



An exploratory study on the educational attainment of youth who have reached eighteen whilst in foster care in Ocean View, Cape Town.

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

The overall aim of the study was to explore educational attainment of youth who have reached eighteen whilst in foster care in Ocean View, Cape Town. A qualitative research design and a purposive sampling technique were adopted to recruit the participants. Furthermore, non-probability sampling has been utilised to draw a purposive sampling. Semi-structured one-to-one interviews were used in this study. The participants were males and females between the ages of eighteen and twenty years, who had reached eighteen whilst in foster care.

Children in foster care associated their goals in life with educational attainment. The study revealed that the youth who turned eighteen whilst in foster care identified importance pertaining to education as the only way that could help themselves to get their desired jobs and achieve their educational goals in life. The study found that children in foster care appreciate social support and kindness they receive from their foster parents, which they considered as crucial in their lives because their biological parents could not provide for them.

However, some of the participants expressed great concerns over the treatment they were receiving from their foster parents as a major setback in their lives, which could hinder them from achieving their education goals. The study also shows that the participants in the study encounter financial challenges such as not having money to access tertiary education similar to many children from an impoverished family backgrounds. The main recommendations are that there is a need for collaboration between the foster parents, social workers and the class teachers in offering social support to the participants who are in foster care.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to God; whose everlasting love saw me through every struggle in my academic progress. I remember when I did not have money for tuition and accommodation but You made it possible and saw me through the toughest times of my life. There are certain times when I felt like giving up, but God held my hand and walked with me, through hard times. Thank you, God, You are my pillar of strength.

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ABBREVIATIONS

NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
SHAWCO	Student Health and Welfare Organisation
NYP	National Youth Policy
NEET	Not in Education, Employment of Training
P	Participant
DSD	Department of Social Development

CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Concepts are clarified in the context in which they are operationalized in the study:

Foster care refers to the temporal removal of children into alternative placements whose parents are not in a position to adequately care for them (Children's Act 38 of 2005).

Educational attainment refers to the accomplishment of highest level of education (Centre in Society and Health, 2013).

Foster parent refers to legal guardian caring for someone else's child (Children's Act 38 of 2005).

Ocean View refers to a small coloured township which was formed in 1968 by the apartheid government under the Group Areas Act (Klein, 2016).

Valley Development Projects (The Open Door) refers to a designated child protection organisation based in Ocean View and Masiphumelele and it falls under the Valley Development Projects.

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1. CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION AND CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 is a legal document designed to safeguard the rights of children and youth living in South Africa. Joftus (2002) connotes that education in South Africa is a contributing factor, which increases an opportunity to a better-quality life of children, youth and adults as comparing to the rest of the world. Education is the primary means to better health and it increases higher social status (Joftus, 2002). Children in foster care associate their long-term goals in life with educational accomplishment (Spigel, 2004). Mkandawire (2012) connotes that children in foster care coming from disadvantaged family backgrounds, regards educational attainment as instrumental to independence and an opportunity to better life.

This research report comprises five chapters: the first one introduces the thesis, the second one presents the literature review conducted on the study focus area, followed by chapter three, which presents the methodology and research design of the study that the study used. Chapter four presents findings of the study and is followed by the main conclusions and recommendations presented in chapter five.

This chapter presents the contextual background to the study, the research focus area, the rationale for the study, the motivation for undertaking the study and the significance of the study, as well as the overall aim and objectives of the study. Lastly, the key research ethical considerations when undertaking the study, its limitations and challenges of the study are discussed.

1.2 Contextual background to the study

Ocean View is a small coloured township, which was formed in 1968 by the apartheid government during the "forced removal" under the Group Areas Act (Klein, 2016). The population of Ocean View in 2011 was 3084 when a census was conducted (Statistics South Africa, 2011). The population is predominantly coloured (91.38%), black African (6.80%), Asian or Indian (0.63%) and White (0, 25%) (Frith, 2011). However, the key result for the 2011 Census Suburb Ocean View shows that 25% of those aged eighteen years or older had completed grade 12 or were enrolled into tertiary education (Statistics South Africa, 2011). The Ocean View population is predominantly coloured (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

In terms of mainstream education, the 2011 census shows that of those aged eighteen years and above, only 25% had completed primary school, 29.7% had passed their matric and only 4% had any other training after matric (Statistics South Africa, 2011). This would point to the fact that a majority of those aged eighteen years and above, who are supposed to be economically active, do not have matric. In addition, there are over 30 youths who reached eighteen whilst in foster care between 2015 and 2016 (Valley Development Projects, 2016).

Klein (2016), the school principal at Ocean View High School, stated that foster care youth in Ocean View experience the challenges of failing a grade and repeating a failed grade, as opposed to their counterparts who had never entered the foster care system. In addition, nearly 70% of youths aged 18 years and above, and in foster care, have had one consequence of the early educational challenges (Klein, 2016). Children in foster care face a low matriculation completion rate compared to their counterparts who are residing with their biological families (Klein, 2016). Furthermore, Klein (2016) states that thirteen percent of children in foster care who had enrolled at Ocean View high school in 2016 passed their grade 12 exams by the age of eighteen compared to seventy percent of children in the general population. The matriculation pass rate among children in foster care is very low in Ocean View, mainly because some children do not have adequate financial resources to pay for extra lessons (Klein, 2016). According to Valley Development Projects (2016), aspirations of youth in foster care is still very rudimentary in Western Cape and South Africa when it comes to their educational aspirations.

1.3 Rationale for the study

Courtney (2009) asserted that there has been insufficient research undertaken in understanding the educational aspirations of youth who reached eighteen whilst in foster care. Joftus (2002) noted that adequate family support among youth in foster care enhances a chance of individual fulfilment, as well as the attainment of stable and meaningful employment, which is critical to self-sufficiency. Unfortunately, children placed in foster care receive limited academic support from their foster parents and are prone to academic failure (Courtney, 2009). The researcher saw the school reports of the youth in foster care when he was doing the administration filing of files for the Open Door, and the school reports showed that most youths in foster care were struggling academically, and had repeated a grade once or twice in their life. The researcher developed a desire to understand the reasons why youths who had reached eighteen years whilst

in foster care were not performing well in their studies, and were repeating or had failed a grade. Hence, the author felt the need to explore and understand the educational aspirations and challenges of youths who had reached eighteen whilst in foster care.

1.4 Motivation for undertaking the study

The researcher has worked as a statutory social worker at Valley Development Projects (The Open Door), which is a designated child protection organisation funded by the Department of Social Development in Ocean View. In his practice, the researcher observed that children in foster care faced numerous challenges such as a lack of adequate financial support to access tertiary education, which might hinder their academic performances. The researcher also noted that children in foster care encounter challenges such as dealing with the trauma of being removed from their biological parents, repeating a failed grade, and a lack of adequate financial and social support from their foster parents. However, the researcher also observed when he was working at The Open Door that some schools in townships do not have enough resources (such as having enough classrooms) to equip children for tertiary education, which might deprive an opportunity for them to achieve their educational goals in life. In addition, the researcher observed that mandated court appearances (when the social workers are doing foster care extensions) and doctors' appointments distracted youths in foster care from schoolwork. However, the researcher also observed that there is a major increase in a number of high school dropouts among foster care children and this is a major concern to the entire community of Ocean View. It would seem to the researcher that these challenges required urgent intervention from different stakeholders.

1.5 Significance of the study

The highest dropout rates of youths in foster care that were experienced ranged from the ages of eighteen to twenty-one (Klein, 2016). In addition, by having more information about the educational aspirations of youths who have reached eighteen whilst in foster care, The Open Door (Non-Profit Organisation in Ocean View), which is a mandated child protection organization dealing with foster care management, will have a better understanding of the educational aspirations of youth education for those who have reached eighteen whilst in foster care.

This study will hopefully aid to pointing out a better understanding for some of the challenges children in foster care encounter, whether or not they associated their goals in life with

educational attainment and anticipated solutions in relation to achieving their educational aspirations.

Non-Profit Organisations, such as The Open Door, will have a better understanding of the reasons why children in foster care are struggling academically in their schoolwork. The Open Door will hopefully benefit from the study by using the findings and recommendations proposed in this study to put policies in place that will encourage youths in foster care to utilise the support they receive from their teachers and social workers to achieve educational attainment.

1.6 The overall aim and specific objectives of the study

The study seeks to contribute towards a better understanding of educational aspirations and challenges of youth who had reached eighteen whilst in foster care. Therefore, fourteen of these youths who had reached eighteen whilst in foster care were interviewed in-depth to explore the following objectives of the study:

1. Their goals in life;
2. Whether they associated their goals in life with educational attainment;
3. The challenges, if any, they anticipated in relation to achieving their goals in life;
4. Their solutions, if any, they identified in overcoming the above challenges;
5. The challenges, if any, that they faced in school, which they believed would hinder them from achieving their educational goals;
6. The challenges, if any, that they anticipated in the community that they believed would hinder them from achieving their goals in life; and
7. Their solutions, if any, proposed necessary to overcome the challenges they identified in the community.

1.7 Key ethical considerations

Strydom (2005:57) states that “ethics is a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, is widely accepted, and which offers rules and behaviour expectation about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects, participants and researchers”. This study conformed with the ethical norms and standards of research ethics on human subjects in

social sciences. The University of Cape Town's ethical clearance was attained through the Department of Social Development ethics committee where the student is registered. Researchers are encouraged to consider ethical principles, norms and standards and avoid harm to participants when conducting research (Strydom, 2005). The ethics, which were considered in the study, include the following:

Voluntary participation

Babbie and Mouton (2012) connote that, when conducting research with human participants, participants should voluntarily participate in the study. When the researcher approached the participants and requested them to participate in the study, the participants were informed that participation in the study would be voluntary. Every participant received a full explanation of his/her rights before the research was conducted. This enabled them to participate out of their free will and they were informed that if they wanted to withdraw from the research interview they were free to do so. All the participants in the study participated voluntarily. Babbie and Mouton (2012) state that when conducting research, no one should be forced to participate without giving their consent to take part in the study willingly.

Informed consent

Strydom (2005) states that research participants must give consent and be informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they decide to participate in the study. The participants were given a written consent form with detailed information about the study and they voluntarily completed and signed the written consent forms (see attached Appendix A). Strydom (2005) states that research participants must be given the choice to decide for themselves and that they should not be forced to participate in the study.

Deception of participants

Deception of participants refers to "deliberately misrepresenting facts in order to make another person believe what is not true hence violating the respect to which every participant is entitled" (Strydom, 2005:60). The participants were informed that the study was for academic purposes, and the participants agreed to partake in the study. Deception of participants can occur when the researcher intentionally gives the participants misleading information about the study (Strydom, 2005).

Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to having to keep information shared confidentially without sharing it with someone else (Strydom, 2005:61). Ensuring that information gained from the participant is not disclosed to the public is crucial when conducting the study (Strydom, 2005). The researcher guaranteed confidentiality for all information provided by the participants before the interview took place. The researcher did not discuss with others the information shared by participants, however; the participants were informed before the study that the information was going to be shared with the university supervisor anonymously and for supervision purposes. Strydom (2005) connotes that confidentiality places a strong obligation to researchers to keep the information shared by the participants to themselves.

Avoidance of harm

Avoidance of harm refers to the prevention of deliberate harm to participants, be it physical or emotional in nature (Strydom, 1998). Therefore, the researcher's enquiry should neither cause nor predispose participants to physical or emotional distress. In this study, the researcher avoided questions that would harm the participants emotionally. The researcher was very sensitive and alert to any signs of discomfort during the interviews. Strydom (2005) alludes that participants can be harmed in a physical and emotional manner; therefore, the researcher should protect the participants from any form of physical discomfort that may emerge from the study.

Anonymity and privacy

Anonymity means that the identities of the research participants remain anonymous, and that no one should be able to identify the participants' names after the research (Strydom, 2005). In this study, all participants were assured anonymity. The researcher informed the participants that their identities and responses would not be disclosed. Pseudonyms were used to ensure the anonymity and privacy of the participants. Yedigis and Weinbach (2011: 119) argue that "it is imperative that the researchers be reminded of the importance of safe-guarding the privacy and identity of participants, and to act with the necessary sensitivity where the privacy of subjects is relevant".

Debriefing of participants

Debriefing of participants refers to an opportunity given to participants to express any discomforts that may have arisen during the research interview (Strydom, 2005). In this study,

the researcher was sensitive and alert to any signs of discomfort during the interviews. Only one participant needed to be referred to a psychologist for emotional counselling after the interview. Debriefing of participants at the end of a research session was one way in which the researcher minimised the harm that could have been triggered by the interview process (Strydom, 2005).

1.8 Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the need for the researcher to cautiously ensure that he or she remains unbiased when conducting research (Strydom, 2005). It is crucial that the researcher reflected openly and honestly pertaining to the aforementioned in order to determine the influence these could have on the researcher's objectivity, as well as the research participants and process (Strydom, 1998). The researcher is currently working at The Open Door in Ocean View as a social worker, and the research participants interviewed were not on his foster care case workload. He was conscious not to go with pre-conceived assumptions regarding educational aspirations of youth in foster care generally. The researcher remained neutral and non-judgemental when he was conducting the interviews. The researcher referred all the participants who required extra counselling to other professionals, such as the psychologists, and made sure that the participants received the relevant counselling. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) connote that a qualitative researcher is expected to think critically at all times and must always avoid misleading conclusions when conducting a study.

The literature review is presented in the next chapter.

2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Firstly, this chapter will discuss the theoretical and legislative frameworks approaches that underpin the study: namely, social exclusion, social inclusion and human development theories. Secondly, the legislation and policy frameworks that are relevant to the study will be discussed. Thirdly, the literature review relevant to the study will be discussed along with the main themes of the study as drawn from specific objectives of the study as outlined in Chapter One.

2.2 Theoretical perspectives

2.2.1 Social exclusion theory

The concept of social exclusion allows the researcher to explore and address processes whereby children in foster care from marginalised communities, such as Ocean View, remain systematically unable to take part in and benefit from services provided to them whilst in foster care. Walker and Walker (1997:32) connote that “certain individuals and groups of people are disadvantaged due to their limited involvement in, and access to, mainstream social, and economic activity is being widely used to describe this phenomenon”. However, youths are predominantly at risk of experiencing social exclusion in the modern society if they are not educated (Walker & Walker, 1997:45).

Similarly, Leonardos (1999:11) states that “causes for exclusion also goes beyond material poverty and encompass a wide range of reasons why individuals or groups might be excluded, such as discrimination against children in the welfare system based on their social status”. Similarly, Keenan (2007) suggests that groups of people and youths who are not educated are at risk of being excluded, as they cannot get proper employment without proper qualifications.

2.2.2 Social inclusion theory

Children in foster care face difficulties accessing resources from the government compared to their counterparts who are living with their parents. According to Collins (2003), social inclusion primary objective is based on equal fairness among the disadvantaged population, such as the youth or unemployed citizens. However, its objective is to secure a minimal level of welfare and fight against poverty within a society (Collins, 2003). Social inclusion aims at

the principals of justice, as it plays a role of including socially and financially excluded citizens in certain communities to be active citizens in the economy of the country (Collins, 2003).

The social inclusion theory expects everyone to be active participants in their society, regardless of their different economic status and age group (Collins, 2003). Social inclusion acknowledges the education of citizens as a major significant site for the achievement of well-being among the disadvantaged population (Collins, 2003). The Department of Social Development (2010) states that children in foster care receive a minimum amount of R920.00 as a foster care grant per month, which is not sufficient to buy basic commodities for the entire month. Collins (2003) believed that social inclusion needed to focus on improving the welfare of every marginalised citizen in the country and have a minimal access to wellbeing.

2.2.3 Human development theory

The provision of free basic education in South Africa is key in addressing the capabilities of youths who cannot afford to pay for their tuition. Sen (1999) states that the concept of human development refers to increasing opportunities and the standards of living among people. Sen (1999) implies that capability is categorised as the rights citizens enjoy that lead to a life; they value having access to basic education and a better healthcare system, which lead to long life. The core value of human development is to protect the rights of people and increase their capabilities to attain a better living (Sen, 1999). However, Kanbur and Squire (1999:184-185) state that “a key feature underlying the success of countries with lower levels of poverty is the emphasis on human development as it is possible to attain human development without necessarily having economic growth”.

According to Kanbur and Squire (1999), the human development approach encourages economic growth if the government prioritises investment in education and better healthcare for the poor. The government of South Africa put in place various structures such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which offers bursaries to children who cannot afford to pay for their tuition fees. Offering affordable education to the poor can be used as a component of reducing poverty among youth, as it increases their capabilities to earn better incomes and create jobs opportunities once they are educated (Sen, 1999). Furthermore, Kanbur and Squire (1999) recommend that the government must provide more resources, such as building enhanced schools for the marginalised communities and providing better welfare systems for the poor people in the country.

2.3 Policy and Legislative framework

The South African government put in place various policies and legislation to protect the constitutional rights of children residing in South Africa.

2.3.1 The Children's Act 38 of 2005

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 goal is directed towards protecting the rights of all children in South Africa, and its main emphasis is on the well-being of children. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 addresses matters pertaining to the well-being of children, namely safety, child support, guardianship, custody, foster care, adoption, abduction and child trafficking. Section 180 (1) (a) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 states that a child is placed in the foster care of a person who is not a parent or a guardian, by order of the children's court, mainly if the biological parents are not in a position to care for the child.

However, Section 181 (a) and (b) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 shows that the main purpose of placing children in foster care is to protect the rights of children by providing a safe, healthy environment with positive support, and to encourage the idea of permanency planning towards family reunification. Permanency is a long-term plan used to assess a child in foster care mainly by looking at what the paramount interest of the child is. Section 181 (c) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 indicates the other purpose of foster care is to respect children's cultural, ethnic and community diversity. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 acknowledges the importance of a peaceful and loving family structure and environment, where children's rights are respected. Richter and Dawes (2008) support the Children's Act 38 of 2005 which looks at the parent-child relationship regarding the responsibilities of parents towards the child, in contrast with the traditional parental authority, in order to promote the child's best interests in various circumstances.

Section 176 (1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 indicates that a person placed in alternative care as a child is entitled, after having reached the age of 18 years, to remain in that care until the end of the year in which that person reaches the age of 18 years. Section 176 (2) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 further implies that the head of provincial social development may on application allow a person to remain in that care until the end of the year in which that person reaches the age of 21 years. Section 176 (2) (a) (b) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 states that the child may remain in the care of the current alternative care-giver only if the

caregiver is willing and able to care for that person, and that continued stay in that care is necessary to enable that person to complete his or her education of training.

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 acknowledges that child protection social workers play a pivotal role of protecting children from situations of abuse, neglect and other forms of maltreatment. Furthermore, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 states that social workers promote safety and well-being of children placed in foster care, through intervention in reported cases of child abuse and neglect.

2.3.2 The National Youth Policy (2015-2020)

The policy is important in the study because it encourages youth in South Africa to reach their full potential (NYP, 2015-2020). The National Youth Policy (NYP) (2015-2020:2) "is developed for all young people in South Africa, with a focus on redressing the wrongs of the past and addressing the specific challenges and immediate needs of the country's youth". The NYP (2015-2020) encourages the empowerment of youth to reach their full capabilities, which can transform the economy of the country. Ngcaweni and Moleke (2007) note that the government needs to avail more opportunities to unskilled youths by offering them education and financial opportunities. In addition, Ngcaweni and Moleke (2007) state that children in foster care need to be financially supported and should be given bursaries so that they can achieve their educational aspirations in life.

The NYP (2015-2020:3) acknowledges that "access to education and skills development has improved, but the quality of education and educational outcomes remains a challenge". This policy recognizes that youth empowerment is instrumental in South Africa and that special attention needs to be fixed on those youths in townships and rural areas who are not accessing the proper basic education.

2.4 Children in foster care and their goals in life

Section 150 (1) (a) (e) (g) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 states that children placed in foster care are regarded as children in need of care and protection; hence the children are removed from their birth parents due various reasons such as being abandoned, orphaned or exposed to circumstances which may harm a child's physical, mental and social wellbeing. Section 150 (2)

(a) (b) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 indicates that if a child is found to be in need of care and protection, he/she must be referred by a designated social worker for further investigation. However, Section 150 (3) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 states that a social worker must put measures in place to assist the child, such as providing counselling, family reconstruction and also offer early intervention services so that the child can reach his/her desired goals in life.

The history of the Republic of South Africa has created inequality through the apartheid system, which favoured a certain race to having access to a good welfare system in the country, whilst the majority of the youth, especially black youths, were denied opportunities to education and training, as well as economic participation (Mkandawire, 2012). Children in foster care face the disadvantages of being deprived an opportunity to achieve their educational goals in life, mainly because some schools in townships do not have enough resources (enough classes) to equip youths for tertiary education (Mkandawire, 2012).

Keenan (2007) connotes that marginalised youths are optimistic for work and they would like to pursue their careers as social workers, photographers, business people and farmers, even though there are limited job opportunities in South Africa. According to Harden (2004), children in the foster care system could pursue their dreams, could become successful in life, and if given the same opportunities could be enrolled in colleges, compared to youths who are not in foster care. Howard and Berzin (2011) observed that few youths in foster care have increasing disadvantages of not being financially stable and they tend to work part-time jobs to be financially stable.

Robinson-Easley (2012) states that when children and youths are inspired and encouraged by community members, they are more likely to bring positive change in their communities. In addition, Harden (2004) has observed that when youths leave school early, without completing their education and start to seek employment, they are prevented from getting a good education. Mguzulwa (2014:70), who studied the impact of youth gang violence and educational attainment in Khayelitsha, found that "completion of Grade 12 was very important for the youth involved in youth gang violence as they believed that this would enable them to enter higher education". A similar feature that this study shares with that of Mguzulwa (2014) is that they were both conducted in impoverished gang-infested communities with high levels of crime and violence.

Mguzulwa (2014) further states that youths involved in gang-violence activities valued the importance of education and understood the advantages of completing high school, such as having better opportunities to get into tertiary education. In addition, Mguzulwa (2014:70) found that “it was the wish of most of the youth to have professional qualifications and this seems to have been the driving force for them to work hard at school”. Youth in foster care still aspire to complete schooling, despite facing challenges such as a lack of positive role models in their lives (Robinson-Easley, 2012).

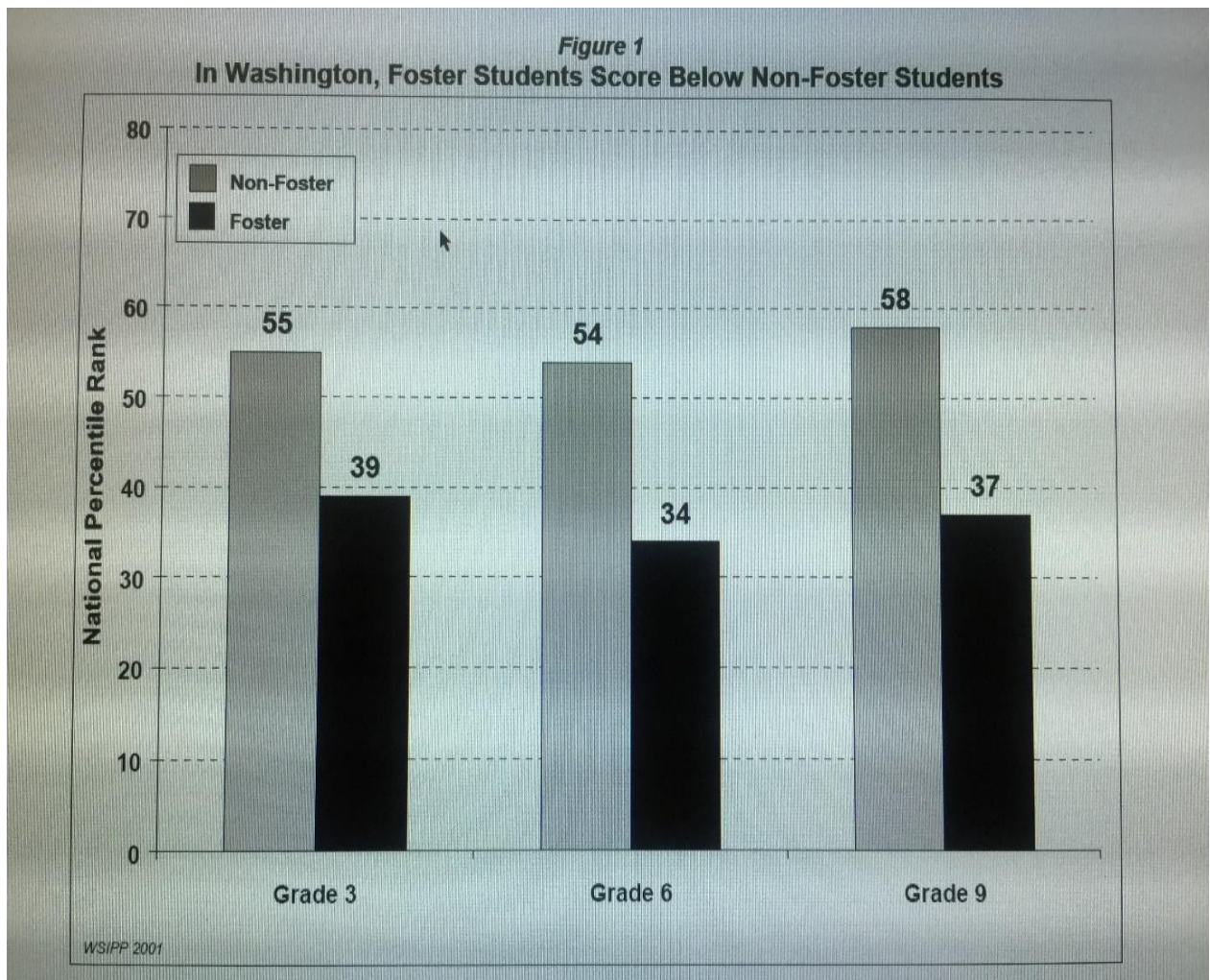
2.5 Educational progress of children in foster care

Burley and Halpern, (2001) conducted a research in the United States of America comparing the differences in educational attainment between youths in foster care and youths not in foster care. Similar to Pears, Kim and Brown (2018), who conducted a study on the factors affecting youths in foster care, they found that children who are not in foster care are most likely to perform poorly in their studies. In addition, Burley and Halpern, (2001) allude to the fact that youths in foster care have lower chances of tertiary accomplishment generally than their peers who are not in foster care. However, Burley and Halpern (2001) found that youths in foster care face educational difficulties such as post-traumatic stress caused by abuse by their biological parents, and this can lead to a sense of neglect and low self-esteem.

Pears et al. (2018:2) further state that youths in foster care experience bad parenting from their foster parents, moving schools and post-traumatic experiences, which steered to poor academic performances in school. The National Youth Policy (2020) encourages students to attain an average of 50% in all their subjects if they want to be enrolled into tertiary education. The National Youth Policy (2015-2020) encourages teachers to assist learners struggling with mathematics, and the government encourages the importance for learners to pass mathematics.

Burley and Halpern (2001:13) found that “many youths in foster care are more prone than their non-foster peers to experience anxiety, depression and inability to concentrate and each of these factors can influence students’ ability to focus and do well in school”. In support of these findings, Courtney (2009) suggests that youths in foster care require social support adjusting to foster care placements, and social support by their foster parents, while in their care, can make the children adapt well and feel loved.

Table 1: Differences in educational attainment (Burley & Halpern, 2001:13)



The above table shows that children in foster care underperformed compared to their counterparts who were not in foster care. However, Burley and Halpern (2001:9) found that youths in foster care, who change school regularly, are more likely to miss up to six months of educational progress and this can disrupt a youth's ability to learn and succeed academically whilst in foster care.

Lewin and Mawoyo (2014) state that access to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is still a major challenge to many youths, from marginalised communities, who cannot afford to pay for their tuition at any public universities in South Africa. In support of the finding, Mguzulwa (2014) found that there is still lack of information about how to apply for NSFAS funding in most township schools, and only a few parents have the privilege of sending foster children to the right schools for better education. Furthermore, Mguzulwa (2014) found that youths believed that it was through education that they would be able to achieve their educational attainment.

2.6 Challenges faced by children in foster care in achieving their goals in life

According to a study done by Mnisi (2015) on the factors contributing to foster care breakdown, she found that children in foster care seem to have had encountered ups and downs whilst in foster care. However, few youths in foster care reported to have had a good relationship with their foster parents and some youths reported to have experienced physical and emotional abuse by their foster parents whilst in foster care (Mnisi, 2015). In addition, Mnisi (2015:123) further mentions that “one foster parent acknowledged abuse but put all the blame on his spouse and the adolescents in foster care reported to have suffered some kind of abuse by the foster parents or their family members”. The barriers encountered by the children in foster care seem to hinder them from achieving their educational attainment, as they could not focus on their studies (Mnisi, 2015).

Mnisi (2015) also found that some foster parents regarded physical and emotional abuse as a form of disciplinary measures for the children who were not obeying the rules in the foster homes. Brady and Gilligan (2018), who explored the educational progress of youths in foster care, found that youths in foster care experienced challenges such as the death of a parent, or youths having serious long-term illnesses, which made it difficult for them to concentrate on their studies. In addition, Brady and Gilligan (2018) allude to some family members of youths in foster care reside in harmful environments, which are not suitable for the upbringing of the foster children, and foster care placement becomes the only alternative. The study conducted by Mnisi (2015) shows that children in foster care are experiencing challenges such as abuse from their foster parents, which can hinder them from achieving their educational goals.

According to Brady and Gilligan (2018), children in foster care encounter a number of educational challenges such as having difficulties accessing information on the array of educational opportunities and pathways available to the youth. Brady and Gilligan (2018:38) further connote that youths in foster care have higher risks of becoming early school dropouts due to having limited academic support from their foster parents. Brady and Gilligan (2018) found that some youths in foster care excel in their studies, whereas other youths do not succeed in their studies, and the main reason includes the effects of stressors they encounter whilst in foster care. These may lead to lower confidence or aspirations, and lower expectations on the part of others.

Burnett (1999) states that there are other challenges experienced by youths in foster care, such as safety, as they live in fear of their safety because of gang violence in their communities, and this might disrupt their chances of focusing on their studies. In addition, Burnett (1999) found that gangs demarcate their areas and that they are always watchful over their members and carrying dangerous weapons, which makes other innocent community members scared. Similarly, regarding youths who are in gangs, it appears that Mguzulwa (2014) found that safety was a major concern as youth dropout at school resulted in repeating grades, and those who experienced academic challenges were also at risk of dropping out of school. It appears from the study done by Mguzulwa (2014:70-71) that “some youth from townships are negatively affected by the gang violence and it affected their school attendance and academic performance, because seemingly they were not giving school their full attention as they were always concerned about their safety”.

In Section 176 (2) of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005, the foster care extension can only be issued until the end of the year in which the youth reaches the age of 21 years. The Children’s Act 38 of 2005 states that children who reach the age of 21 years whilst in foster care are not eligible to receiving the foster care grant, even if they are still having their schooling. Ngcaweni and Moleke (2007) allude to youths, who are eligible to qualify for foster care and the child support grant, might incur some financial challenges in the foster home since there won’t be any social grant from the state which might lead the youth to seek extra employment.

2.7 Strategies which can promote educational attainment of youth in foster care

Pears et al. (2018:2) allude to “the use of support services such as financial aid, assistance with housing, and academic advising increase the likelihood that youth in foster care to complete higher education programs and obtain tertiary education degrees”. It is further recommended that the government should initiate programmes targeting youths in foster care; such programmes should include financial support, assistance in choosing courses, mentoring, and study-skills training (Pears et al., 2018). Furthermore, Brady and Gilligan (2018:38) state that over 90 percent of children in foster care in Ireland require foster parents to play a major role in assisting and encouraging the educational progress of youths in foster care.

However, Brady and Gilligan (2018) connote that children in foster care require additional support from their teachers and social workers in order to have positive encouragement for

educational attainment. Similarly, Mguzulwa (2014) found that youths needed financial and psychological support from their biological families in order for them to follow their dreams. However, it also appeared from Mguzulwa's (2014) study that some youths from townships often face challenges in terms of both financial and psychological support; this hampers their chances of making it into tertiary education due to financial constraints.

Lewin and Mawoyo (2014) assert that most township schools have larger classes; this results in learners missing out on individual attention, and learners with learning problems being overlooked in some cases. It is further recommended by Brady and Gilligan (2018) that children in foster care should be given enough resources and receive support from the government so that they can realise their full potential. Similarly, Mguzulwa (2014) states that the youth are aware of the importance of completing matric and acquiring tertiary qualifications.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented a detailed discussion of the various aspects of the theoretical and legislative frameworks approaches that underpin the study: namely, social exclusion, social inclusion and human development theories. Secondly, the legislation and policy frameworks that were relevant to the study were discussed accordingly. Thirdly, the literature review relevant to the study was discussed along with the main themes of the study as drawn from specific objectives of the study as outlined in Chapter One.

The following chapter presents the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion on the methodology of the study. It will discuss the research design, the population of the study, sampling strategy, method of gaining consent to the participants, the research tool, data-collection strategy, interview recording apparatus, data analysis, data verification and the limitations of the study.

3.2 Research design

Babbie and Mouton (2001) describe a research design as a plan or blueprint of how a researcher intends to conduct the study once a research problem has been formulated. This study adopted a qualitative approach as a method of gathering data. A qualitative research design seeks to describe and understand human interaction on their daily experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). This study is exploratory in nature as the researcher sought to understand how the participants in the study understood the challenges that youths faced whilst in foster care, and to construct the importance of educational aspirations out of their experiences. Babbie and Mouton (2001) state that an exploratory study seeks to examine phenomena that are relatively new, and its core function is to help the researcher to yield insights into a topic for better understandings.

3.3 Population of the study

The research participants were drawn from one set of population, which comprised youths of all races who had reached eighteen whilst in foster care and were still schooling. The Ocean View's foster care database had twenty-one (21) young people who turned eighteen years whilst in foster care. Babbie and Mouton (2001) state that researchers study a set of the population that is of interest to the researcher so as to be able to draw conclusions on the research phenomenon under investigation.

3.4 Sampling strategy

Sampling is the process of selecting research participants in a study (Babbie and Mouton, 2012). There are two basic approaches to sampling, which are non-probability sampling and probability sampling (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The non-probability sampling method can be based on the availability of a limited number of the participants who are not necessarily representative of the broader group being studied, and may include the purposive sampling

method (Strydom, 2005). Probability sampling presumes that each member in the population has the same known probability of being selected (Strydom, 2005).

The study adopted a non-probability sampling method because the researcher relied on the participants that were available and willing to participate in the study. The participants who were two years behind in school and had repeated a grade or two were deemed sufficient for the study. The researcher received referrals from The Open Door social workers and the class teachers of all the foster children who were struggling in their studies. The researcher intended to interview twenty participants who were deemed sufficient for a minor dissertation and achieving the purpose of the study. However, some of the participants dropped out of school before the researcher had started with his data collection, and some participants were transferred out of the area of Ocean View. Therefore, due to the difficulties of getting participants to meet the selection criteria, the researcher was able to secure fourteen out of twenty targeted youths to participate in the study.

3.5 Method of gaining consent

Gaining entry refers to the process of negotiating permission to carry out a research in the desired research setting or field (Creswell, 2014). According to Babbie and Mouton (2012), there are strategic ways which the researcher can use in order to establish initial contact with the gatekeeper of the targeted prospective research participants. Creswell (2014) states that a gatekeeper is a person who grants permission to gain access in an area a researcher intends to conduct the research. The child protection agency in Ocean View called The Open Door was identified as an agency which had authority over the prospective research participants. The Open Door was contacted directly, and permission was sought from Susan Burger, the project manager of The Open Door, as the gatekeeper. The researcher explained to Susan Burger the purpose and intentions of conducting the research. The researcher is familiar with the child protection agency as he had once worked for it as a social worker and therefore it was easier for him to be granted access to the prospective research participants.

3.6 Research tool

A semi-structured interview schedule was used in the study as a tool for data collection. Marrian (2002) states that the conversational quality of a semi-structured interview schedule as a data-collection tool makes it easier to build a trust between the interviewee and the researcher, which is an essential element in the research process. An interview schedule was

used in this study, as a guiding tool, to ensure that all the research questions were consistent and in line with the research objectives under study.

3.7 Pre-test of the interview schedule

A pre-test of the interview schedule was undertaken to determine the clarity and suitability of the wording, making sure that the phrasing was easier for the participants to understand (Babbie & Mouton, 2012). The interview schedule was developed by the researcher with the help of his thesis supervisor. After the pre-test of the interview schedule, the researcher consulted the supervisor and alteration of certain questions were made where necessary. Some words and phrases, which were not clear to the participants, were changed. Babbie and Mouton (2012) state that when using an interview schedule there is always the possibility of error.

3.8 Interview recording apparatus

The researcher used a tape recorder as a recording tool. An interview recording refers to a tape recorder used to gather information when conducting interviews during research (Greef, 2005). In addition, De Vos (2002) states that researchers who use interviews as a data-collection strategy should also use a tape recorder which allows a fuller recording compared to note taking, and it also enables the interviewer to pay maximum attention to the participants. In line with ethical considerations, consent was sought from the participants to record the interviews. The recording of interviews using a tape recorder allowed the researcher to observe the participants and concentrate on the interviews instead of spending time writing notes. The tape recorder was tested before the commencement of every interview to make sure it was working. All the old batteries in the tape recorder were replaced by the researcher before the interviews started. McNamara (2009) advises that researchers should check to see that the tape recorder is working beforehand and should also seek the consent of the participants.

3.9 Data collection

The interviews were conducted at The Open Door in one of the interview rooms. The venue in which the interviews were conducted was secure and the security of the participants was guaranteed in line with ethical considerations. The participants were familiar with the interview place and they felt safe. Marrian (2002) states that it is essential to create an ideal environment that would ensure that there is a smooth flow of information from the interviewer to the participants. The researcher made sure that all the participants understood the questions from the interview schedules which were written in English, since most of the participants were

Afrikaans and Xhosa speaking. All the participants preferred the questions to be asked in English, though they were free to use their local languages. During the interviews, the researcher used some listening-skill techniques, demonstrating interest in the information being shared by maintaining eye contact. The interviews went well, and each interview took an average of 45 minutes to one hour. The researcher also assured the participants that the information shared was going to be locked away in a safe place.

3.10 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis refers “a process which entails an effort to formally identify themes and to construct hypotheses as they are suggested by data and attempt to demonstrate support for those themes and hypotheses” (De Vos, 2005:333). The framework for data analysis which the researcher used was an adaptation of the Tesch (1990) model. This model was the most appropriate as the researcher feels more competent using it, due to his utilization of it in the research conducted in the past. The following nine steps for the data-analysis process were followed:

Transferring all the interviews from the tape recorder to the paper. The researcher read all transcriptions and made sense of the data before analysing. The researcher used the research objectives formulated in the study and coded the data by making labels on the transcripts. The transcripts were marked with various colours to group the themes which were similar and corresponded with other themes. The researcher repeated the above process with all the transcripts until all the themes were done and he felt that there was no new information needed. Themes were grouped into sub-themes and categories which reflected issues linked to the objectives of the study. Relevant quotes were used to clarify the themes and sub-themes of the study which were linked to the research objectives. The researcher linked all the themes and sections in relation to the literature review and specific objectives of the study for deeper level understanding.

3.11 Data verification

According to Babbie and Mouton (2012), it is imperative that there are elements which enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Babbie and Mouton (2012) put forth the following mechanisms, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as a model of enhancing the validity of qualitative research data discussed below.

Dependability

Dependability refers to “the process where a researcher’s role is to provide its audience with evidence that if the research were to be repeated with the same or similar participants in the same context, its findings would be similar” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278). The researcher ensured dependability by using semi-structured interview schedules as a tool to collect data, and the methodology section was accurately laid out by giving a detailed contextual to the research design on how the data was analysed. When a research process is well documented, logical and audited, then dependability is achieved (Babbie & Mouton, 2012).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the ability to measure what is intended in the study such as a participant’s thoughts and opinions in research (Babbie & Mouton, 2012). The researcher ensured credibility by comparing various participants’ responses. In addition, the literature review research findings in Chapter Two were compared to the rest of the study to show the accuracy and credibility of the study based on what has been studied and what was discovered. In addition, the researcher consulted his university supervisor who plays the role of reviewing the data collected in order to circumvent any biases which could have been overlooked. Credibility is concerned with the accuracy of the way the subject is identified and described, whereby the researcher clarified the boundaries around the research study.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to “the degree to which the findings are product of the focus of the inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:278). The research participants gave their views during the interview in the study without the influence of the researcher. However, the researcher kept all the interview collection tools to put any biases to rest should an audit be necessary.

3.12 Anticipated challenges and limitations of the study

De Vos et al. (2002) state that in as much as qualitative research had gained some acceptance as an approach, it also has some inevitable limitations, such as a lack of generalisation of the findings to a wider population has been a major criticism. The limitations of the study included a qualitative research design and a small sample size.

Qualitative research design

Gxubane (2012:13) connotes that “qualitative research design have inherent limitation as they rely greatly on subjectivity and the findings are not easily generalizable”. The study was limited as the researcher depended on the participants’ responses and the research findings were not easily generalizable. However, the study provided an insight into an in-depth understanding on the educational attainment of youths who have reached eighteen whilst in foster care in Ocean View. De Vos (2005) states that a qualitative research design has its limitations, such as a lack of generalization of the findings, and it can also limit the size of the sample.

Sample size

The researcher had intentions to interview twenty but ended up with fourteen participants. The total number of participants who took part in the study did not affect the study outcomes and the quality of the research data. The participants provided an in-depth understanding on the research topic.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter presented a detailed discussion of the various aspects of the research design and methodology that were adopted in this study. A qualitative research design, which was adopted in the study, was discussed. The chapter also presented discussions on the population, sampling strategy and methods of gaining consent. The research tool, the pre-test of the interview schedule and the research interview recording were discussed. Tesch’s approach, which was used for data analysis and data verification, was discussed. The anticipated challenges and limitations of the study that were encountered were also discussed.

The following chapter presents the research data and findings on the educational attainment of youths who have reached eighteen whilst in foster care in Ocean View, Cape Town.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH DATA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the research findings that emerged from the analysis of research data and compares them to related studies. Firstly, the overall aim and specific objectives of this research will be re-stated, the profile of participants will be presented in a table, followed by a second table laying out the framework for discussing the research data. The findings will be presented according to themes, sub-themes and categories that emerged from the analysis of the research data, which are based on the main objectives and the overall aim of the study. Further critical discussion will be presented in relation to the findings to similar studies and theories, previously examined in the literature review. The study seeks to contribute towards a better understanding of educational aspirations and challenges of youths who reached eighteen whilst in foster care.

Fourteen youths who reached eighteen whilst in foster care were interviewed in-depth to explore their goals in life; whether or not they associated their goals in life with educational attainment; the challenges, if any, they anticipated in relation to achieving their goals in life; their solutions, if any, they identified in overcoming the above challenges. Furthermore, the study explored challenges, if any, that youths in foster care faced whilst in school, which they believed would hinder them from achieving their educational goals; the challenges, if any, that they anticipated in the community that they believed would hinder them from achieving their goals in life; and their solutions, if any, proposed necessary to overcome the challenges they identified in the community.

4.2 Profile of participants

Table 2: Participants' ages, gender, foster parents and their relationship to the foster children, total number of dependants to the foster parent and breadwinner in the family.

Participants (P)	Age	Gender	Foster parents and their relationship to the foster children	Total number of dependants on the foster parents	Breadwinner in the family
1	19	M	Maternal grandparents	Two (1 child and 1 adult)	Maternal grandfather is a retired carpenter
2	19	M	Paternal aunt and paternal uncle	Three (2 children and 1 adult)	Paternal uncle is a mechanic
3	18	M	Maternal grandparents	One (1 adult)	Maternal grandfather is a fisherman

4	19	F	Maternal aunt	Three (2 adults and 1 child)	Maternal aunt is a domestic worker
5	18	F	Maternal aunt and maternal uncle	Three (2 children and 1 adult)	Maternal aunt works for the South African Navy at the dockyard
6	18	M	Paternal aunt and paternal uncle	Two (1 child and 1 adult)	Paternal aunt is a bookkeeper
7	20	F	Paternal aunt and paternal uncle	Two (1 child and 2 adults)	Paternal uncle is a fisherman and paternal uncle is a tailor
8	18	F	Maternal grandmother	Six (4 children and 2 adult)	Maternal grandmother is unemployed, and she depends on the social grants (Older Person's Grant)
9	20	M	Maternal grandmother	Six (5 children and 1 adult)	Maternal grandmother is unemployed, and she is receiving an Old Age Grant
10	18	F	Family friend	One (1 adult)	Family friend is a nurse aid
11	19	M	Maternal grandmother	Three (2 children and 1 adult)	Maternal grandmother is unemployed and depends on the social grant (Older Person's Grant)
12	18	F	Maternal uncle and maternal aunt	Two (1 child and 1 adult)	Maternal uncle works for a recycling company and the maternal aunt who is a fashion stylist
13	18	F	Maternal aunt and maternal uncle	Six (3 children and 3 adults)	Maternal aunt works for a cycling company as a domestic worker
14	19	M	Maternal aunt	Five (3 children and 1 adult)	Maternal aunt is a nurse

4.2.1 Discussion on the profile of the participants:

The ages of the participants during the period of the study

All the participants interviewed were above 18 years of age and hence they participated in the study. Section 176 (2) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 states that a child can remain in foster care until he/she reaches the age of 21 years. All the participants were between the ages of 18 and 20 years, the oldest was 20 years and the youngest was 18 years. There were seven participants aged 18, five participants aged 19 and two participants aged 20 years. All the participants were allowed to complete their high schooling in line with the provision of Section 176 (1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

Gender

The participants interviewed consisted of seven males and seven females, as the research targeted equal gender representation. The gender of participants was also significant, because the researcher was interested to know if there were any differences in gender between male and females in the different research variables under investigation in the study.

Foster parents and their relationship to the foster children

The researcher was interested to know whether the research participants were related to their foster parents, so as to find out if the existence of a relationship between the foster parents and the participants had any impact on their educational aspirations. The profile shows that 13 out of 14 participants were fostered by their relatives, and only one was in foster care with a family friend. It would seem that most of the participants were in the foster care of their extended family members.

Total number of dependants on the foster parents

The researcher was interested to know the total number of dependents who were being taken care of by foster parents. This was significant to the study, as it gives the researcher an overview of the other people who were living at home, and whether the participants had other siblings in foster care. The above table shows that most of the participants lived in the foster home with more than one child in the foster family. Very few participants had no siblings at home. The implication of foster parents being responsible for many dependents is one of the research variables that is explored in the study.

Breadwinner in the family

The researcher was interested to know if the breadwinners were the foster parents, or if other family members were. In addition to that, the researcher was also interested to know whether the foster parents were receiving any other income in addition to the foster care grant they were receiving from the government. The above table indicates that all the participants' foster parents were breadwinners and most of the foster parents also kept jobs, which would possibly make it possible to meet the costs associated with the educational needs of all the children in their care.

4.3 Presentation and discussion of the research data

Table 3: Framework for data analysis

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
4.3.1 Participants' goals in life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To complete Grade 12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Admission to tertiary education ➤ Getting a job
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To pursue a professional career 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Giving back to the community
4.3.2 Participants' association of their goals in life with educational attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquiring of Grade 12 qualification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Creation of employment opportunities
4.3.3 Anticipated challenges in achieving goals in life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting access to higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Help to apply for bursaries ➤ Limited financial resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failing mathematics 	
4.3.4 Participants' solutions, overcoming the difficulties in achieving their educational goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeating of failed grade 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going an extra mile to pass matric 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivation and social support from foster parents and family Love and adequate support from foster parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Getting additional family academic support to pass matric ➤ Helping the participants to achieve their goals through showing kindness ○ Not receiving social support ○ Corporal punishment ○ Verbal abuse
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouragement from external sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Encouragement from pastors in church ➤ Encouragement from The Open Door
4.3.5 Participants' perceived difficulties in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers not doing their jobs properly 	
4.3.6 Participants' perceived difficulties in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of safety in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fear of studying at night ➤ Fear of being robbed
4.3.7 Participants' proposed solutions, in overcoming challenges identified in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement of police in arresting criminals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Community members working together with police in fighting crime

4.3.1 Participants' goals in life

In exploration of the participants' goals in life, the sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of research data included that they wanted: *to complete Grade 12* and *to pursue a professional career*:

To complete Grade 12

The participants who wanted to complete Grade 12 cited reasons which included that they desired admission *to tertiary education* and others wanted to *get a job*. Those who wanted to further their studies stated the following:

“When I finish school, I am going to apply to study law. I was advised to apply for every university, even outside of Cape Town, because you never know where the opportunities open, but the main universities where I would like to attend are either the University of the Western Cape or Stellenbosch University...” (P10).

“After matric... I am planning to study at Damelin College and further my studies there...” (P13).

“I am planning to go to the University of Cape Town (UCT) or University of the Western Cape (UWC)... Going to university will be nice” (P5).

It would seem that the research participants believe that an entry into institutions of higher learning might better their opportunities in life, mainly if they get good matric results. It would seem that most participants wanted to be educated and further their studies because they indicated that it was the right decision to be highly educated. Harden (2004) discovered that children in the foster care system could pursue their dreams and can become successful in life, if given the same opportunities of getting enrolled into colleges as compared to those children who are not in foster care. Similarly, Mguzulwa (2014) studied youths who were involved in gang violence and found that the completion of Grade 12 was very important to them as they believed that this would enable them access to higher education.

Those who wanted to get a job had the following to say:

“... I want a job which will make me rich ... make money” (P13).

“I have been throwing CVs during the holidays at Woolworths, Edgars and beauty cosmetics sections because I want to work and make money ... on top of the foster care

grant that I am currently receiving (meaning the foster care grant received by foster parents)” (P12).

“I want to join the army and work ... Sometimes you cannot get the clothes ... spray (fragrance) that you need ... So you must not wait until next month starts” (P1).

It would seem that a significant number of participants are not interested in furthering their studies. The reasons for not wanting to complete their studies seem to indicate that most participants had pressing issues other than furthering their studies and had desires to get a job so that they could earn some extra income and make money. It would seem that the participants’ current monetary challenges, such as not having enough money to buy toiletries, compels them to get a job. Most participants wanted to be financially stable and to be able to buy what they are currently not getting from their foster parents. The research data seems to support Howard and Berzin (2011) who also found that few youths in foster care have the increasing disadvantages of not being financially stable, and they tend to work part-time jobs so as to be financially stable.

To pursue a professional career

The research data shows that all participants wanted to pursue *varied professional careers* such as being a social worker, a lawyer, a nurse, a police officer, chef, photographer, graphic designer, footballer, engineer and a soldier. They further motivated their reasons for pursuing their different career paths. Those who wanted to pursue careers such as *social workers, police officers, nurses and soldiers* had this to say:

“I want to be a social worker so that I can help my community by removing children that are being abused and place them into place of safety” (P8).

“My plan is to join the defence force and become a soldier so that I can protect ... my community” (P6).

“I want to be a private nurse because I want to help ... sick people. I see a lot of sick people like at the clinic there is not enough staff and people wait for long hours in queues ...” (P5).

It would seem that the desire for some participants to give back to the community is inspired, firstly, by challenges, such as crimes, that they have observed in their community. Secondly,

this seems to suggest that some participants might have had good experiences from observing social workers and nurses who serve as positive role-models and who inspired them to give back to the community.

One participant, who wanted to have a *career in hospitality* and to work as a chef, had this to say:

“I would like to study hospitality and become a chef. I chose that goal because I like making food and eating it at the same time” (P7).

Another participant who wanted to pursue a *career in sports* had this to say:

“At the moment I see myself achieving soccer because I like it and I enjoy playing soccer” (P11).

The participants who wanted to pursue their *careers in arts* such as graphic designer and choreographer had this to say:

“I want to become a graphic designer. I enjoy drawing and if I am feeling bored, or stressed, I enjoy drawing” (P3).

“I want to be a choreographer, because I like talking and teaching others and I am very open ... I have been dancing since I got to Ocean View, for all the shows ... I love it” (P13).

The research data shows that most of the participants had set themselves long-term goals, which seem to have been motivated by what is happening in their community. It would seem that most participants wanted to become police officers so that they could fight crime in their community. The research data shows that most of the participants are determined to achieve their educational goals so that they could work for their preferred professional careers. Brady & Gilligan (2018:38) found that over 90 percent of children in foster care in Ireland require foster parents to play a major role in assisting and encouraging the educational progress of youths in foster care. Social inclusion aims at the idea of justice, as it plays a role of including socially and financially excluded citizens in certain communities to be active citizens in the economy of the country (Collins, 2003:22).

4.3.2 Participants' association of their goals in life with educational attainment

The research data indicates that most of the participants associated the attainment of their educational goals with *acquiring a Grade 12 qualification* to be successful in life.

Acquiring of Grade 12 qualification

The participants who wanted to pass Grade 12 believed that *acquiring a Grade 12 qualification* would *create employment opportunities* for them. Most participants regarded education as a key to success and they specified that they wanted to complete their schooling because they believed that employment *opportunities* exist for people with Grade 12:

“... high school is very important because education is the key to success and if you do not have education there are less chances that you are going to be successful in life and get a good job” (P5).

“If you do not have high school education you can struggle in life and you cannot get a good job that pays well without Grade 12” (P14).

“High school is the foundation of life for instance if you need to go to tertiary or get a good job ... you cannot get it without high school education. It is very important” (P1).

The research data shows that most of the participants valued the importance of education. The research data seems to support Keenan (2007) who also found that children in foster care have high hopes for work and they would like to pursue their careers such as social workers, police officers and soldiers, even though there are limited job opportunities in South Africa. Keenan (2007) states that young people, who leave school early without completing their education and start to seek job employment, are prevented from getting a good education.

4.3.3 Anticipated challenges in achieving goals in life

The participants identified two challenges that they believed could prevent them from achieving their goals in life, namely, *getting access to higher education* and *failing mathematics*:

Getting access to higher education

The research data shows that some participants were well aware that their *limited financial resources* and not having *bursaries* would prevent them from enrolling in the institutes for higher learning and to achieve their educational goals:

“... the foster care grant that I receive from the government and my foster parent’s income is not enough to send me to university” (P12).

“I would love to study further, go to university if the money is available but I cannot afford the university fees” (P7).

“I went to False Bay College in Fish Hoek and they told me ... I need to pay tuition fees, but I do not think if I can get the money” (P4).

The research data shows that children in foster care have limited financial resources in their foster families to cater for their tertiary education fees, unlike some youths residing with their birth parents and extended families who might come to their rescue. The children in foster care need financial support from the government and their foster parents so that they can realise their educational aspirations. It became clear to the researcher that the participants were not aware that they could access financial support from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) set up to help young people who come from poor and working class families, and who cannot afford to pay for their tuition at any public universities or public colleges in South Africa. Sen (1999) implies that capability is categorised as the rights citizens enjoy which lead to a life they value, such as having access to basic education and a better healthcare system, which leads to long life.

Those who needed help to apply for bursaries had limited financial resources from their foster parents; hence they needed to apply for bursaries in order for them to achieve their goals. They had this to say:

“My cousin is studying welding in Cape Town College and he said he can help me to ... apply for a bursary ...” (P9).

“I just need to work hard and attend varsity if there is money. Hopefully ... my foster parents will save money for me to go to college ... help me to apply for bursaries ...”
(P12).

The research data seems to suggest that the participants are not getting the help they need from their foster families in applying for financial assistance towards their tertiary education. This could mean that if they fail to apply for funding they may not proceed to tertiary institutes, taking into account that the income their foster parents earn is very limited. Brady and Gilligan (2018:38) discovered that “children in foster care face challenges such as having difficulties in accessing relevant information on the range of educational opportunities and pathways available to them”. Mgzulwa (2014) also found that youths required financial support from their foster parents in order for them to follow their educational dreams. Kanbur and Squire (1999) suggest that the human development approach inspires economic growth, if the government prioritises investment in education and better healthcare for the poor.

Failing mathematics

Another challenge most participants cited as a factor that could prevent them from achieving their goals in life was *failing mathematics*:

“The only difficulty I have is mathematics because I did not pass my maths last year because it was difficulty... I failed it” (P9).

“My difficulty is mathematics ... I always fail mathematics and I am currently studying mathematics literacy ...” (P4).

“I need someone to help me with mathematics actually. I did discuss it with my foster mother. I showed her my report last year; I did pass all my subjects except mathematics and I cannot do anything without mathematics” (P14).

The research data shows that the participants were aware that they needed to pass ‘pure’ mathematics¹ in order for them to pass matric well, and stand a good chance of being accepted to their preferred degrees. Others were also sceptical that instead of studying ‘pure’

¹ Pure mathematics is harder than maths literacy mainly because it deals with theoretical concepts and equations, not used in everyday life. Pure mathematics is needed to enter most universities and you will have more course and programme options. Mathematics literacy is an easier option and a good fall back because it applies to real life situations. Mathematics lit may limit your career options to higher tertiary education opportunities if you do not get high marks.

mathematics they were studying mathematics literacy, which will not assist them to access careers, and which could lead them to become doctors and accountants. The South African government through the Department of Education encourages learners to pass mathematics whilst acknowledging that mathematics is a difficult subject and which needs attention by the authorities (NYP, 2015-2020). The National Youth Policy (2020) encourages teachers to assist learners struggling with mathematics, and the necessity for teachers to be retrained in teaching mathematics.

4.3.4 Participants' solutions in overcoming difficulties in achieving their educational goals

In exploration of the participants' solutions to overcome their challenges, the youths cited a range of solutions which included: *intentions to repeat failed grade, going an extra mile to pass matric, motivation and social support from foster parents and family, love and adequate support from foster parents, encouragement from pastors in church and encouragement from Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) such as The Open Door.*

Repeating a failed grade

The participants who were repeating a grade so as to achieve their educational goals stated the following:

"I am repeating grade eleven this year because I failed my practical last year..." (P1).

"I failed matric last year so I am repeating grade twelve ... I am writing some of the subjects I failed last year ..." (P2).

"... I am repeating grade eleven this year...because I failed it last year ..." (P12).

The research data shows that some participants were prepared to repeat a grade so as to achieve their Grade 12 in school. The Department of Education progress report (2011) mentions that an average of 45% of learners repeated a failed grade before they completed high school.

Going an extra mile to pass matric

Those who were prepared to go an extra mile to pass matric had the following to say:

"If the teachers can help me to pass matric that will be great ..." (P9).

“Next year, I will make a plan so that I can attend extra maths classes, so that I can pass matric” (P14).

“I am going to start writing my exams in June and that is when I am planning to finish. I am going to have a tutor, attend extra classes and that is going to help me pass my studies” (P7).

It would seem the research participants believe that passing matric opens doors for them and that is the best way for them to achieve their goals in life; hence they are willing to go an extra mile by dedicating more time to their studies so that they can pass mathematics and achieve their educational goals. The Ministry of Education Progress Report (2007) states that attending extra lessons and having someone who helps with homework helps children pass exams.

Motivation and social support from foster parents and family

Some participants reported that they needed motivation and social support from foster family in order for them to fulfil their future goals:

“I need help with my school work from my foster family ... someone who can give me positive feedback after school and is more than the help that I need. We do not get that type of support from our foster mother” (P5).

“I need ... social support from my foster parents ... I did not get this from my deceased parents” (P1).

“My grandmother (foster mother) always encourages me to do well in school ... and my siblings ... All I need is encouragement and positive feedback in my life” (P9).

The profile of the participants discussed above showed that all participants were living in households, some of which had three or more siblings in foster care. The research data seems to suggest that it is difficult for one foster parent to give attention to all the children in foster care, mainly because foster parents might have children of their own as well and which they need to take care of (see Table 2). This could mean that foster parents will not have enough time to give attention to all the children under their care, and this might have negative implications on the children’s educational aspirations if they fail to get the motivation and support, they need from their foster parents. The children in foster care might not achieve their educational aspirations if their foster parents fail to motivate the participants. The findings

show that participants needed motivation from their foster families and the research data shows that some of the participants were not receiving motivation from their foster families. Courtney (2009) discovered that youths in foster care need help such as social support, adjusting to foster care placements and being supported by their foster parents; while in their care they can make the children adapt well and feel loved.

Amongst those participants who expressed that they needed support, some felt that they *needed additional academic support* in order to pass their Grade 12 and reach their goals in life:

“I need help with my school work from my foster parents to guide me on my studies” (P7).

“I need help from her (foster mother) ... she must guide me with my homework when I do not understand so that I can pass my subjects and achieve my goals of going to college” (P14).

“I need help from my foster parents with my school work so that I can pass matric and achieve my goals” (P12).

The research data indicates that the participants in the study would appreciate academic support from their foster family so that they can better their opportunities of passing matric. It seems to the researcher that children who are not in foster care are likely to have extended family members who could support them when they are facing academic challenges, unlike those in foster care who only rely on their foster parents for such support. The Children’s Act 38 of 2005 acknowledges the importance of a peaceful and loving family structure and an environment where children’s rights are respected.

Love and adequate support from foster parents

The research data shows that whilst some participants enjoyed good social support from their foster families, others did not. Amongst those who received good social support some reported that their foster parents played a major role in *helping them to achieve their goals in life through showing kindness*:

“My grandfather (foster father) ... Understands me and does not shout all the time and he listens to you (participant) and offers kind messages to me, which I really appreciate. I enjoy his kindness because it keeps me motivated all the time ...” (P1).

“My grandmother (foster mother) showers me with love and kindness which is a good thing to me because it makes me want to study hard and pass my exams so that I she would not be disappointed with me. ...” (P3).

It would seem some research participants appreciated the kindness they received from their foster parents which helped in providing a safe home for the participants in foster care. Some participants expressed their desire to put extra effort in their studies so that their foster parents would be pleased that they had achieved their goals. Andersson (2008) discovered that children in the foster care system can obtain good grades in school if the foster parents support secure affections for children who come from a background of abuse and neglect. Burley & Halpern (2001:13), discussed in Chapter 2, discovered that “many youths in foster care are more prone than their non-foster peers to experience withdrawal, lack of social skills and each of these factors can influence students’ ability to focus and do well in school”.

It is evident from the research data that some of the participants were not receiving *encouragement* and *enough social* and *academic support* from their foster parents:

“Sometimes ... I do not receive enough encouragement from my foster mother and sometimes she does not attend my dancing shows because she is not always there when I need her” (P13).

“I want them (foster parents) to be more involved in my schoolwork. My foster mother is not involved in my life most of the time and I feel like I am not receiving enough help from both my foster parents” (P5).

Some participants reported that, instead of moral support, they received *corporal punishment* from their foster parents:

“Corporal punishment made me stronger because they (foster parents) used to hit (corporal punishment) me with a stick or belt when I do something wrong ... and always tell me ... they have a right to hit me because if I do wrong obviously, it’s their method of telling you that we love, and we don’t want that ... that time I did not see it that way I took it so that they wanted to look down on me and they just want to hit me and stuff. Actually, it was not so, man ... I did not want to listen obvious” (P1).

“My grandmother she used to hit (corporal punishment) me when I was younger, but she stopped” (P9).

The research data seems to suggest that some foster parents were not fully involved in some parts of participants' lives. One participant reported verbal abuse from her foster mother and expressed that she was not happy with the way she was being treated as this affected her progress at school:

"I am not happy because when my foster mother is drunk she swears and you cannot do your homework. This has been happening since I was eleven" (P8).

Probing the verbal abuse further, the participants confessed that:

"I did not tell anyone about the verbal abuse. When you tell her that she is wrong then she will shout at you more. Last year she was here (foster mother came to see a social worker) because of the way she treated my child; she did shout after speaking to the social worker. I feel like I need to move out of the house because she is not going to change her behaviour. All I want is to finish my education" (P8).

It would seem that some foster care children were not able to do their homework properly because their foster parents were abusing them under the influence of alcohol. The research data seems to suggest that some of the foster parents are not fit for their role as care givers since they verbally abuse the foster children placed into their care. It would seem that the participants who experienced abuse whilst in foster care might have struggles when completing their homework and when the foster parents are verbally abusing them. The research data supports Mnisi (2015:123) who found that "adolescents in foster care reported to have experienced physical and emotional abuse; whilst some foster parents admitted abusing children in their care". Straus (1994) discovered that a high number of foster children have previously experienced corporal punishment, sometimes to the extreme. Mnisi (2015) states that children in foster care experiencing physical abuse by their foster parents can hinder them from achieving their educational goals. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 addresses matters pertaining to the well-being of the children, namely, protection of children from being abused, neglected, abduction and child trafficking.

Encouragement from external sources

Some participants, although few, reported that they received *encouragement from pastors in church* whilst a few others reported that they received *encouragement from the organisation The Open Door* (see Chapter One for details about this organisation).

Encouragement from pastors in church

Those who received encouragement from church *pastors* had this to say:

“Church pastors ... give encouragement through praying for you during exams” (P5).

“I receive encouragement from church and (pastors) would pray for us during my exams” (P10).

“Yes (participant confirming receiving encouragement), from my pastor at church and the people from the church encourage you to do well with schoolwork” (P8).

Encouragement from The Open Door organisation

Some participants reported that they received encouragement from NGOs in the community such as *The Open Door* and had this to say:

“... The Open Door gives encouragement to children in foster care to apply for universities when they reach in Grade 12” (P5).

“The Open Door social workers are nice people; they encourage you to further your studies” (P12).

“I receive encouragement from The Open Door; one social worker at The Open Door helped me when I dropped out of school in Grade 11 and he encouraged me to go back to school and finish my matric, which was really nice” (P1).

The research data suggests that pastors in church and The Open Door organisation were encouraging children to do well in their studies. The children who are not in foster care might receive encouragement from their biological parents compared to the participants who are in foster care who do not have biological parents and extended relatives living in the house to encourage them, so that they can reach their educational aspirations and goals. It seems that the church pastors and The Open Door were encouraging participants to thrive in their studies in line with the spirit of Ubuntu.

4.3.5 Participants' perceived difficulties in school

The research data suggests that most of the participants faced difficulties in school such as *teachers not doing their jobs properly*, and the participants believed that this might hinder them from achieving their educational goals:

“Teachers are an obstacle in my life because of their lack of commitment in teaching children. They do not put effort in their teaching and they do not do their job properly” (P3).

“Teachers do not check our homework and they (teachers) must always sign and check... learners' books, which they do not do” (P8).

The participants were concerned about some of the teachers who were not doing their jobs properly, and they believed that this might hinder them from achieving their educational goals. This is concerning because it means that, even if some learners are determined to succeed in achieving their educational goals, they may not be able to do so if their teachers are demotivating them. Lewin and Mawoyo (2014) assert that the majority of public schools in South Africa have large classes; this results in learners missing out on individual attention and learners with learning problems being overlooked in some cases. Mkandawire (2012) writes that children in foster care face disadvantages of being deprived of an opportunity to achieve their educational goals in life, mainly because some schools in townships do not have enough resources (enough qualified teachers) to equip youths for tertiary education.

4.3.6 Participants' perceived difficulties in the community

Some participants reported their *fear of studying at night because of gangsters* and *fear of being robbed* as major concerns in their lives, which they believe might hinder their chances of achieving their educational goals. Those who feared studying at night because of gangsters had this to say:

“My brother is into the issue of gangsters and I am afraid to walk around. I am always scared and today... I was up at 4 a.m. studying and when gangsters started burning stuff so I stopped studying and went straight to bed ...” (P12).

“There is always gang violence ... gangsters always shoot each other. You cannot study well at night because you are also afraid of being seen by gangsters as a witness or being shot ... I am also scared to study with the light on at night” (P9).

“If I want to visit a friend of mine who lives closer to me ... and invite him to study, I cannot walk but if they (gangsters) live in that area, which is dangerous. I would not go there at night. I am afraid of the shootings” (P3).

The research data shows that the participants lived in fear of studying at night, always looking over their shoulders and worried about their safety because of gang violence. It would seem children living in violent communities are not likely to perform well in their studies because they cannot study after hours. This finding is supported by Burnett (1999) who found that gangs demarcate their areas and that they are always watchful over their members, carrying dangerous weapons, and this makes other innocent community members scared. Mguzulwa (2014:70-71) found that “some youths fear for their safety often resulted in drop-outs or repeating grades and that even those youths who did not drop out of school seemed to have difficulties with their school work and were also at risk of dropping out”.

Some participants reported that they also feared being robbed by members of the gangs:

“I fear being robbed all the time and I am always looking around when I am walking from school ... yesterday, the person that I know was robbed and shot dead ...” (P6).

“... Innocent people are being robbed and killed ... I fear being robbed and killed too ... I also fear the gangsters” (P4).

The findings suggest that the participants live in fear of being robbed or killed and they feared that if they are to be shot they might not be able to survive to achieve their educational goals in life. Fear of gang violence seemed to be a common concern amongst many participants as they did not feel safe in the community. Similarly, Mguzulwa (2014) also found that some youths from townships were negatively affected by the gang violence, as it affected their school attendance and academic performance because they were not giving school their full attention as they were always concerned about their safety.

4.3.7 Participants’ proposed solutions in overcoming challenges identified in the community

Research data regarding the solutions, which were proposed by the participants in overcoming the challenges identified in the community, included: *involvement of police in arresting criminals and community members working together in fighting crime.*

Involvement of police in arresting criminals

The research data shows that most participants believed that the police should be more visible and arrest the criminals in their community:

“... The police should be more visible in the community and they should be arresting the criminals. If I become a police officer, I am going to arrest the drug dealers in Ocean View” (P5).

“The police should do their job and arrest criminals ... they (police) need to be visible all the time” (P2).

“... Police should take out (arrest) the people that are using drugs and send them away” (P7).

Some of the participants lamented the need of community members working together with South African Police Service in fighting crime in their community had this to say:

“The community must stand together as one. That is the main solution and community members are afraid to speak up. If you report the case to the police, they will shoot you and they do staff to your family. People are scared to speak up and this is the reason this problem is still going on” (P5).

“... the community working together and stop them (gangsters) from killing people. People must stand up and confront the people who are doing this” (P3).

The research data suggests that the participants felt that the police should be more visible and do their jobs properly in arresting criminals so that the youths could be able to achieve their educational aspirations goals in life. It can be inferred from the research data that if good measures to prevent crime could be put in place this could assist learners to study freely at night and be able to reach their educational aspirations without fear of the criminals in the community.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented a profile of the participants and discussed research data in relation to specific objectives of the study. A comprehensive discussion of the research data, according to themes, sub-themes and categories, was carried out in relation to their significance to the overall aim of the study within the context of other relevant studies in the literature. The study revealed that all the participants wanted to complete their Grade 12 and were willing to achieve their goals in relation to their attainment goals. Some of the participants were concerned about the on-going gang violence happening in the community, which they believe might hinder them from achieving their goals in life. Most participants considered education as their main goal, which they believed would make their dreams come true. They insisted that they would continue to work hard and not to give up on their studies. The next chapter will present the main conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

The overall aim of the study was to contribute towards a better understanding of the educational aspirations and challenges of youths who had reached eighteen whilst in foster care in Ocean View, Cape Town. This chapter presents the main conclusions and recommendations of the study, discussed according to the objectives of the study.

5.2 Participants' goals in life

The findings of the study showed that all the children in foster care associated their goals in life with educational attainment. The study revealed that the children in foster care identified the importance of completing Grade 12 as the only way that could help them to achieve their educational goals in life. The study further indicated that it was the aspiration of most of the youths in the study to have certified qualifications. Therefore, it can be concluded that completing Grade 12 and acquiring a professional qualification seems to have been the motivating strength for youths to put in additional academic effort at school.

Based on the above conclusions, it is therefore recommended that:

- There is a need for collaboration between the foster parents and the class teachers in offering social support to youths who are in foster care so that they can achieve their educational goals. The teachers in school should set monthly meetings between the class teachers of the children in foster care and their foster parents, and the goal will be to encourage the youths to complete Grade 12.

5.3 Participants' association of their goals in life with educational attainment

The findings of this study showed that the children in foster care were convinced that acquiring Grade 12 qualifications would allow them to acquire a formal qualification, which would create employment opportunities for them.

Based on the above conclusions, it is therefore recommended that:

- The Department of Education, through life orientation and learning support teachers in schools, should offer career-guidance subjects to children so that they can have a clear understanding of what profession would best match their subjects.
- The Department of Education, through the teachers and principals, can also invite motivational speakers to talk to all the high school learners about academic and career guidance and this can be done once every term. The venue could be the school hall and the school principal could invite the former high school students, who are doing well in life, as speakers.

5.4 Anticipated challenges in achieving goals in life

The study found that the children in foster care were not getting the help they needed from their foster families in applying for financial assistance towards their tertiary education. This could mean that if they fail to apply for funding they may not proceed to tertiary institute, taking into account that the income their foster parents earn is very limited and needs to maintain many dependents. Furthermore, the youths believed that mathematics was their biggest obstacle, in which they thought they needed assistance if they were to pass their exams. The study found that most children in foster care, similar to many high school learners, were aware that failing mathematics is a major challenge they feared could hinder them from achieving their chances of getting accepted to specific degrees of their choice. In addition, it was evident from the study that mathematics is a national concern, which affects all learners in general.

Based on the above conclusions it is therefore recommended that:

- The Department of Education, through school principals, needs to avail more information on how to apply for bursaries and reach out to marginalised communities such as township schools. The Department of Education, through teachers, should run career-talk workshops within their schools every school term. The learning support teachers should aim at reaching out to high school children, especially those between Grades 8 and 12 who are about to enter tertiary education levels regarding the financial assistance available to them. This will ensure that they study hard, knowing that they can apply for financial aid instead of relying on the breadwinner in their foster family to financially support them.
- The learning support teachers, with children struggling with mathematics, should approach the University of Cape Town's Student Health and Welfare Organisation

(SHAWCO) programme which offers free tutoring programmes to township schools. University students, who are majoring in mathematics, could volunteer to teach through the Student Health and Welfare Organisation (SHAWCO) from the University of Cape Town. University students should offer extra mathematics lessons to high school learners struggling with mathematics. The extra mathematics lessons can be run on weekends when the university students do not have lectures. The extra lessons should be free of charge, especially to those learners who cannot afford to pay. A register should be kept by the university students who will be rotating the running of the extra classes during weekends. University students will be responsible for monitoring the academic progress of learners who attend the extra mathematics classes during weekends, and a copy of the register should be submitted to the high school class teachers of the learners at end of each month.

- Social workers, who are assigned to children struggling with mathematics, can approach retired high school mathematics teachers residing in Ocean View to offer tutoring services once a week, over a weekend, at Ocean View High School classes. The retired teachers should be able to offer their tutoring services free of charge and this should be on a voluntary basis.

5.5 Participants' solutions, overcoming the difficulties in achieving their educational goals

The findings of the study indicate that most children in foster care had failed a grade and regarded repeating a failed grade as a solution to achieving their educational aspirations. Some participants were determined to go an extra mile in order to pass exams and achieve their goals in life.

The study also found that the youths in foster care also needed financial support and motivation from foster parents and family to do well at school. It would seem that most youths in foster care encountered the problems of having limited financial resources to pay for their tuition, if they were to further their studies, and had little knowledge of how to apply for bursaries.

The study also found that some foster care parents provided the children in their care with love and adequate support, which the participants cited as necessary to achieve their educational goals. Most of the participants in this study appreciated the social support and kindness they received from their foster parents and perceived it as crucial in their lives because their parents could not provide that to them. However, some of the children in foster care were not happy

with the way their foster parents were treating them and reported that some of the foster parents used corporal punishment and verbally abused them. As a result, those affected participants found that they were unable to focus on their studies properly.

The study further found that some of the children in foster care received encouragement from external sources such as pastors in church and The Open Door. They believed that the support they received from external sources, such as receiving encouragement from pastors in church and The Open Door organisation, motivated the participants to do well in their studies.

Based on the above conclusions it is therefore recommended that:

- The government, through the Department of Education, should exempt children in foster care from paying tuition fees at both high school and tertiary education as they have limited financial resources to pay for their tuition. The Department of Education must ensure that necessary infrastructure is put in place to guarantee that all children and young people in foster care are given the necessary financial resources and support to realise their full potential.
- The designated social workers should encourage children in foster care, and who want to pursue a career in social work, to apply for social-work scholarships offered by the Department of Social Development (DSD). The designated social workers can download the application forms from the DSD website and assist the children in foster care to complete them.
- Foster parents should be encouraged by the social workers to support the children in their care, through helping them with their homework or just by being there when foster children need someone to talk with.
- Social workers and social auxiliary workers can support the foster parents by running workshops at The Open Door, and workshops on enhancing social relationships between foster children and their foster parents. A social auxiliary worker can conduct home visits every two months, checking if the foster parents are still coping when looking after the children placed in their care
- Social workers, with the support of social auxiliary workers, must do systematic home visits and make sure that the children in foster care are still happy; this can be done once a month. The supervision meetings with the children in foster care can be done at The Open Door's social-work offices. The venue at The Open Door is easily accessible

to children in the community after school hours (from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.), and social workers work from those offices.

- Designated social workers should report abuse cases immediately and children placed in foster care should be taught about their rights during foster care placement. For those children that are being abused by their foster parents, designated social workers and registered counsellors should render counselling services to them. The person who identifies or reports abuse should complete Form 22 as prescribed in Section 110 (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, which is a standard form of reporting allegations of abuse found at any child protection organisation. Mandatory safety and risk assessment by designated social workers and the submission of Form 23 within six weeks after submission of Form 22 must be emphasised by The Open Door supervisor. The designated social worker will then conduct an investigation on the allegations of abuse and, if the foster parent is found guilty of abuse, the child will need to be removed from his or her care. The social worker will submit the names of the Provincial Head of Department of Social Development and their names will be included in the national child protection register, as stipulated in the Children's Act 38 of 2005. Caregivers found guilty of the offence of abuse will not be allowed to foster any children in future unless found not guilty.

5.6 Participants' perceived difficulties in school

The study found that the youths faced difficulties in schools, which included a lack of commitment by teachers to teach them. This, the participants believed, might hinder them from achieving their educational goals.

Based on the above conclusions it is therefore recommended that:

- The Department of Education, through school principals, should assess the performance of the teachers through offering a suggestion box in each classroom where learners can anonymously write their grievances pertaining their difficulties in school. The school principal will read the submitted grievances and, if teachers are found not to be committed in doing their jobs, they can be reported to the Department of Education for cautioning.

5.7 Participants' perceived difficulties in the community

The study discovered that children in foster care are concerned about the lack of safety in the community due to gang violence being a major issue in the community. This, they believe, will obstruct them from achieving their educational goals because they fear studying at night.

- Based on the above conclusions, it is, therefore, recommended that: The city of Cape Town through the Ocean View ward councillor should encourage devoted community members to form a neighbourhood watch within the community of Ocean View, which will join forces with the SAPS to reduce crime in the community. The designated social workers and other NGOs in Ocean View should approach the ward councillor regarding the idea of forming a forum in Ocean View. The main idea of the forum will be to share ideas and solutions on how to deal with crime, gang violence in the community of Ocean View, and how the community can protect their children from the ongoing gang violence. The ward counsellor can facilitate the forum, and community members could meet once every month at the multi-purpose community hall in Ocean View.

5.8 Overall conclusion

The findings showed that children in foster care associated their goals in life with educational attainment. The study revealed that the children in foster care identified the importance of education as the only way that could help them to get their desired jobs and achieve their educational goals in life. The findings revealed that the participants in this study appreciate the social support and kindness they received from their foster parents as crucial in their lives because their parents could not provide that to them. However, some of the participants expressed great concerns over the treatment they were receiving from their foster parents as a major setback in their lives, which could hinder them from achieving their education goals in life. Of interest in this study was the fact that children in foster care failed a grade once or twice in their life. The study also found that children in foster care do not have adequate financial assistance to access tertiary education, which is similar to many children from impoverished family backgrounds.

5.9 Recommendation for further research

The research was conducted in Ocean View on a small sample of fourteen youths who had reached eighteen years whilst in foster care. Considering that the sample was small, there is a need for similar research to be conducted on a larger scale that would include all the children who are in foster care, instead of research just focusing on those children that turned eighteen. This would provide a broader and in-depth understanding of the experiences of children in foster care in relation to the educational aspirations and challenges that they would encounter in trying to achieve their goals in life.

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APPENDIX A



Department of Social Development

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Informed consent form

You are requested to participate in a research study that is conducted by a Master's student, Benson Tatenda Siyawareva, who is registered at the University of Cape Town, Department of Social Development. This form contains information explaining this research study. If you agree to participate as a participant, please complete your details below and then sign and date this document.

Research study title: **An exploratory study on the educational attainment of youth who have reached eighteen whilst in foster care in Ocean View, Cape Town.**

The overall aim of the study

The study seeks to contribute towards better understanding of educational aspirations and challenges of youth who reach eighteen whilst in foster care. The researcher is inviting you to partake in the study which should take about 45 minutes to 1 hour. The interview will be conducted at The Open Door offices in Ocean View at 3 p.m. after the school closes. However, if you wish to partake in the study time and venue can be negotiated. Participation in this study is based on a voluntary basis hence you are obliged to withdraw at any given time. Information gathered from this study will be confidential and anonymity will be ensured. All the interviews will be recorded using a tape recorder.

Should you require any further information please contact me on 0840388419 or you can get hold of me on email at bensonsiya@yahoo.com. Dr Thulane Gxubane (my university supervisor) can be contacted on 0216503493 or via email at thulane.gxubane@uct.ac.za.

Regards,

Benson.

I voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

Name

Surname

Date

APPENDIX B



Department of Social Development

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Interview schedule

Participant number:

1. Biographical details:

1.1 Gender

- a) Male
- b) Female

1.2 Age of the participant

- a) How old are you?
- b) Age at which you were placed in foster care?

1.3 Educational history

- a) Which grade are you currently enrolled in?
- b) Have you ever repeated any grade?
- Probe- If Yes, which one? Why?

1.4 Psychosocial and economic background of the foster family

- a) Who is your foster parent?
- b) Is your foster parent married?
- c) Who is the breadwinner in the family?
- d) Is your foster parent employed or not?
 - Probe- If yes, what is their occupation?
 - Probe- if none, why?
- e) How is your relationship with your foster parents?
 - Probe-why?
- f) How many children are there in the foster family?
- g) Who do you get along with very well in the foster family?
 - Probe- why?
- h) Who do you not get along with in the foster family?
 - Probe- why?

2.1 The participant's goals in life.

- a) What do you want to be in the future?
 - Probe- why?
- b) Who is your role model?
 - Probe-why?
- c) How are you going to achieve your goals?
- d) Do you see yourself achieving your goals?
 - Probe- if yes, how?
 - Probe- if none, why?
- e) What help do you need to achieve your goals?
 - Probe- why?

2.2 Participants association of their goals in life with educational attainment.

- a) Do you think high school education is important in life?
 - Probe- if yes, why?
 - Probe- if none, why not?
- b) Do you want to complete your high school?
 - Probe-why?

2.3 Participants strategies, if any, which will enable them to achieve their goals in life.

a) Who is your role model in school?

- Probe- why?

b) Which activities do you think are linked to your goals in life?

- Probe- why?

2.4 Participants difficulties, if any, they anticipate in relation to achieving their goals in life.

a) Do you face any difficulties in achieving your goals in life?

- Probe- if yes, what sort of difficulties?
- Probe- if none, why?

2.5 Participants solutions, if any, they have identified in overcoming the above difficulties.

a) What are your solutions in overcoming your difficulties?

- Probe- if yes, what are they?
- Probe- if none, why?

2.6 The role of the foster care family plays, if any, in helping them to achieve their goals in life.

a) Do you receive encouragement from your foster family?

- Probe- if yes, what sort of support?
- Probe- if none, why?

c) What kind of encouragement would you appreciate from your foster family?

- Probe- why?

2.7 The difficulties, if any, participants face in school, which they believe will hinder them from achieving their educational goals

a) What difficulties are you experiencing at school which you think could stop you from achieving your goals?

- Probe- why?

d) Who is encouraging you at school to do well with your school work?

- Probe- why?

e) What kind of encouragement would you want at school?

- Probe- why?

e) Do you think the difficulties you have identified have anything to do with you being a foster child?

- Probe- if yes, why?
- Probe- if none, why not?

2.8 The encouragement, if any, in the community that enables them to achieve their goals in life.

a) Do you receive encouragement from the community?

- Probe- if yes, what sort of encouragement do you receive?
- Probe- if none, why?

2.9 The difficulties, if any, that the participants anticipate in the community that they believe will hinder them from achieving their goals in life.

a) What sort of difficulties do you experience, if any, in the community which you believe will stop you from achieving your goals in life?

- Probe- why?

3.0 Their solutions, if any, in overcoming the identified challenges in the community.

a) What do you think should be done in the community in order to overcome the difficulties you have identified to help you achieve your goals?

- Probe- why?

3.1 What else would you like to share with me regarding the *educational attainment of youth who have reached eighteen whilst in foster care (Ocean View: Cape Town)* that we did not discuss in the interview?

3.2 Are you satisfied in the manner your needs are met?

- Probe- why?

Thank you so much for your participation and your time. It is much appreciated.

Thank you.