprets empirical qualitative findings of this study which was aimed to explore the experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlog at Botlokwa in the Capricorn district of the Limpopo Province. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews from a sample of twelve (12) social workers in the Department of Social Development at Botlokwa in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province were conducted. These social workers were selected according to their experience in foster care placement. The researcher used convenient sampling to select these participants (social workers). The findings of the study are related to its objectives. The Nvivo software was used to manage and organise data that is analysed thematically as follows:

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF SOCIAL WORKERS

In a quest to understand participants, demographic factors comprising of age, gender, experience of social workers and their qualifications were profiled as follows:

4.2.1 Age of Social workers
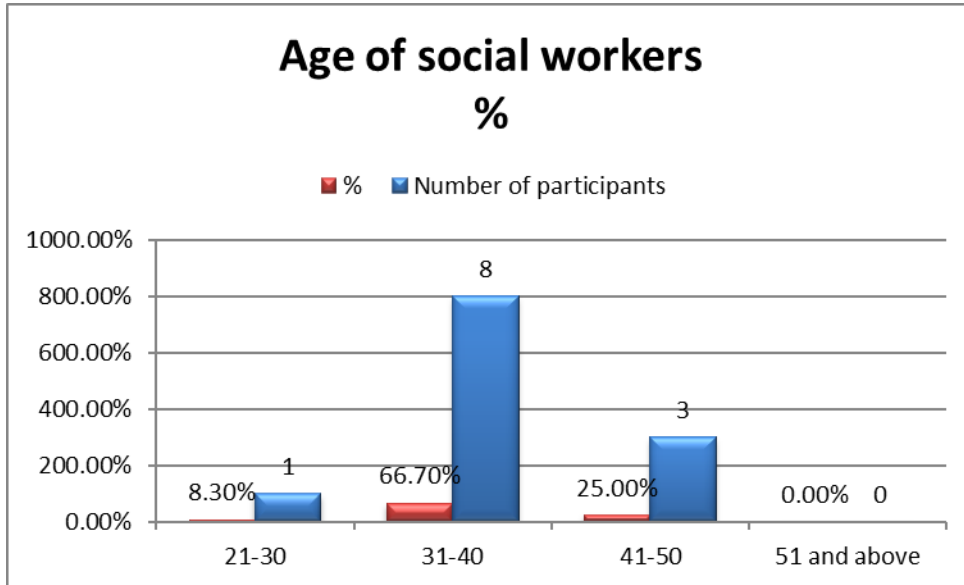
Figure 1: Age of social workers

The graph above illustrates that majority of participants were aged between 31-40 years with a 66,7% representation, followed by participants aged from 41-50 with 25% representation and those aged from 21-30 with 8.3 % representation.

4.2.2 Gender of social workers
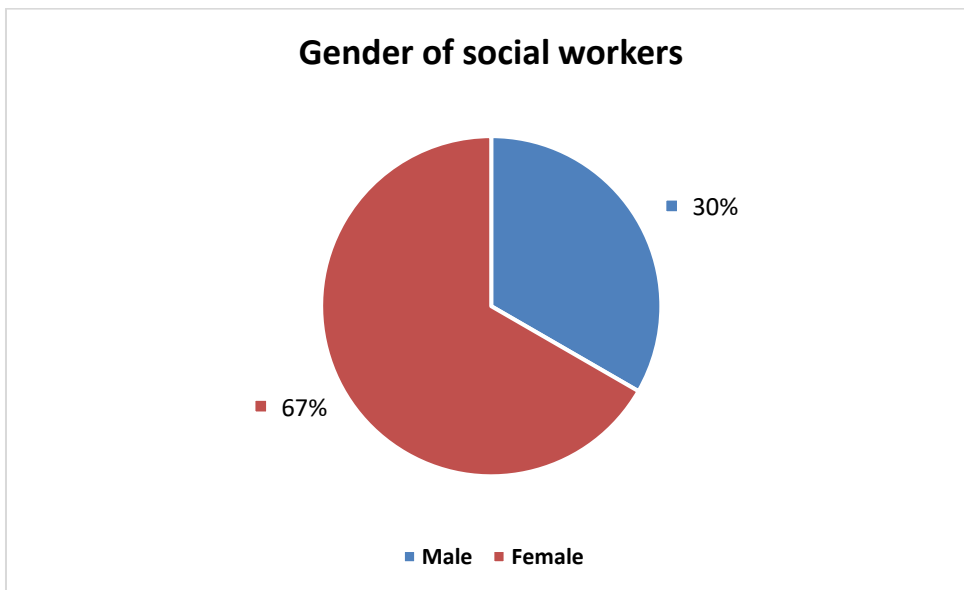
Figure 2: Gender of social workers

The above figure shows that the majority of participants were females with 67% representation and four males at 33% of the sample. The possible reason behind the representation variation could be that social work is traditionally viewed as a female-dominated profession. Rapholo (2018) reveals that the social work profession is dominated by female practitioners as compared to their male counterparts. In the same wavelength, Sithole (2010) and Khunou, Pillay and Nethenonda (2012) avow that women are dominating the social work profession.

4.2.3 Highest Qualification of social workers

Qualification	Female	Male	%
BA in Social Work	8	4	100%

Table 1: Highest Qualification social workers

From the table above, it can be noted that all participants interviewed hold a Bachelor of Art degree in Social Work. For one to practise as a social worker in foster care placements, they first must have a qualification in social work. This table makes it very clear that these social workers possess a qualification to enable them do foster care work.

3.2.4 Experience of social workers in foster care

Years of experience	Female	Male	%
4-7	02	02	33.3
8-11	03	02	41.7
12-15	01	0	8.3
16 and above	02	0	16.7
Total	08	04	100%

Table 2: Number of experienced social workers in foster care

This table shows that all participants have experience of doing foster care work. However, their years of experience differ as follows: four (two males and two females) who made 33.3% of the sample representation have between 4 to 7 years of experience in foster care, while three females and two males with 41.7 % representation have between 8 and 11 years of experience, one female with 8.3 % representation has between 12 and 15 years and lastly two females representing 16.7 % have 16 years of experience and more in foster care.

4.3 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The study applied a semi structured interview schedule aided by qualitative open-ended questions to collect data from twelve statutory social workers employed by the Department of Social Development in Botlokwa in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province. The following findings which are presented thematically emerged from the study.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Factors contributing to foster care backlog

Findings revealed that the dearth of statutory social workers and social auxiliary workers, system deficiencies within the children's court fraternity processes to finalise foster care, insufficient tools of trade, multiple work responsibilities, lack of cooperation from clients and insufficient supervisors contribute to foster care backlogs.

4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Shortage of Social Workers and Social Auxiliary Workers/ Personnel Capacity

A considerable number of participants reported shortage of social workers in their offices as a factor resulting in a high volume of foster care backlogs. These participants indicated that if they had more social workers as well as auxiliary social workers in their offices, they could render effective and efficient service about minimising or perhaps stopping the foster care backlog. Some of the responses given by participants are as follows:

> *"We as social workers do not have enough social workers in the department, my case-load deserves two more social workers, alone I cannot deal with my caseload".*

> *"We need more auxiliary social workers to help us with the caseload, the caseload we have is too much and I think we are the municipality with many backlogs".*

In the same breath, other participants indicated that there are lot of qualified social workers who are at home without jobs because the Department of Social Development did not absorb them after they have completed their Bachelor of Social Work degrees. Therefore, it is crucial for the Department of Social Development to go back to the drawing board about the recruitment strategy for social workers in the country. This will help to minimise the high caseload of foster care backlogs. The following is a response from one of the participants:

> *"We lack manpower in the department and many social work graduates are sitting home without jobs. The Department of Social Development should just utilise them to join us so that we can deal with the caseloads".*

Findings of this study reveal a shortage of social workers as well as auxiliary social workers to team up in an endeavour to curb the foster care backlog. The findings find support in Chibba (2011), who revealed that social workers are scarce in South Africa. In his study, Chibba established that many social workers in South Africa leave the country for better salary packages and good working conditions. The researcher believes that social workers leave government to secure better working conditions and salaries. This challenge is supported by Khumalo (2016), when he quoted the ex-minister of Social Development who mentioned that South Africa needed about 16 000 social workers to curb issues faced by children. This is because the country lost many social workers in the late 1990s to other countries in search for better incentives and working conditions. Boning and Ferreira (2013) corroborate participants' view that the social work profession is under pressure because few workers employed by government must deal with high caseloads. This results in the quality of services being compromised and the worsening situation of children in foster care.

4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 2: System deficiencies within the Children's court fraternity

Most participants highlighted that the operation of children's court contributes largely to foster care backlogs. They mentioned that children's courts give social workers court dates which are inconsistent with the children's court date of enquiry. This becomes a challenge, particularly with orders which are due for review. One participant stated that:

> *"The dates which the court gives us are far and they take time to give dates, normally we go to court once in a month that is not fair to the vulnerable children".*

Findings reveal that the way in which children's courts operate contributes to the backlog in foster care by securing court dates which are far from when the children's court inquiry was opened. Normally, foster care placement takes about 90 days to finalise according to Section 155(2) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended to enable designated social workers to investigate the circumstances of a child before court proceedings. Therefore, social workers should ensure that they submit the reports to court on dates which will also allow courts to be accommodated within the expiry date of 90 days.

In the same wavelength, some participants indicated that some presiding officers' recommendations are sometimes unnecessary, and that there are clerks of court who are not organised. This is what one participant said:

> *"The magistrate recommendations are too much, sometimes the court need form 30 results, sometime the court does not view the child as orphan as the social workers do, so this is a challenge for us""If both parents are deceased when the child is living with their maternal family, the court needs consent about child placement from the paternal family and if the families are not in good terms there is no way in which one could get consent".*

Presiding officers often make recommendations that need thorough investigations before foster care placement can be finalised. Manukuza (2013) substantiates that most of the time, presiding officers dismiss the recommendations made by statutory social workers

about placing the child concerned in foster care of relatives. Presiding officers usually hold that only children without visible means of support should be regarded as children in need of care and protection. Therefore, it is imperative that social workers conduct a thorough assessment and foster care screening before opening an inquiry in children's courts. This according to the researcher, will minimise chances of foster care cases being adjourned as this has implications on the wellbeing of children who are seriously in dire need for care and protection. Participants' views about presiding officers is corroborated by Sibanda and Lombard (2015), that social workers must deal with presiding officers who have partial knowledge about matters affecting children who need care and protection as provisioned by Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended. Sibanda and Lombard (2015) found that children's court matters are often presided over by presiding officers who rotate from civil, criminal and children's court cases, resulting in some of them not being proficient with the provisions of the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 as amended. This contributes to foster care backlogs.

In corroboration with these findings, other participants mentioned that some of the clerks of court are not well organised about foster care. They mentioned that many often files get lost in their possession, and as a result cases lapse. Here are some responses from participants:

> *"Clerks of the children's court are not well organised, more often they fill in names of foster children a time before the court inquiry starts, misplacing files and sometimes writing wrong names on the court orders, later the social worker will pick this up and the cases should go back to court to rectify the errors".*

> *"I believe clerks of the children's court are not in order, files get missing and the supervisors blame us, when we submit files to court we clip the files together as one, but the clerks will unclip them to check is the files are complete and that's how they get lost".*

It can therefore be deduced from these findings that deficiencies in children's courts, namely; the period to finalise foster care placement or review of court orders, clerks of court who are disorganised, presiding officers' understanding of children in need of care and protection and their unfair recommendations contribute to foster care backlogs.

4.3.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Foster care processes and its implication to backlog

An overwhelming majority of participants mentioned delays in waiting for form 30 and the advertisement of unknown fathers as causing the backlog. Form 30 is the application that social workers make to the Department of Social Development to confirm whether the prospective foster parent is a child abuser or not. The main aim is to check whether the foster parent's name found by the social worker does not appear on the National Child Protection register as envisaged in section 123(c) of the Children's Act no 38 of 2005 as amended. One participant argued:

> *"Before we place a child in court it is the requirement of court to submit form 30 and advert results, some magistrate do not consider files without form 30, so is either I wait for the results or another presiding officer".*

In the same breath, the other participant echoed that:

> *"The process of foster care is long, it takes 90 days and the system is failing us you will go to home affairs for parents death confirmation, go to school for child progress report and confirmation that the child is going to school".*

Findings of this study reveal that the 90 days waiting period for form 30 and the advertisement of unknown fathers contribute immensely to the backlog. The researcher believes that the waiting period should be revised and shortened to allow for foster care cases to be processed in a manner that is responsive to children's needs. This is because the waiting period compromises the principle of the child's best interests. According to Guidelines for the Effective Management of Foster Care in South Africa (2010), form 30 and the advertisement of unknown fathers are necessary and therefore should never be avoided. The researcher concurs in that the form 30 inquiry should always be the starting

point during the application of foster care to make sure that children who need care and protection are taken care of by capable and suitable foster parents who do not have criminal records against children.

4.3.1.4 Sub-theme 4: Insufficient tools of trade

An overwhelming number of participants mentioned a lack of tools of trade as a factor contributing to foster care backlogs in their offices. Participants mentioned shortage of necessary tools of trade such as stationery, cars, offices, computers and telephone and fax facilities. All these resources are important in the execution of foster care placement. The researcher observed that almost all offices in Botlokwa have the same challenge of tools of trade. During interviews in this study, the researcher observed frustrations and anger amongst participants when they spoke about the lack of the said tools because it hinders their potentials to deliver quality services to clients.

Some participants echoed that:

"We don't have enough printers and cartridge and as such I cannot be able to print reports, sometime I go to hospital next door to ask them to print for me, this is not good because this files are confidential".

"I struggle when I need a car for home visits, clients think I do not take them serious, this is because we schedule for appointment and fail to go and see them. I need to wait until the car is available".

In the same wavelength, another participant stated that:

"Because of lack of phone in my office I sometimes go to switchboard to make calls then I must tell clients to go out of office meanwhile I am making calls and when I came back I call them again so that we continue with session".

These findings are validated by Ngwenya and Botha (2012) that it will be difficult for social workers to perform to their optimal level without tools of trade, because effective services are dependent on tools. Therefore, it is important for Social Development as the

incumbent to provide adequate resources and infrastructure to social work offices to allow them to work in an environment that is accommodative and functional. This will ease them to push the high foster care caseloads. The portfolio committee on Social Development (2009) avers that the lack of resources impedes social workers from executing their tasks of foster care processing. This has been confirmed by Sibanda and Lombard (2015), who also found that challenges within the Department of Social Development in foster care cases include shortage of resources. Dhludhlu and Lombard (2017) mentioned that the department must invest in resources that will help social workers perform their daily functions without any delay. Resources that are significant in this regard include computers, transport for home visits and telephone lines to communicate with clients. The resources challenge is not only an issue within statutory social workers, but according to Alpaslan and Schenk (2012), infrastructure plays a crucial role in any department. Therefore, the government should ensure that there is a space for offices, electricity, toilets as well as a waiting area for clients. Therefore, the employer, in this study has an enormous role to play in making work easy for social workers who do foster care placement by making working tools available. This will help eradicate a high volume of lapsed orders and foster care backlogs in general.

4.3.1.5 Sub-theme 5: Multiple work responsibilities

Most participants mentioned multitasking and high caseloads as causing foster care backlogs in their offices. This is as a result of practising generic social work where they focus on several fields of practice in social works such as substance abuse, family preservation and reunification, foster care cases and community work. Participants' responses were as follows:

> *"I have high caseload and am not focusing only on foster care, but I focus on substance abuse cases and family preservation and community campaigns".*

> *"I think being a generic social worker contributes to backlog because I have many cases from different focus area, I need to give each case reasonable time it deserves".*

Findings reveal that being a generic social worker and dealing with high caseload causes foster care backlogs in offices of social workers. This is corroborated by Ngwenya (2011), Sibanda and Lombard (2015) and Mosimege (2017), who found that the caseload faced by social workers, and the unequal allocation of foster cases contributes to the high volume of foster care backlogs amongst social workers in Social Development in South Africa. The researcher is of the view that social workers should specialise in different focus areas. The unfair allocation of foster care files to social workers contravenes the Code of Conduct for the Public Service (Public Service Commission, 2002). According to the code of conduct, supervisors are obliged to treat everyone equally and to distribute work equally to all social workers. Furthermore, they should monitor and evaluate the work of the subordinates to ensure quality service delivery. Unfortunately, cases are unevenly distributed amongst social workers and therefore, other officers end up with more cases than others. This contributes to a high volume of foster care backlogs in social work offices.

Other participants indicated that the multiple responsibilities somehow confuse social workers to end up not attending to foster care cases, particularly those that are due for renewal. One participant pointed out that:

> *"Social workers with lapsed cases do not attend to their cases on time, instead they sit with them without attending them until the supervisor query them".*

It can be noted from these findings that social workers who do not specialise in the Department of Social Development somehow contribute to the high volume of foster care. To support the last quote from one participant, the researcher has observed from his practical experience that some workers attend to foster care cases as and when they are about to lapse due to multiple tasks at hand. As a result, they do not have ample time to gather all required documents within a short space of time. This results in high volume of lapsed court orders.

4.3.1.6 Sub-theme 6: Lack of Cooperation from Clients

Some participants stated that clients do not cooperate in providing the necessary documents to finalise foster care placement or renew court orders. Some participants have indicated that other clients do not honour the appointments they are given to assist during the process of foster care applications or renewals. The researcher holds the view that most of the clients are not well capacitated about foster care and as such they do not know what is expected of them.

Another participants echoed that:

> *"Clients relocate to other areas without informing the social worker, I will go several times to check them and I will never find them until I ask from neighbours, looking for them delays the progress of the case because nothing will be done without them".*

> *"Clients do not want to bring outstanding documents, when you call them using office phone they do not answer; they answer when you use personal cellphone".*

In the same wavelength, one participant echoed that:

> *"Clients will tell you lies every time they come to office, they normally come to office when they want to withdraw money because they need social worker to assist them with a letter of withdrawal to post office".*

Findings reveal that lack of cooperation from clients is a serious problem because nothing can be done without them, and this contributes to foster care backlogs in their offices. This supports Ngwenya's (2011) argument that most clients are reluctant when they should comply with social workers. Some are not honest and give information that cannot be trusted. Clients do not inform social workers when they change their place of stay. As a result, it is difficult for social workers to conduct home visits. Maloma (2013) concurs that clients lie about their addresses and location wherein social workers find it difficult to locate the address given by the clients. Maloma further avows that clients do not bring outstanding documents such as death certificates of parents and school reports in time.

This conduct contributes to backlogs. Meintjies, Budlender, Giese and Johnson (2003) argue that clients give false information. The social worker needs to authenticate every information provided by clients, including checking if the foster parent is indeed staying with the child.

4.3.1.7 Sub-theme 7: Insufficient Supervisors

Participants mentioned that they do not have enough supervisors in their respective offices, and that this contributes to foster care backlogs because before they can open children's court inquiry, supervisors should have canalised their reports. They highlighted that one supervisor in their offices supervises many social workers which ultimately results in delays in processing foster care applications further. Some participants avowed that:

> *"You will find one supervisor having more than ten supervisees and this delays our progress especially when the supervisor has to canalise our foster care cases, I feel demoralised when I wait for files for a long time".*

Other participants indicated that the proximity of offices between social workers and supervisors is a challenge is as far as canalisation is concerned, particularly that there are not enough cars to drive to where the supervisor is located. This is what one participant said:

> *"Our supervisors stay far from our offices and they come to us after a while, when we need clarity is either we wait for them to come to our respective offices or to call them".*

In the same wavelength, other participants echoed that:
> *"We have almost six social work stations and we are supervised by only two supervisors".*

"My foster care files take time with my supervisors for canalisation and only when they visit our office they bring them back".

From the study supervisors do not properly perform monitoring and evaluation tasks as required because they are allocated many social workers to supervise since they are allocated a lot of social workers to supervise. As stated in the Social Welfare Services Framework (2012), the supervision of social service practitioners aims to ensure the delivery of quality services to beneficiaries, whilst supporting and building the capacity of the practitioner. This framework points out that one supervisor may supervise not more than ten supervisees (social workers, student social workers, social auxiliary workers and learners) if that is his/her only key performance area. The ratio of social workers on structured supervision framework states1:10 provided it is the only key performance area and 1:6 if the supervisor has other duties.

Social workers do not receive enough supervision they need to deal with challenges that come with foster care. Consequently, poor quality of work results and adds to the foster care backlog*.* Social workers should always be supported by their supervisors to ensure the effective rendering of services (Moaisi, 2003). Engelbrecht (2014) and SACSSP (2007) outlined that the Social Services Professions Act, 110 of 1978 as amended and the code of ethics guide the supervision of social work and outline how they should be supervised. However, studies by Chiwara (2015) and Ntjana (2015) revealed that it is not only the lack of supervision that social workers endure, but also gaps in adequate and functional guidance of social workers by supervisors in rendering social services. Studies by Dhludhlu (2015) and Chiwara (2015) recommend continuous professional development and training for both supervisors and social workers. This is to ensure they are on par with the changing world by having updated information about what they do. This statement finds support in Maloma (2013) that there is a lack of proper supervision in social work; they are given files to work on without supervision and worships. Maloma (2013) recommends that management should keep regular contact with social workers to assist them with their daily challenges which, among others, include foster care. According to Mbau (2005), the aim of supervision is to motivate and instil confidence in

social workers and ease the anxiety and tension they come across, as well as to help them cope with emotionally demanding situations. When social workers are encouraged and supported by their supervisors, job satisfaction is evident. The supportive function of supervision provides clear directions for social workers providing foster care services, and make their tasks easy to implement (Hess, Kanak & Atkins, 2009).

4.3.2 Theme 2: Social workers' coping strategies on foster care backlog

Findings indicated that coping strategies for social workers with regard to foster care backlogs include comforting clients with lies. some social workers leave files unattended whilst others use their own resources to execute their roles. Others prefer to work as a team in order to cope with foster care backlogs.

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Comfort clients with lies

Some participants highlighted that to cope with foster care backlog issues, particularly when their clients are behind them, they keep on comforting clients with lies. One participant echoed:

> *"I lie to the client; I tell them your case will be sorted in no time knowing exactly that the case is delayed by form 30 results or clerk of court misplaced papers.*

Findings indicate that some social workers comfort clients with lies to protect weaknesses of their employer in terms of allocating resources to ease them address foster care in their offices. It is apparent from participants that social work goes to the extent of behaving in a manner contrary to the rules of comforting clients. SACSSP (2005) states that social workers must always uphold principles as contemplated in the code of ethics such as respecting individuals to privacy and confidentiality and behaving ethically. Due to backlogs in foster care, sometimes the principles are not followed to adjust to the situation. The researcher believes that social workers do not just comfort clients with lies intentionally but they do this to ease the pressure that is put on them by clients who from time to time come to social workers' offices.

4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Un-attendance of files with process notes

Some participants revealed that they leave files unattended but write process notes in the files until they find resources to attend to foster care applications and reviews. The following is a response from one participant:

> *"I just leave files as they are until I have resources and i write process notes to indicate that there was lack of resources to execute my work".*

Findings reveal that some social workers leave files without attending to them until they have proper resources to deal with the cases. During his practical experience, the researcher observed that it is difficult to execute foster care cases as they require proper resources such as printers, computers and stationery.

4.3.2.3 Sub-theme 3: Use of Own Resources

Participants mentioned that they use their own resources such as cars, laptops and money to make sure they provide effective services to clients. Here are responses from participants:

> *"Coping with foster care backlog involves going extra-mile using my own car, laptops and sometimes money".*

> *"I spoon feed the department by using my own money for making copies and using my car for home visit and other time for court".*

It is safe to conclude that at some point, social workers use their own resources to make sure clients receive services. They do so for fear of victimisation by management and supervisors. This practice amongst social workers has implications in that the Department currently does not have any compensation policy for government officials who use their own resources to execute official duties. Currently, the Department of Social Development has a policy on scheme B which allows officers to use their private vehicles. They are reimbursed at an all-inclusive rate that includes maintenance, fuel, capital and

insurance (Subsidized Motor handbook, 2017). The researcher has observed during his practical experience that scheme B is not accessible to all social workers, and as such this puts social workers' life at risk as they use their own cars without the department's knowledge.

4.3.2.4 Sub-theme 4: Letjema (working as a group)

Another participant revealed that they work as a group and devote their time on foster care cases alone in a manner that will alleviate the backlog. The participant also mentioned the outsourcing of resources such as cars and printers from other offices that do not have a huge backlog. Here is the response from the participants:

"We develop the action plan to beef up manpower by coming up with letjema where we focus on foster only and sometimes, we outsource resources like cars and offices".

"Some days we come together from our different areas of work and put other work on hold while we pursue foster care cases".

"The last time social workers were deployed at district office for a week to deal with cases of foster care regardless of where one works"

It is apparent from the above finding that social workers cope with foster care backlogs by helping one another and outsource resources which they do not have in their offices. This implies that social workers who do not have backlogs in their offices go an extra mile to assist those with backlogs with resources from other satellites. The researcher holds the view that supervisors should make use of the strategy of social workers to help one another and outsource resources which other offices do not utilise to finalise foster care backlogs. Child protection services require teamwork among service providers to make sure the work is done without challenges (LaLiberte, Crudo, Kovan & Watson, 2012). This means that working together to help statutory social workers with more backlogs by those with less backlogs in their offices. The researcher believes that should social workers

adopt this approach and implement it efficiently and effectively, foster care backlogs can be prevented and/or minimised in social work offices.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Social workers' recommendations on mitigating factors to foster Care Backlogs

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Specialisation

A substantial majority of participants recommended specialisation as a way to curb foster care backlogs. They mentioned that dealing with different focus areas is time consuming and frustrating. They deem it best to have areas of focus. The following are responses from participants:

> *"If we can have people who are specialising in foster care and they are provided with resources so that the service can be rendered effectively foster backlog".*

> *"Foster care should be a specialisation, we must have social workers who deal specifically with foster care cases and nothing else, I feel it is confusing and frustrating to deal with many different cases".*

Recommendations reveal that foster care should be a speciality where there is a division of labour among social workers. This supports Ngwenya's (2011) suggestion that social workers employed by social development should adopt a structure of specialisation, that is, to have social workers who deal with family preservation, administration, community work and statutory work. The researcher believes that when social workers have a division of labour where some focus on foster care, community work, family preservation, alcohol and substance abuse etc, foster care can be functional and responsive to children's needs.

4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Foster case file audit

Participants said that foster care cases be audited by supervisors to check if the files comply and incorporate all required attachments such as parents' death certificates and school reports before children's court inquiries. Participant said that:

> *"I recommend foster care audit, we audit file checking if the file has a valid court orders and valid document, supervisor should be involved so that they tell officers of penalty should they fail to finalise the case".*

Findings revealed that the auditing of foster care files will have a tremendous effect in the fight against foster care backlogs. The management of statutory services (2012) defines auditing as a quality control measure that must be performed internally and externally. It is an independent and objective activity to ensure that organisations operate with effective compliance and risk management. Ismael and Thomlison (2012) highlighted that a case file audit is based on a selection of a random sample of cases to explore documents and case records in order to examine whether the social worker complies with all the professional and ethical requirements of the profession in handling cases and clients, checking the quality of reports, including process reports, court reports and progress reports and whether cases are managed in a manner that is in line with the Children's Act and other relevant legislation and policies. The researcher believes that if the system of files audit is implemented, it will be fully functional and operational, and foster care backlogs could be minimised. Social workers will feel the need to make sure that all cases are given full attention and are always be up to date.

4.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Resources Allocation

Most participants recommended that social workers' offices should be fully furnished with resources such as telephone lines, printers, computers, stationery and cars to conduct home visits among others. This is what some of them said:

> *"Each social worker should have their transport and office tools like computer, stationery, printers with ink and telephone".*

"Tools of trade are necessary for social workers and the department is aware of our challenges but they fail to give us adequate resources. You will remember that our last national strike was about tools of trade and nothing has been done until today".

Findings of this study revealed that resources in an organisation are of paramount importance; without proper resources, foster care remains impossible and difficult. Budlender and Proudlock (2010) revealed that government funding of statutory work is always insufficient; and this exacerbates the problem of foster care backlogs. Funding should cover all the necessary tools of trade so that the issue of backlogs can be minimised.

4.3.3.4 Sub-theme 4: Manpower

Some participants recommended that the Department of Social Development hire more social workers and social auxiliary workers to add manpower in fighting against foster care backlogs. The researcher holds the view that there will be a division of labour when more workers are hired, which will result in boosting morale and productivity in the workplace. This is what participants said:

"I recommend that the department hire more social workers and auxiliary workers for the caseload to be manageable and those they employ should be furnished with all the resources which are necessary".

"We lack manpower in the department and many social work graduates are sitting home without jobs, DSD should utilize them to join us so that we can deal with the caseload".

"The more we have a capacity of workers to deal with the backlog the more we will mitigate this challenge".

Findings revealed that there is a shortage of workers responsible for foster care. The above finding is supported by Lombard and Klein (2006) and Proudlock, Dutschke, Jamieson, Monson and Smith (2008) that in South Africa, social work is recognised as a scarce skill, and more should be hired. According to Fengu (2012), Social Development made bursaries and scholarships available to students who wanted to become social workers to fill up the shortage. Social worker graduates and bursary holders cannot be employed because the department mentioned that they do not have money to hire more social workers. This still leaves a shortage of social workers in the country.

4.3.3.5 Sub-theme 5: Multidisciplinary team amongst stakeholders

A substantial majority of participants recommended that there must be a good working relationship between departments which is essential in foster care systems. It is said that a good working relationship among departments will yield positive results in the alleviation of foster care backlogs. Here are some responses from participants:

> *"I recommend a multidisciplinary team to be functional, at some point I feel we must have meetings with the schools, court and home affairs as well as foster parents, this will help us to have foster care that is thriving".*

> *"DSD and other stakeholders must have an agreement to speed up all foster case; they put it as a priority whilst waiting for advertisement results and form 30".*

> *"We must empower clients' on foster care because sometimes they relocate without informing us (social workers) and some of our clients do not know what is expected of them, it will be important to empower them".*

Findings revealed that good working relationships between stakeholders of foster care can prove positive in the fight against backlogs. Ngwenya (2011) confirmed that social workers and presiding officers of children's courts should have a communication channel as well as an open-door policy. When they go to court, social workers will know the requirement; and as a result, backlogs can be minimised. For the channel of

communication to be functional, it is important to involve presiding officers, clerks of court, supervisors and social workers. Furthermore, Manukuza (2013) avers that foster parents and foster children must be empowered about foster care to ensure that they know what is expected of them and what foster care entails.

4.3.3.6 Sub-theme 6: A computerised reminder system

Most participants recommended the use of a computerised reminder system. According to management of statutory services (2012), a reminder system is a time management tool to keep track of expiry dates and reports that are due rather than relying on memory. Participants mentioned that this system will help them minimise backlogs in foster care. They said social workers must be able to follow the trends of technology to play their role in a manner that is convenient and efficient. Here are some responses from participants:

> *"we are approaching a digital world they call it fourth industrial revolution, I think a computerised system should be designed for social workers to remind them about their cases when they are due to lapse, this will avoid the backlog".*

> *"I recommend a system that will notify a social worker when a case is due to lapse in three month time, this system should not only notify social workers but also remind the coordinator, supervisors as well as well as district officers".*

> *"There must be something like a robot in a computer to highlight the status of the file, when it is red it highlight that it is due for renewal and when it is green it shows the file is active".*

Findings confirmed that the use of a computerised system in the fight against foster care backlogs will yield positive results. Section 159 of the Children's Act 38 0f 2005 as amended states that an order made by court in terms of section 156 lapses on expiry of two years from the date the order was made and may be extended by a children's court for a period of not more than two years at a time. It is therefore the responsibility of the social worker together with supervisors to keep record of all court orders and expiry dates

on court orders to ensure that no court order lapses. According to Chan and Holosko (2018), the use of technology as an intervention strategy in the social work fraternity is increasingly getting attention. The impact of technology is not only limited to its effectiveness and convenience, but the ability to expand intervention methods to tackle different problems which social workers are facing. On a global scale, social work interventions are also becoming more sophisticated and dynamic because of technological inventions.

4.3.3.7 Sub-theme 7: Convenient court dates

Some participants recommended that children's courts should give court dates which are accommodative and convenient for social workers, particularly with lapsed court orders. Having dates which are not far will help social workers to push the work knowing that the court is due. This will eventually prevent files from lapsing and causing backlogs. One participant echoed:

> *"I think it will be best for children's court to sit every Mondays or Tuesdays, in this way the problem of backlog will be minimal, we will always be busy with our cases because there will be no time anymore to do things which are not work related".*

> *"Children's court should give dates which are accommodative and convenient to us social worker to allow us time to prepare".*

Findings reveal that courts should come up with reasonable court dates. This will help social workers to prepare their reports in time. The researcher holds the view that knowing the next court date allows social workers to schedule their appointment well.

4.3.3.8 Sub-theme 8: Amendment of Form 30 and Advertisement of Unknown Fathers

An overwhelming majority of participants mentioned that foster care cases take almost 90 days or three months. This is the same as the outcome for form 30 and the

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advertisement of unknown fathers. Participants recommend that this process be looked at and be amended. The following are some responses from participants:

"I feel that the process of advertising the unknown fathers and the issue of form 30 which screens for crime against foster parents is long and need to be amended".

"Children's life get stuck because of a mere form 30 results, when we don't have it nothing can be processed so it will be best they go back to the drawing board to amend it".

Findings reveal that form 30 and the advertisement of the process of unknown fathers should be amended. The researcher is of the view that waiting for form 30 for almost three months is time wasting and demoralising as it contradicts the principle of the child's best interests. Timaeusa and Bolerb (2007) point out the importance of the advertisement of unknown fathers to ensure that children are not placed in foster care when the father's whereabouts are known. The researcher believes that children cannot be placed in foster care while their fathers are still alive. The likelihood is that the father will be able to provide for the child's needs and other essential services required for the development of the child.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter forms the cornerstone of the research study as it presented findings of the research project. In this chapter, research findings and literature review were presented, and focused on experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlogs. Therefore, it can be concluded that a number of factors prevent social workers from finalising and/or mitigating foster care cases or lapsed orders resulting in foster care backlogs in their offices. Because of these factors as presented in this chapter, social workers end up engaging in unethical practices due to frustrations which they encounter in their offices as a way of trying to cope with this dilemma. It is therefore crucial that the Department of Social Development and other stakeholders that are key in foster care collaborate their services more efficiently and effectively to mitigate foster care backlog stability in social

work offices. The Department of Social Development should ensure that it makes all the necessary resources available and other possible ways to minimise foster care backlogs in offices of social workers. The next chapter will be about summary of major findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present summary of empirical findings, conclusions and recommendations. The study sought to explore experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlogs at Botlokwa in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province. Findings of the study have shown that social workers in this area experience a volume of foster care backlogs due to shortage of resources, lack of support from the employer and lack of cooperation from the Department of Justice. It can therefore be deduced that foster care backlogs affect social workers tremendously. This chapter also presents re-statements of the research problem, aim and objectives of the study. Feedback on the theoretical framework used in this study will also be presented.

5.2 RE-STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

The HIV/AIDS pandemic orphaned many children and thus escalated the need for foster care in South Africa. The status quo thus led to backlogs in the processing of foster care applications which negatively impacted the quality of life of children (Dhludhlu, 2015). The Department of Social Development tried to come up with a strategic plan to deal with the issue of the backlog. However, the backlog is still continuing (Ngwenya, 2011).

The Department of Social Development's (2017) progress report highlighted that 478 158 children were receiving foster care services. A backlog of 39 102 in all provinces of South Africa was reported. By November 2017, this reported backlog was supposed to be eradicated and reported to the Pretoria High Court by December 2017. Because new extension orders lapsed every month due to the two-year order cycle for each child, it was difficult to eliminate the backlog. Notwithstanding the reported backlog, there was 49 534 foster care orders that had to be extended before December 2017 and another

overwhelming 30 232 that would lapse between January and March 2018. According to the said report, Gauteng and Limpopo Provinces had the risk of not being able to meet the deadline. The two provinces had the highest number of children in foster care.

Social workers with high caseloads find it hard to have all documents and attachments to report to extend orders ready for courts on due dates (October, 2017). It is therefore inevitable for orders to lapse. Social workers investigate and assess each case by visiting each family. From each family visit, they need to write reports, take the reports for canalisation, approach children's courts for appointments and later present them. This results in a turnover time for foster care placements of up to 18 months. After the court has approved the placement, social workers still have to supervise the foster care placement in terms of section 46(f) of the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 as amended (SA, 2005), thereafter write reports on the child's development and justify any extension beyond two years (October, 2017). Social workers listed various challenges they face within the fraternity of foster care, including lack of resources, too much administrative work, high caseloads, magistrates and various departments interpreting the Children's Act differently (Ngwabi, 2014; Dhludhlu & Lombard, 2017). As a result, this caused delays in the opening and finalisation of foster care cases and the extension of court orders for existing foster children. There was a limited scientific research on foster care backlogs in South Africa, yet the problem still prevails, putting social workers under work pressure.

5.3 RE-STATEMENT OF THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

5.3.1 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to explore experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlogs at Botlokwa in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province.

5.3.2 Objectives of the study

To accomplish the aim of this study, the following objectives became important:

- To identify factors contributing to foster care backlogs.

This objective has been achieved. In theme one, findings pointed out shortage of social workers and social auxiliary workers, system deficiencies within children's court fraternity, processes to finalise foster care, insufficient tools of trade, multiple work responsibilities, lack of cooperation from clients and insufficient supervisors as contributing to foster care backlogs.

- To establish social workers' coping strategies on foster care backlogs in the Department of Social Development.

This objective has been achieved. The findings in theme two indicated that social workers are coping with foster care backlogs by comforting clients with lies. Some social workers leave files unattended whilst others use their own resources to execute their roles. Yet, others prefer to work as a team to cope with foster care backlogs.

- To develop social workers' suggestions on how to mitigate foster care backlogs.

This objective has been achieved. In light of theme three, statutory social workers recommended specialisation in foster care, the auditing of files, allocation of more resources and enough manpower in foster care. It was also recommended for strong multidisciplinary team amongst stakeholders, implementation of a computerised reminder

system in foster care, and amendment of form 30 and the advertisement of unknown fathers as ways to curb the backlog.

5.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study was anchored on the theoretical underpinning of Talcott Parson Structural Functionalist theory to achieve the objectives of the study. The Structural Functionalism theory sees the society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote cohesion and stability. In this study, it was discovered that there is no cooperation between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development and sometimes from prospective foster parents who do not provide the required documents on time in the finalisation of foster care. Social workers have indicated that cases pending review of orders lapse because children's courts give dates which are far and that presiding officers' recommendations are sometimes not fair, particularly in instances of interpreting circumstances which define a child in need of care and protection. Findings have also shown that some presiding officers are not versed in terms of applying the Children's Act no. 38 of 2005 as amended. According to Mohammed and Osuala (2014), Structural Functionalism is inextricably tied up with the question of order, stability and cohesion and if integration is maintained in society by its parts. In the context of this study, these parts referred to different departments that play a significant role in foster care system.

Foster care is an on-going process that involves different role-players. As a result, if one of the involved role-players fails to play its role then, a backlog is bound to exist. In some instances, a backlog can result from a malfunction and delay of one department. For example, social workers may struggle to timely provide information required by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development as a result of lack of compliance amongst foster families. This theory was useful to identify role players that are playing a significant role towards the backlog of foster care cases.

5.5 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The following is a summary of major findings of the study from qualitative data:

5.5.1 Factors contributing to foster care backlogs

- Findings of the study revealed that there is a shortage of social workers and social auxiliary workers to work together in an endeavour to curb foster care backlogs. Chibba (2011) revealed that there is a scarcity of social workers in South Africa.

- Findings revealed that the way in which children's courts operate contributes to the foster care backlog; it does so by securing court dates which are far from when the children's court inquiry is opened. Furthermore, it was revealed that presiding officers' recommendations are sometimes too much for the scope of social workers and that some clerks of children's court are disorganised; so foster care backlogs become unpreventable.

- The study found that 90 days' waiting period for form 30 and the advertisement of unknown fathers also contribute immensely to foster care backlogs. The two are legal requirements for the opening and finalisation of a children's court inquiry.

- It was also found that social workers operate with insufficient resources such as offices, stationery, cars, computers, and telephone and fax facilities. Social workers cannot be able to perform their official duties without the mentioned resources. Tools of trade are an important aspect for statutory social workers because without proper tools, it will be rather difficult for them to render effective services to clients (Ngwenya & Botha, 2012).

- It was found that practising generic social work and dealing with high caseloads contribute to foster care backlogs in offices of social workers. The findings are supported by Ngwenya (2011), Sibanda and Lombard (2015) and Mosimege (2017) who found that high caseloads and unfair distribution of cases to area social workers contribute to foster care backlogs amongst social workers.

- Findings revealed that lack of cooperation from clients is a serious problem because nothing can be done without them; and this contributes to foster care backlogs. Ngwenya (2011) avers that clients act dishonestly towards social

workers because they do not cooperate and do not tell them when they relocate; the social worker gets to see the client only when the grant has stopped.

- It was also found that statutory social workers have inadequate supervisors in their respective offices; and this contributes to foster care backlogs because before they can open the children's court inquiry, supervisors should have canalised their reports.

4.5.2 Social workers' coping strategies on foster care backlog

- From this study, it was found that some social workers cope with the backlog by comforting clients with lies. The findings revealed that some social workers leave files unattended and write a process notes to indicate reasons why they did not attend to such files until they have all the necessary resources.

- The findings of this study have shown that due to lack of sufficient resources, social workers at some point tend to use their own resources to make sure clients receive quality services. They do so for fear of victimisation by management and supervisors. It was also learned that this kind of practice amongst social workers has implications in that the Department of Social Development currently does not have any compensation policy for government officials who use their own resources to execute their office work. It was clear from the findings that when social workers have too much caseloads, they help one another by providing resources which are lacking and help alleviate the foster care backlog.

5.6 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are drawn from the above findings:

- Foster care backlogs are not a result of social workers' ignorance but failure by relevant stakeholders such as the employer (DSD), children's courts (DJCD) and sometimes clients, to collaborate their efforts and make resources available to make the job easy for social workers to curb this challenge which social workers are face with.

- In order to cope with the challenges of foster care backlogs, social workers tend to practise unethically. For example, they comfort clients with lies (i.e. make empty

promises that clients' files are being attended whereas they are not) so that they do not discourage them. Some end up using their own resources in order to address foster care backlogs.

- Non-specialisation amongst social workers in the Department of Social Development somehow contributes to the high volume of foster care in social work offices.

- It was evident from the study that supervisors are unable to properly fulfil oversight, monitoring and evaluation tasks as required due to the fact that they are allocated a lot of social workers to supervise.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on empirical findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- It is important for foster care to be declared a speciality for social workers.

- The Department of Social Development should be strict in auditing foster care files in order to check if they comply with the requirements of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended.

- It will be of utmost importance for the Department of Social Development to allocate statutory social workers with the necessary resources to fulfil their duties.

- The department should recruit more social workers and social auxiliary workers to increase manpower in the fight against foster care backlogs.

- It is important for the Department to adopt a computerised system to remind social workers and supervisors when files are due for review to avoid lapsing.

- It is imperative for role players in foster care to create an effective and good working relationship as this will help promote effective service delivery to clients.

- It is of paramount importance to have policies that will protect social workers who from time to time use their own resources to execute their official duties.

- Through children's courts, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development should come up with a schedule of court dates to avoid confusion. This will allow social workers to go to court prepared.

- It is important for the Department of Social Development to amend form 30 and the advertisement of unknown fathers' waiting period to a lesser period.

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ANNEXURE A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Topic: Experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlog at Botlokwa in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province.

INTRODUCTION

I Mokgalapa A.M am a masters student at the University of Limpopo conducting research on 'Experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlog at Botlokwa in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province'. The purpose of the research project is to explore experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlog. The information that will be gained from this research will assist social workers to improve on the foster care system.

The results of this research project will be used by me, Mr A.M Mokgalapa to fulfil the research requirements of the University of Limpopo to obtain my Master degree in Social Work.

Please answer the following questions with honesty and to the fullest. Remember there is no right or wrong answers.

Thank you for your voluntary co-operation, your opinions and time. Your support is of great value in the improvement of the foster care system.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF SOCIAL WORKER

1. AGE OF SOCIAL WORKER

Age	
25-30	
35-40	
45-50	

55-60	
Above60	

2. GENDER OF SOCIAL WORKER

Female	
Male	

3. YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS

Specify…………………

4. HIGHEST QUALIFICATION

Specify…………………………

SECTION B: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO FOSTER CARE BACKLOG

1. Tell me about personnel capacity with regard to addressing foster care backlog in your workplace. (Probe)

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

2. How do children's courts in your area contribute towards foster care backlog? (Probe)

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

3. Tell me about the process of finalising foster care placement and its implication on foster care backlog. (Probe)

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

4. Tell me about the availability of working tools with regard to application of foster care in your office. (Probe)

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

5. Share with me your experiences with regard to the lapsed orders in your office. (Probe)

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………….

6. From your experience as a Social Worker what do you think could have contributed to foster care backlog in your office. (Probe)

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

7. What other experiences would you like to share with me regarding foster care backlog in your office? (Probe)

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

SECTION C: SOCIAL WORKERS' COPING STRATEGIES ON FOSTER CARE BACKLOG

1. How do you cope with the lapsed orders in your office? (Probe)

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………

2. How do you cope with the foster care caseload in your office? (Probe)

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………….

SECTION D: SOCIAL WORKERS' RECOMENDATION ON MITIGATING FACTORS TO FOSTER CARE BACKLOG.

1. What do you think should be done to mitigate foster care backlog in your office? (Probe)

……

………

2. What changes would you like to see on foster care system? (Probe)

……

………

Thank you for participating in this study

ANNEXURE B: CONSENT FORM OF SOCIAL WORKER

Title of research project: Experiences of Social Workers regarding foster care backlog at Botlokwa in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province

I am a Social work masters student from the University of Limpopo, I have intentions to research on experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlog at Botlokwa. Throughout my research, Dr. S.F Rapholo will supervise me. The following is information about the study so that you can make an informed decision.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To explore experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlog at Botlokwa in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province

2. PROCEDURE

If you agree to participate in this study the following procedures will be followed:

- A suitable place and time for interviews will be discussed with you. It will be in an office where confidentiality will be possible.
- Written consent will be obtained from you after the study has been explained to you to be part of this research.
- The interview will be recorded. Written permission to tape-record the interview will be asked from participants.
- The interview will last approximately one hour.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY

Special care will be taken to work in an ethical manner. All tape-recorded materials and completed interview schedules will be safely stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. All recorded material will be stored in a store room at the Department of Social Work at the University of Limpopo, prohibiting all people, including the researcher and study leader form having access to the material. Interviews will be held with each participant separately in a quiet, private office, to avoid interruptions. Each participant will

be allocated a number beforehand, such as respondent 1, respondent 2 et cetera, to maintain confidentiality. Me as researcher will maintain anonymity as far as possible during the research process. Participants will be informed of the confidentiality that would apply regarding their identity. Information provided will remain confidential through that the identity of participants will be reported anonymously to protect the identity of participants.

4. INFORMED CONSENT

For the purpose of the study the relevant information will be provided by the researcher by means of an interview with you as the interviewee regarding expected duration of involvement, procedures that will be followed, confidentially and voluntary participation and self-termination. An adequate opportunity will be provided for questions before the study commences.

5. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Written permission will be obtained from the social workers where it will be made clear that participation is voluntary. The researcher will ensure for the purpose of the study that all parties are aware that no one is obligated to participate. Non-participation in the study will not be disadvantaging in anyway.

6. DECEPTION OF RESPONDENTS

You as Social Worker will be briefed about the aim of the research and no information will be withheld from you in order to allow you to make an informed decision regarding your participation in the research and to ensure no deception.

7. BENEFITS AND RISKS
- The information gained from the research can assist social workers and courts to be expert in foster care system.
- It can also add on the existing body of knowledge regarding foster care system.

8. COSTS

There will be no cost to you as a result of your participation in this study.

9. PAYMENT

You will receive no payment for participation.

10. QUESTIONS

You are welcome to ask any questions to the researcher before you decide to give consent. You are also welcome to contact my study leader or me as student if you have any further questions concerning your participation in the study.

Cell no: Mr A.M Mokgalapa (082 423 5734)

Cell no: Dr S.F Rapholo (079 970 7404)

11. FEEDBACK OF FINDINGS

The findings of the research will be shared with you as soon as it is available if you are interested. You are welcome to contact us regarding the findings of the research.

I want to thank you for your kind consideration of my request.

………………………

Mr. A.M Mokgalapa

Masters student: Social Work: statutory Practice

……………………….

Dr SF Rapholo

Study Leader

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY

You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw at any point even after you have signed the form to give consent, without any consequences.

Should you be willing to participate you are requested to sign below:

I _____ hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the above mentioned study. I am not coerced in any way to participate and I understand that I can withdraw at any time should I feel uncomfortable during 32

the study. I also understand that my name will not be disclosed to anybody who is not part of the study and that the information will be kept confidential and not linked to my name at any stage. I also understand that I might benefit from participation in this project and am aware of the possible risks. Should I need further discussions someone will be available to assist me.

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of the person obtaining   Date

ANNEXURE C: REQUEST LETTER TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO
Turfloop Campus

Department of Social Development

34 Hans van Rensburg

Polokwane

0700

Dear Sir/madam

RESEARCH PROJECT: MR MOKGALAPA A.M, MASTERS-STUDENT IN SOCIAL WORK

I am Mokgalapa A.M, a junior social worker in the service of Botlokwa Capricorn District and a Masters student in the Department of Social Work at the University of Limpopo. In the fulfilment of requirements for the Master degree, I have to undertake a research project titled "**Experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlog at Botlokwa in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province**".

As you are well informed about the topic, I request the Department of Social development to grant me the permission to conduct this study in your premises. My target population is social workers who have an experience in placing children in foster care.

The purpose of this research is to explore experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlog**.**

Data Collection: For the purpose of this study, the qualitative way of data collection by means of semi-structured face-to-face interviews will be utilised. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews will be conducted in order to explore experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlog**.**

Benefits of the research: The findings of this study will help the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, and the Department of Social Development when putting on strategies in place to address foster care backlog in an eloquent and enthusiastic manner. The findings will also help social workers and other academics in the field of foster care to close the gap through empirically scientific evidence on contributing factors to foster care backlog as well as developing ways to deal with this problem. The study will also be of benefit to policy makers and program developers to improve the service delivery regarding the management of foster care placement.

Confidentiality: The data will be completed anonymously. The researcher will allocate a number to each respondent beforehand which will be named in the document such as participant 1, participant 2 and so forth. No names of respondents will thus be disclosed.

Consent: It will be explained to each respondent that their participation is completely voluntary and withdrawal at any stage would be allowed, without it impacting on service rendering. Written consent will be obtained from the respondent after he/she had been informed about the research in a transparent manner. Attach the protocol of this research.

If there are any questions the following persons can be contacted:

Study Leader: Dr S.F Rapholo (079 970 7404)

Researcher: Mr Mokgalapa A.M (082 423 5734)

I want to thank you for your kind consideration of my request.

Kind Regards

……………………………

Mr Mokgalapa A.M

Masters student

ANNEXURE D: FACULTY APPROVAL LETTER

University of Limpopo
Faculty of Humanities
Executive Dean
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 4895, Fax: (015) 268 3425, Email:Satsope.maoto@ul.ac.za

DATE: 8 March 2019

NAME OF STUDENT: MOKGALAPA, AM
STUDENT NUMBER: [201308986]
DEPARTMENT: MSW – Social Work
SCHOOL: Social Sciences

Dear Student

FACULTY APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL (PROPOSAL NO. FHDC2019/2/4)

I have pleasure in informing you that your MA proposal served at the Faculty Higher Degrees Meeting on 19 February 2019 and your title was approved as follows:

TITLE: EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING FOSTER CARE BACKLOG AT BOTLOKWA IN THE CAPRICORN DISTRICT OF THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

Note the following:

Ethical Clearance	Tick One
In principle the study requires no ethical clearance, but will need a TREC permission letter before proceeding with the study	
Requires ethical clearance (Human) (TREC) (apply online)	√
Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	
Requires ethical clearance (Animal) (AREC)	
Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	

Yours faithfully

Prof RS Maoto,

Executive Dean: Faculty of Humanities

Director: Prof SL Sithole
Supervisor: Dr SF Rapholo

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ANNEXURE E: ETHICAL CLEARENCE CERTIFICATE

University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: anastasia.ngobe@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 4 July 2019

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/133/2019: PG

PROJECT:

Title: Experiences of social workers regarding foster care
backlog at Botlokwa in the Capricorn District of the
Limpopo province.
Researcher: AM Mokgalapa
Supervisor: Dr SF Rapholo
Co-Supervisor/s: N/A
School: Social Sciences
Degree: Master of Social Work

PROF P MASOKO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics
Council, Registration Number: **REC-0310111-031**

Note:
i)   This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
ii)   Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
iii)   PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

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ANNEXURE F: APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

CONFIDENTIAL

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

TO: MOKGALAPA AM

FROM: DR T MABILA

ACTING CHAIRPERSON: LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE (LPRC)

DATE: SEPTEMBER 2020

SUBJECT: EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING FOSTER CARE BACKLOG AT BOTLOKWA IN THE CAPRICORN DISTRICT OF THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

RESEARCHER: MOKGALAPA AM

Dear Colleague

The above researcher's research proposal served at the Limpopo Provincial Research Committee (LPRC). The committee is satisfied with the methodological soundness of the research proposal.

Decision: The research proposal is granted full approval.

Regards

Acting Chairperson: Dr T Mabila

Secretariat: Ms J Mokobi
24/09/2020

ANNEXURE G: EDITORIAL LETTER

University of Limpopo
Department of Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting
School of Languages and Communication Studies
Private Bag x1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3707, Fax: (015) 268 2868, email:kubayij@yahoo.com

01 September 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBJECT: EDITING OF DISSERTATION

This is to certify that the master's dissertation in Social Work entitled 'Experiences of social workers regarding foster care backlogs at Botlokwa in Capricorn District of Limpopo Province' by Mr M.A Masilo has been copy-edited, and that unless further tampered with, I am content with the quality of the dissertation in terms of its adherence to editorial principles of consistency, cohesion, clarity of thought and precision.

Kind regards

Prof. SJ Kubayi (DLitt et Phil - Unisa)
Associate Professor
SATI Membership No. 1002606

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