

**THE VIEWS OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING THE USE OF GROUP WORK
TO ADVANCE SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF FOSTER CHILDREN**

by

HLENGANI AUBREY NDOBE

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK (MA SW)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF. BOTHA

FEBRUARY 2026

DECLARATION

Name: Hlengani Aubrey Ndobe

Student number: 53594517

Degree: Master of Social Work

I declare that **the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance social competence of foster children** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that any use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been fully disclosed.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to the appropriate originality detection system which is endorsed by Unisa and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

I further declare that where Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools have been used in the preparation of this dissertation, their use has been limited to ethical permissible support, has been fully disclosed and does not replace my own original research, my independent critical thinking and analysis, or authorship responsibilities.

I understand that failure to disclose AI use, plagiarism and/or lack of academic integrity may constitute academic misconduct under Unisa's policies.



SIGNATURE FEBRUARY 2026

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, Tsakane Getrude Mbhiza and Risimati Isaac Mahlale. Because of your unconditional and genuine love, care and support, I have grown to be a good example to all my siblings. Thank you very much, N'wa-Hasani and Jonasi and may the Lord keep you to see more of my achievements.

I dedicate this work to my late grandparents, N'wa-Msengi Maria Mahlawule-Mbhiza and Hasani Elias Mbhiza. You sold one of your cows to invest in my education. *Vakokwani* (grandparents), I have done it again.

To my beautiful children, Dzuneko and Siphosethu, your presence kept me going. I owe you many fun days that we missed, and I love you so dearly, my angels.

To my siblings, Destar, Hlamulo, Hloniphani, Miyimeri and Seketelo, thank you for your unparalleled support *vana va mhani* (siblings) throughout this journey. I am truly grateful to have you as my siblings.

To my second parents, Prof. Reineth Prinsloo and Prof. Gert Prinsloo, thank you for your support in my tertiary academic journey. This one is for you. I will forever be grateful to Paul and Conrad for sharing their parents with me.

To my spiritual father, Dr Andrew Spaumer, thank you for your seasoned support. You know how it all started. I thank you for your unwavering support and for reminding me that it is not all about being smart, but about taking small steps towards your goal through the grace of God.

To you, my late uncle Mr Edward Ndobe, your prayers and encouragement during my high school days kept me going to this day. May you continue to rest in peace, and I know that you would have been very proud of me.

To you, my late former Social Work Supervisor, Ms Cynthia Boya, you have said many words of wisdom to me, but what I cannot forget is when you said, "*you must study Papa*". Wherever you are, I know you are proud of me. Rest well, Super!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to the following institutions and individuals for their various contributions which helped me to successfully finish this study:

- The University of South Africa (UNISA), Department of Social Work, I thank you for the opportunity you granted me to complete my Masters degree through your institution.
- My supervisor, Prof. Petro Botha, thank you for your patience and for not holding back on your honest guidance throughout this journey. Without your guidance, support, and constant checking on me, I would not have been able to complete this study.
- Gauteng Department of Social Development, Tshwane Region (Northern Corridor), thank you for permitting me to conduct the study with your social workers. This study would not have been possible without your permission.
- My sincere gratitude goes to the research participants who made themselves available and shared their knowledge and experience with me so I could complete this study.
- My Social Work Managers, Ms Dudu Tibane and Ms Lolo Mohlala, thank you for allowing me to complete this degree. You have been the best inspiration in my professional life.
- My colleagues at the Department of Social Development, Bronkhorstspuit Service Point, thank you for your support and patience when I could not be reached. I will forever be grateful for your support.
- To the independent coder Prof. Mankwane Daisy Makofane, thank you for your excellent analysis of the research data. Your critical feedback on how the interviews were conducted with participants was very helpful.
- To the editor, Kim Smit, thank you for your dedication to refining the structure and improving the readability of this dissertation.
- And above everything, I thank Almighty God for His protection, guidance and strength throughout this academic journey. **Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me"**. *Ndza khensa Hosi.*

ABSTRACT

Family is crucial for a child's safety, yet many face challenges that threaten the well-being of children. Foster care offers the necessary support and environments conducive to growth, yet children often face psychosocial challenges and need to learn social skills. Although social workers implement individual, group, and community interventions, group work remains underused in foster care. This research explored social workers' views on utilising group work to advance the social competence of foster children. In accordance with the principles of social work and research, ethical guidelines were adhered to. A qualitative study involved eighteen social workers from the Gauteng Department of Social Development, Tshwane region. Participants were purposefully selected using non-probability sampling. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. Data was processed, analysed, and supported with verbatim responses to enrich findings. The findings emphasised the importance of group work in providing support and skills, but highlighted barriers such as heavy caseloads, administrative pressures, insufficient resources, management apathy, transport difficulties, and non-compliance with accountability. Recommendations include boosting resources, improving communication, clarifying roles, and offering specialised training to aid social workers. The study aims to enhance knowledge in social work and improve services for vulnerable children.

Key words: Child, foster care, social worker, social competence, group work

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CYCC	Child and Youth Care Centre
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DSD	Department of Social Development
HOD	Head of Department
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACSSP	South African Council of Social Service Professions
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
USA	United States of America

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF ACRONYMS	v
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF APPENDICES	xi
CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY.....	1
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT	3
1.4 RESEARCH AIM, QUESTION(S) AND OBJECTIVES	6
1.4.1 Research Aim.....	6
1.4.2 Research Questions.....	6
1.4.3 Research Objectives	6
1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	7
1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	8
1.6.1 Research Paradigm	8
1.6.2 Research Approach	8
1.6.3 Research Design.....	8
1.7 RESEARCH METHODS	9
1.7.1 Study Setting.....	9
1.7.2 Population	9
1.7.3 Sampling and Sample Size	9
1.7.4 Data Collection Methods and Procedure.....	10
1.7.5 Data Analysis Methods	11
1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS.....	12
1.8.1 Child	12
1.8.2 Foster Care	12
1.8.3 Social Worker.....	13
1.8.4 Social Competence	13
1.8.5 Group Work.....	13

1.9	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	14
1.10	FORMAT OF THE RESEARCH REPORT	14
1.11	CHAPTER SUMMARY	15
CHAPTER 2:	LITERATURE REVIEW	16
2.1	INTRODUCTION	16
2.2	THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF FAMILIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN	17
2.3	THE STATUS OF THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN WITHIN AN INTERNATIONAL AND SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT	19
2.4	THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA	20
2.4.1	Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996).....	20
2.4.2	White Paper on Social Welfare (1997).....	20
2.4.3	Children’s Act 38 of 2005	21
2.5	THE PROCESS OF FINDING A CHILD IN NEED OF CARE AND PROTECTION	22
2.6	PLACEMENT IN ALTERNATIVE CARE	24
2.6.1	Foster care as a form of alternative care.....	24
2.7	THE CHALLENGES FACED BY CHILDREN PLACED IN FOSTER CARE	28
2.8	SOCIAL SKILLS ESSENTIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOSTER CHILDREN	29
2.8.1	Social competence.....	30
2.8.2	Components of social competence	30
2.8.3	Benefits of social competence.....	31
2.9	SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS.....	33
2.9.1	Purpose of social work	33
2.9.2	Methods of social work.....	34
2.9.3	Primary methods	35
2.9.4	Secondary methods	37
2.10	SOCIAL GROUP WORK AS A METHOD TO ADVANCE SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF FOSTER CHILDREN	38
2.10.1	Nature and purpose of social group work.....	39
2.10.2	Types of groups	40
2.10.3	Advantages and disadvantages of social group work	41
2.10.4	The significant roles of a social worker in group work.....	42
2.11	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	44

2.11.1	Ecological system theory	44
2.11.2	The role theory	47
2.12	CHAPTER SUMMARY	48
CHAPTER 3:	APPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	50
3.1	INTRODUCTION	50
3.2	RESEARCH PARADIGM	50
3.3	RESEARCH APPROACH	51
3.4	RESEARCH DESIGN	53
3.5	STUDY SETTING	53
3.6	POPULATION	55
3.7	SAMPLING STRATEGY	55
3.8	THE PILOT TEST	57
3.9	METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION	59
3.9.1	Interview as a method of data collection	59
3.9.2	Semi-structured interviews	60
3.9.3	Communication techniques	61
3.10	METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS	62
3.11	TRUSTWORTHINESS	64
3.11.1	Credibility	64
3.11.2	Dependability	64
3.11.3	Transferability	65
3.11.4	Conformability	65
3.12	ETHICAL CONSIDERATION	66
3.12.1	Confidentiality and anonymity	66
3.12.2	Informed consent	67
3.12.3	Avoidance of harm	68
3.12.4	Deception of participants	68
3.12.5	Debriefing of participants	68
3.13	CHAPTER SUMMARY	69
CHAPTER 4:	PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS	70
4.1	INTRODUCTION	70
4.2	BIOGRAPHICAL AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS	70
4.2.1	Gender of the participants	73
4.2.2	Ages of the participants	73

4.2.3	Race of participants	74
4.2.4	Years of work experience in foster care supervision service delivery .	75
4.2.5	Number of foster children participants have in their caseload	76
4.2.6	Methods of social work intervention utilised by participants in foster care supervision	77
4.2.7	Frequency of the utilisation of group work as a method of intervention in foster care services	78
4.3	RESULTS OF THE STUDY	78
4.3.1	Theme 1: Participants' definition and understanding of social competence.....	82
4.3.2	Theme 2: Participants' views on suitable methods to develop social competence in foster children	93
4.3.3	Theme 3: Group work as a method to advance and enhance social competence in foster children	96
4.3.4	Theme 4: Participants' experiences in group work.....	96
4.3.5	Theme 5: Work-related factors impeding the application of group work..	103
4.3.6	Theme 6: Suggestions and recommendations for the employer	117
4.4	CHAPTER SUMMARY	124
	CHAPTER 5: CHAPTER SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	125
5.1	INTRODUCTION	125
5.2	SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS	125
5.2.1	Summary and conclusions based on the literature review and theoretical framework of the study	125
5.2.2	Summary and conclusions based on the description of the applied research process.....	128
5.2.3	Summary and conclusions based on the research findings	130
5.3	LIMITATION OF THE STUDY.....	139
5.4	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	140
5.4.1	Recommendations related to social work practice	141
5.4.2	Recommendations related to social work training and education.....	142
5.4.3	Recommendations related to social work and social welfare policy ..	142
5.4.4	Recommendations related to future research	143
5.5	CHAPTER SUMMARY	143
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	145
	APPENDICES	167

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: List of some of the studies conducted on foster care	5
Table 2.1: Advantages and disadvantages of social group work	41
Table 4.1: Summary of biographical and background information of participants.....	71
Table 4.2: Themes, subthemes and categories that emerged from the semi-structured interviews with participants	71
Table 5.1: Summary and conclusions based on the research findings relating to the objectives of this study	130
Table 5.2: Recommendations based on the research findings relating to the objectives of this study	141

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Primary and secondary methods of social work	35
Figure 2.2: Illustration of the levels of ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979).....	47
Figure 3.1: Geographical demarcation of the Department of Social Development, Tshwane Region Service Points	54
Figure 4.1: Gender of participants	72
Figure 4.2: Ages of participants.....	73
Figure 4.3: Races of participants.....	74
Figure 4.4: Years of work experience in foster care supervision service delivery.....	75
Figure 4.5: Number of foster children participants have in their caseload	76
Figure 4.6: Methods of social work intervention utilised by participants in foster care supervision	77
Figure 4.7: Frequency of the utilisation of group work as a method of intervention in foster care services	78

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Confirmation Letter from SRC	167
Appendix 2: Ethics Clearance Certificate	167
Appendix 3: Application to DSD to Gather Information	170
Appendix 4: Permission from DSD to Gather Information	172
Appendix 5: Researcher Acknowledgement Form	173
Appendix 6: Participant Information Sheet	174
Appendix 7: Consent to participate in the study	178
Appendix 8: Data collection tool(s) as per methodology/ design (including questionnaire/ interview guide/checklist)	180
Appendix 9: Turnitin Results	182
Appendix 10: Editor's Letter	183

CHAPTER 1:

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide a broad summary of the study's context, which encompasses the background and rationale for the study, research problem statement, research aim, question and objectives, theoretical framework, research methodology, definition of key concepts, ethical considerations, the format of the research report and a chapter summary.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The importance of family in childcare cannot be overstated, since it serves an essential function in influencing and developing the child's character or personality (Srikandi, 2020:340). It is considered the most vital unit in a community that must guarantee a child's safety and well-being (Sibanda & Lombard, 2022:332). However, societal pressures can sometimes hinder families from creating a nurturing environment for at-risk children (Adeboye, Guerreiro & Hojer, 2019:433). In South Africa, numerous families still encounter various difficulties as many communities endure crime, violence, substance abuse, and gender-based violence (Department of Social Development, 2021:185). In the year 2019, it was reported that up to 5.2 million children were orphaned in South Africa (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2019:1).

The South African government provides essential necessities to the population, including children, who cannot secure these needs on their own. With reference to children, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996: Section 28(1)) states that every child has, among other rights, the right to family or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment.

Section 150(1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa 2006: Section 150(1)(a)-(i)) outlines who the children in need of care and protection are. The placement in foster care of a child who was found in need of care and protection is actioned by the children's court (Nkosi, 2020:13). Section 156(1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section

156(1)), indicates that the children's court can issue an order stipulating, among other orders, that the child found in need of care and protection be placed in foster care in terms of Section 156(1)(e)(i)). Children could be placed in kinship or non-kinship foster care (Maphoto, 2020:1).

Social workers provide assistance to at-risk populations like children, people with disabilities, and the homeless (Viljoen, 2020:4). Child protection social work focuses on advocating for and safeguarding the rights and welfare of at-risk children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation (Myaka, 2021:1). The designated social worker's responsibility is to coordinate child placement in foster care to guarantee they are raised in a supportive family environment (Maphoto, 2020:2).

The Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 181(a) and (b)), highlights that one of the goals of foster care is to promote and nurture children by providing a safe, healthy environment with positive support. However, this does not imply that these placements achieve their optimal outcomes. Psychosocial development and behaviour of children who have lost parental care can create adjustment difficulties in foster care placement (Nkosi, 2020:14). To help resolve these difficulties, foster children must learn key skills of social competence (Swezey, 2018:2). Social competence refers to the social, emotional, and cognitive abilities and actions required for individuals to effectively adapt to their surroundings (Aliim & Ayriza, 2019:305). Therefore, effective strategies such as implementing methods to enhance social skills in foster children are crucial (Salik & Mushtaq, 2023:89).

The profession of social work encompasses casework, social work with groups, social work with communities, administration and research as methods of intervention (Smit, 2017:1). While it is best to apply all five intervention methods, casework is the most frequently employed and social work with groups is the least utilised (Smit, 2017:1). Group work endorses and substantiates transformative experiences through which interpersonal styles, social skills, and change can be identified and utilised (Maphosa, 2022:49). Being part of groups allows individuals to understand appropriate social behaviour norms, form enjoyable social connections, recognise personal objectives, and gain various advantages that come from involvement in tightly connected social structures (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:18).

During the thirteen years spent in social work providing supervision services for foster children, the researcher noted that these children experienced ongoing abuse and neglect over extended periods, while the social issues confronting their parents hindered their access to adequate care during their formative years. This is supported by Maphoto (2020:1), who indicates that children are often removed from the care of their families or relatives for a number of reasons, which may include neglect, parents' drug addiction, criminality and family breakdown.

Several studies have indicated that these experiences play a crucial role in a child's development, both in the short and long term, as well as in their future ability to engage fully in society, given that they face a higher risk of encountering issues related to their socio-emotional well-being (Goemans, van Geel, van Beem, & Vedder (2016); Oswald, Heil & Goldbeck (2010) in Jacobsen, Bergsund, Wentzel-Larsen, Smith, Moe, 2020:1). To implement suitable interventions in foster homes, it is essential to recognise issues connected to social-emotional health in the initial phases of the child's placement (Jacobsen *et al.*, 2020:2). The study's aim is based on the observation that there is a lack of research on the use of group work by social workers to advance the social competence of foster children. The challenges highlighted by the referenced researchers also led to the initiation of this study.

This study is significant for social work as it offers insights and enhances the understanding of promoting social competence in foster children through group work. Research results can help pinpoint gaps in service delivery and guide foster care policies. The study's results and suggestions can be employed to enhance the efficiency of group work as an intervention strategy in foster care services, particularly to promote social competence in children in foster care.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In research, a problem statement clearly defines the research issue, its context, its significance for the study, its importance to the community, academia, or society at large, and the critical path that dictates whether a study is worth pursuing (Machiridza & Muringani, 2023:2). It acts as the basis upon which the whole research is constructed, since it identifies the gaps between what is presently known or done and what is optimal or desired (Kehinde, 2025:93). Undeniably, foster care placement has significantly influenced the decrease in the number of children residing in child and

youth care centres (CYCCs) while also ensuring that children develop in a setting that allows them to engage with peers from varied backgrounds, offering them ample life exposure (Maphoto, 2020:2). It is regarded as the most frequently used form of alternative care for children needing protection, and one benefit is that children in foster care reside with families instead of being placed in institutional settings (Nkosi, 2020:15).

However, it was established earlier in this chapter that foster care presents its own obstacles since foster children often face psychosocial issues that lead to difficulties in adjusting, requiring social skills to navigate these challenges. It was also confirmed by researchers (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:18; Maphosa, 2022:49) that group work, as a method of intervention, can be beneficial to participants in terms of social skills development. It seems, however, as confirmed by Smit (2017:1), that social workers prefer the use of case work and not group work when working with foster children. During a literature search, the researcher did not find any empirical data from South Africa or abroad documenting the use of group work by social workers to advance social competence in foster children. The lack of such studies, therefore, suggests that the views regarding the utilisation of group work in this area of intervention are unknown. Numerous studies have been carried out in South Africa and internationally regarding different facets of foster care. To mention a few of the referred studies, these are included in the table below.

Table 1.1 List of some of the studies conducted on foster care

LOCAL STUDIES	INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
<p>Nkosi, W.B. 2020. <i>Family adjustment and support interventions in foster care families: experiences of caregivers and social workers in the Amajuba District</i>. KwaZulu-Natal: University of KwaZulu-Natal. (MA Dissertation).</p>	<p>Swezey, K. 2018. <i>Developing life skills to eliminate negative behaviors among foster youth</i>. California: California State University. (MA Thesis).</p>
<p>Sotshononda, T. 2020. <i>An exploration of experiences of youth exiting foster care system</i>. Cape Town: University of Western Cape. (MA Dissertation).</p>	<p>Harkin, C. & Houston, S. 2016. Reviewing the literature on the breakdown of foster care placements for young people: complexity and the social work task. <i>Child Care in Practice</i>.</p>
<p>Maphoto, K.S. 2020. <i>The views of designated social workers on the South African foster care system</i>. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg. (MA Dissertation).</p>	<p>Deutsch, S. A., Lynch, A., Zlotnik, S., Matone, M., Kreider, A., & Noonan, K. 2015. Mental health, behavioral and developmental issues for youth in foster care. <i>Curr Probl Pediatr Adolesc Health Care</i>.</p>
<p>Mosala, M.K. 2022. <i>Challenges faced by social workers in foster care services: a case of John Taolo Gaetsewe District, Northern Cape Province</i>. North-West Province: North-West University. (MA Dissertation).</p>	<p>Fallesen, P. 2013. Time well spent: the duration of foster care and early adult labour market, educational, and health outcomes. <i>Journal of Adolescence</i>.</p>
<p>Malusi, P. 2020. <i>The experiences of youth after exiting the foster care system in South Africa: a case study of Koukamma Municipality, Eastern Cape Province</i>. Alice: University of Fort Hare. (MA Dissertation).</p>	<p>Jones, A.M. & Morris, T.L. 2012. Psychological adjustment of children in foster care: review and implications for best practice. <i>Journal of Public Child Welfare</i>.</p>

It is therefore evident that a significant research gap exists regarding the use of the group work method and social workers' view of its role in enhancing the social competence of foster children. Understanding how social workers employ group work within a foster care context to advance the social competence of children in foster care, constitutes the central problem investigated in this study.

1.4 RESEARCH AIM, QUESTION(S) AND OBJECTIVES

This section explores the research aim, the research question posed, and the established objectives intended to fulfil the aim and address the research question.

1.4.1 Research Aim

Research provides knowledge and offers recommendations for addressing various business, personal, professional, governmental, and social issues (Dubey & Kothari, 2022:3). Islam and Samsudin (2020:333) confirm that the aim of research is to utilise scientific methods to seek answers to inquiries and to reveal concealed and unexamined realities. This study aimed to understand the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children.

1.4.2 Research Questions

When creating a research question, three essential criteria need to be satisfied (Mattick, Johnston & de la Croix, 2018:105). The research question must confirm that the social or practical issue the researcher intends to explore is pertinent, that the question is innovative and will result in unique work that produces new insights, while also ensuring alignment between the research question and data collection methods for thoroughness (Mattick *et al.*, 2018:105).

The research question for this study is the following:

What are the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children?

1.4.3 Research Objectives

Research objectives offer a precise outline of the actions the researcher will undertake to realise the goals outlined in the research question (Dhir & Gupta, 2021:587). The study sought to understand the views of social workers regarding the use of group

work to advance the social competence of foster children. To reach the goal, the subsequent objectives were created:

- (i) To conceptualise social competence as a skill of foster children
- (ii) To explore methods of intervention employed by social workers when working with foster children
- (iii) To examine the views of social workers regarding the use of group work as a method of intervention when working with foster children
- (iv) To examine the contribution of the views of social workers regarding the utilisation of group work to advance the social competence of foster children
- (v) To make recommendations on how the utilisation of group work to advance the social competence of foster children could be expanded

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Researchers use theory to inform their research and avoid the peril of failing to pose and explore theoretically sound questions and produce results with narrow or limited meaning (Yamauchi *et al.*, 2017:11). The foundational theoretical frameworks for this research are the ecological systems theory and the role theory.

Bronfenbrenner's theory of systems includes five environmental categories: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Gunhidzirai, 2023:286). The ecological systems theory emphasises the connections between individuals and their environments that shape human development (Singh & Azman, 2022:26). This view considers that individuals do not operate in isolation, but are shaped by the environment in which they interact (Mosala, 2022:20). This suggests the need to examine the use of group work by social workers must extend beyond just focusing on the social workers themselves, but also to the wider context in which they operate, enabling a more comprehensive evaluation and multi-tiered intervention.

The second theoretical perspective for this study is role theory, grounded in the core idea that individuals adopt various roles in daily life, which affect their behaviour, self-image, and the perceptions others have of their actions (Anglin, Kincaid, Short & Allen, 2022:2). The role theory was useful in helping the researcher to understand how the

role dynamics amongst the social workers and within the organisation impact the utilisation of group work to advance the social competence of foster children.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology includes the complete process of planning the study, designing it, conducting the research, analysing, and presenting the results (Adeoye, 2024:30). This chapter provides a concise summary of the research methodology, encompassing the research paradigm, research approach, and research design, as elaborated on in Chapter 3.

1.6.1 Research Paradigm

In explaining the importance of a research paradigm, Khatri (2020:1435) argues that a research paradigm serves as a theoretical or philosophical basis for research. It embodies conceptual convictions and values that influence how researchers perceive, understand, and act in that environment (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26). In this study, the interpretivist paradigm (also known as the constructivist paradigm) was used. Researchers operating within the interpretivism paradigm aim to reveal the foundational meanings and interactions that lead to human actions and behaviour (Gamage, 2025:94). An interpretivist paradigm was applied in this research since it allowed the researcher to examine the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children.

1.6.2 Research Approach

This study utilised a qualitative research approach. According to Dubey and Kothari (2022:129), qualitative research is a scientific method designed to fill knowledge gaps by systematically gathering data, reaching conclusions, and discovering solutions to questions or issues. By conducting this research study, the researcher obtained direct understanding and information on how social workers view the application of group work as an intervention method to enhance the social competence of foster children.

1.6.3 Research Design

After the research approach was defined, the next step involved determining the research design. Dubey and Kothari (2022:23) maintain that the main purpose of a study design is to describe how researchers find answers to research questions. An exploratory research design was chosen for this study. An exploratory research design

is selected to investigate new issues that have not yet been examined and lays the foundation for more comprehensive data gathering and analysis (Samanth, 2024:27). The researcher chose an exploratory research design because it was aimed at obtaining the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children. This enabled the researcher to generate fresh perspectives on the research topic.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODS

The next section will succinctly outline the selected study setting, population, sampling, sampling size, pilot study, methods of data collection and how the data has been analysed. These aspects will be addressed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.7.1 Study Setting

This research was conducted in the Tshwane region of the Department of Social Development in the Gauteng Province. According to Majid (2018:3), the characteristics, setting, surroundings, and logistics of a research location can influence the conduct of research participants; thus, by examining a research site before gathering data, the researcher could tackle practical issues connected to the organisation, layout, or arrangement of the research site. As the researcher was based in the Tshwane region, focusing on this population lowered the expenses of the study.

1.7.2 Population

A study population refers to a collection of individuals, items, or other units from which a sample is taken for measurement (Dubey & Kothari, 2022:67). The study's research population included all registered social workers employed by the Department of Social Development in the Tshwane Region.

1.7.3 Sampling and Sample Size

In this research, the researcher was unable to directly observe every unit of the population they intended to study because of its size; consequently, he had to gather data from a portion of the population known as a sample (Dubey & Kothari, 2022:67). The researcher used non-probability sampling due to the absence of a sampling frame to randomly select each social worker, ensuring an equal opportunity for inclusion in the sample. A purposive sampling method was used for selection of participants, given

that the researcher sought individuals with particular attributes (Casteel & Bridier, 2021:350).

There are ten service points within the Tshwane Region Department of Social Development; however, one service point, Bronkhorstspuit service point where the researcher is working, was excluded to minimise bias. The data was gathered from the social workers at the other nine service points. The service points operate as intake and field units which are responsible for statutory work and rendering foster care supervision services. Two social workers from each of the service points who met the inclusion criteria volunteered to participate in the study. As a result, 18 social workers took part in the research. Potential participants were given adequate time to determine whether they wanted to take part in the study. To participate in the research, the participants were required to:

- be social workers employed in the Department of Social Development, Gauteng province, Tshwane region.
- be social workers who have a minimum of three years of experience in rendering foster care services.
- be social workers registered at the SACSSP.

The researcher obtained permission to access these participants through their Head of Department (HOD) of the Department of Social Development in Gauteng Province, their Tshwane regional director, and through their respective social work supervisors and social work managers.

1.7.4 Data Collection Methods and Procedure

This study is qualitative in nature; therefore, data was collected using semi-structured interviews with 18 social workers. A semi-structured interview provides flexibility, enabling the interviewer to ask additional questions during the discussion because of the interviewee's answers (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi & Syam *et al.*, 2022:24). The interview took place in a relaxed manner, with the researcher and participant interacting directly in a casual tone using a semi-structured interview format, instead of adhering to a rigid set of formal questions (Ruslin *et al.*, 2022:24). The schedule used for the interview throughout the data collection process is attached as Appendix 8. The semi-structured interview guide was evaluated in a pilot test with two

participants, and no modifications were required for the document since the participants comprehended the questions and provided comprehensive answers in every section.

In qualitative research, data saturation is a key factor that to be considered (Mwita, 2022:414). Saturation is a principle used in qualitative research to determine the point at which the collected data is adequate to answer research questions or support claims and conclusions made by the researcher (Naeem, Ozuem, Howell & Ranfagni, 2024:1). Data saturation is generally defined as the repetition of information or theoretical saturation when no additional codes, themes, or insights can be identified from the data (Younas, Masih & Sundus, 2025:77). It normally indicates that a researcher must cease gathering additional data for a particular study (Mwita, 2022:414). In this study, saturation was reached after conducting 12 to 15 interviews.

1.7.5 Data Analysis Methods

As soon as data was gathered, the researcher proceeded to analyse the collected information (Patel & Patel, 2019:52). Data analysis is crucial in converting substantial quantities of data into a comprehensive array of findings and reports (Dubey & Kothari, 2022:159). The collected raw data was analysed and organised based on areas of interest. The researcher recorded the interviews and documented the essential notes collected in the field. Once the data was organised, the researcher reviewed it for reflection and recorded any thoughts or ideas that arose regarding the data. The data was coded to start identifying themes, subthemes and categories which were utilised in the empirical chapter.

In Chapter 4, the data is organised into tables, summarised, analysed, and compared with current literature. Assessing the quality of qualitative research is crucial to ensure the robustness of the results, especially when the findings are meant for theoretical advancement and practical application (Daniel, 2019:118). Individuals in the academic community collectively bear the responsibility for ensuring rigour in qualitative research, whether as researchers who create and conduct studies, manuscript reviewers who evaluate, peers who engage in discussions and learn from one another, or educators who utilise findings to improve and innovate teaching methods (Johnson, Adkins & Chauvin, 2020:138). Qualitative researchers are thus urged to illustrate the various methods by which their results can attain a specific

degree of validity (Daniel, 2019:118). The researcher exerted all possible effort to uphold procedural rigour by using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) model which is comprised of four criteria (credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability) that assess the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Stahl & King, 2020:26). The application of this model will be discussed in detail in chapter 3.

1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The concepts listed below are pertinent and are described based on their usage in this research, namely, child, foster child, foster care, social worker, social competence and group work.

1.8.1 Child

A child is defined by the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa 2006: section 1) and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996: section 28(1)) as any person under 18 years of age. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (1990) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) also define a child as any individual under the age of 18 years, unless a different age of majority is indicated by the national law of a country. In this study, a child refers to any person below the age of 18 years who has been declared by the children's court as in need of care and protection and placed in foster care.

1.8.2 Foster Care

According to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 1), foster care denotes the care of a child as specified in section 180 (1) and includes foster care in a registered cluster foster care. Section 180 (1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 180(1)) stipulates that a child is in foster care if the child is in the care of someone other than the child's parent or guardian as a result of an order of the children's court, or a transfer in terms of section 171.

Section 180 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 180 (2)) indicates that foster care excludes placing a child in the care of a temporary safe shelter or CYCC.

In this research, foster care is the lawful placement with a foster parent, either with relatives or non-relatives, of a child determined to require care and protection.

1.8.3 Social Worker

According to section 1 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 1), a social worker means a person who is registered or considered to be registered as a social worker under section 17 in terms of the Social Services Professions Act (Act 110 of 1978). Social workers are professionals with diverse expertise who conduct broad research and practice in various fields utilising knowledge from several disciplines and professions (Finne, Ekeland & Malmberg-Heimonen, 2022:444). In this study, a social worker refers to an individual tasked with providing foster care supervision services.

1.8.4 Social Competence

Aliim and Ayriza (2019:305) define social competence as the emotional, social, and cognitive abilities and behaviours required by individuals for effective adaptation to their surroundings. It pertains to a person's capacity to respond flexibly based on age and cognitive abilities, encompassing various elements like self-awareness, self-regulation, communication skills, and accountability in decision-making (Amrei, Sharifi, & Taheri, 2020:18). The researcher concurs with the above description of social competence.

1.8.5 Group Work

Group work involves a purpose-driven activity with small treatment and task groups focused on addressing socio-emotional needs while achieving objectives (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:27). They additionally indicate that group work involves the intentional application of intervention methods and group dynamics to achieve personal, group, and community objectives while adhering to the ethical standards and core values of the social work field (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:17).

The researcher concurs with the above-mentioned definition that group work is a social work intervention strategy focused on enhancing individuals through collective learning, experience, treatment, or development.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Every profession has ethical considerations, and research is not an exception (Dubey & Kothari, 2022:265). To obtain ethical clearance for completing the empirical study, the researcher needed to follow specific procedures. Ethical approval to conduct the anticipated research was acquired from the College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee of the University of South Africa and the research was considered as low risk (**Ethics Reference Number: 53594517_CREC_CHS_2023**) (See Appendix 2). The researcher was then given approval by the Gauteng Department of Social Development to carry out the study in the Tshwane region (See Appendix 4). Throughout the research process, the researcher adhered to the Code of Ethics for social workers, as he is a registered professional with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). In the course of this research, the researcher endeavoured to exercise the following ethical considerations: confidentiality and anonymity; informed consent; avoidance of harm; avoidance of deception of participants and debriefing of participants. The application of these ethical considerations will be described in detail in Chapter 3.

1.10 FORMAT OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The research report is organised into different components and contains five basic chapters.

Chapter 1 presents an overview of the research study, including the problem statement, the rationale for the study, and the aims and objectives of the research. This is followed by the theoretical framework that supports the study, the research methodology and a discussion on the significant key concepts used throughout the study. The chapter emphasises the ethical aspects considered during the study's execution.

Chapter 2 provides the literature that was examined in the research. The chapter explores the influence of families on children's well-being, the prevalence of violence against children and the historical development of the child protection system in relation to legislative and policy frameworks aimed at meeting the needs of children who require care and protection. This chapter also highlights the methods of social work with a specific focus on group work as a method of intervention in foster care to

advance the social competence of foster children. The ecological systems theory and the role theory is also discussed in relation to the study topic.

Chapter 3 contains the detailed research methodology that was used in the study. This includes the study approach, the design adopted, sampling strategies, methods of data collection, and data analysis. Furthermore, this chapter presents trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the research.

Chapter 4 presents the information gathered from semi-structured interviews conducted with social workers. The results are presented according to the themes, subthemes, and categories identified, backed by the current literature.

Chapter 5 contains a summary of findings, conclusions drawn, and recommendations that are based on the main findings of the study.

1.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provides a summary of the study. The study's rationale was outlined, the problem statement was provided, along with the aim and objectives of the study, and the description of the methodology. This chapter also includes the definitions of essential concepts, research methods used, the method of data analysis and ensuring rigour, and ethical considerations. The next chapter provides a literature overview of the study topic and the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review is an essential component of educational research, acting as a connection between established knowledge and the study being conducted (Abdallah, 2024:1). Sajeevanie (2021:2714) attests that an extensive literature review aids in recognising existing knowledge and uncovering knowledge gaps, as well as identifying additional research results that align or contrast with one's findings, allowing for the positioning of the research within the field and acquiring evidence to back up the research. It serves as a guide that leads the reader through the landscape of current research, highlighting the routes chosen by earlier researchers and uncovering fields ready for additional investigation (Abdallah, 2024:2). There are many sources like digital access to research papers, academic texts, review articles, reference databases, and public data sets that can be gathered, sorted, and evaluated into a relevant and informative unbiased narrative (Sajeevanie, 2021:2714).

In this chapter, the phenomenon of the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children will be explored. The critical review of the literature on this phenomenon will start by exploring the role and significance of families in general in the development of children. The researcher will then explore the status of the well-being of children by presenting both the international and South African contexts. The development of the child protection system in South Africa will also be explored. The White Paper on Social Welfare, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended, will be at the centre of this discussion. After exploring these legislative frameworks, the focus will be on the process of identifying children in need of care and protection, as well as the existing support to safeguard individuals recognised as needing care and protection.

Furthermore, the researcher will identify and discuss the challenges faced by children in foster care and how significant social competence as an essential social skill is to foster children's development. Social workers have roles and responsibilities in the implementation of alternative care services (foster care). Therefore, the purpose of social work and its role in the field of foster care services will be critically discussed. Lastly, the researcher will describe the social work methods, with a focus on social

group work as a method of social work that can be used to advance the social competence of foster children.

2.2 THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF FAMILIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

The Revised White Paper on Families in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2021:180) describes a family as a societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care or the ties of marriage (customary or religious), civil union or cohabitation, and it goes beyond a particular physical residence. Roostin (2018:1) also defines a family as a group of people living together in the same household with the household being based on blood, marriage or other connections, and led by a designated head of the family. Arslan (2023:46) further expands the discussion by highlighting that there are many classifications regarding the concept of family. The sociologist and anthropologist have documented different types of families based on cultural differences that exist in various societies over time (Mohammed & Engler, 2022:3). Sharma (2024:6612) and Mohammed and Engler (2022:3) list the following forms of family based on size and structure:

- (a) Nuclear family - this is a model consisting of a mother, father and children (Sharma, 2024:6612). The nuclear family is widespread in human societies, and it is often referred to as the “elementary family” (Mohammed & Engler, 2022:3). The Revised White Paper on Families in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2021:18) adds that a nuclear family is a family group consisting of parents living with their biological or adoptive children. It plays an important role in socialising children and transmitting the culture of societies (Arslan, 2023:46).
- (b) One-parent family or single-parent family - this is a family model consisting of one parent who has sole responsibility for the adopted or biological child or children without the presence of a spouse or partner (Sharma, 2024:6612). Mohammed and Engler (2022:3) add that widowhood, divorce, or separation may all result in one-parent families.
- (c) Joint or extended family - the family members in this model consist of relatives such as the mother, father, married and unmarried children, daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, grandchildren and sometimes siblings of the father who is the head

of the family (Sharma, 2024:6614). Mohammed and Engler (2022:3) indicate that the size of an extended or joint family is usually large and is a continuation of the parent-child bond, and is descended from a long line of ancestors.

(d) Reconstituted family - Mohammed and Engler (2022:3) add the reconstituted family as one of the classifications of family and refer to this model as a blended or stepfamily. The blended family results from the merging of two separate families due to remarriage or cohabitation, where children from previous relationships may become step-siblings (Sharma, 2024:6612).

(e) Compounded family - this family structure can be thought of as an overlapping set of nuclear families, each with the same man as the family head (Mohammed & Engler, 2022:3). Mohammed and Engler (2022:3) discuss that this family structure is made up of a man who is the head of household, wives and concubines, and their children who live in separate homesteads.

Family, schools and society are the three units that strongly influence children in the process of learning (Mohammed & Engler, 2022:1). However, the family is seen as the primary unit in a community that must guarantee a child's safety and well-being (Sibanda & Lombard, 2022:332). Mohammed and Engler (2022:01) further agree that the role of the family is important for their children's growth and development because parents and other significant caregivers, such as grandparents, siblings and others protect and nurture children. The family plays a crucial role in shaping the child's personality and contributes to their mental and physical well-being (Agayeva, 2021:3).

Sharma (2024:6612) asserts that the functions of a family include emotional nurturing, love and care, as well as creating a safe and secure environment for children to grow and develop. As a unit, the family acts with love and respect, and there is understanding, affection, dedication and childcare (Mohammed & Engler, 2022:02). It is, therefore, evident from this discussion that central to the children's well-being are stable and supportive family structures because they can influence and shape the character or personality of the child (Srikandi, 2020:340).

2.3 THE STATUS OF THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN WITHIN AN INTERNATIONAL AND SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

The family is regarded as an essential institution since it is where young children first acquire acculturation, values and a sense of belonging (Mohammed & Engler, 2022:1). A child's development is embedded within a complex system of relationships and among the many relationships that influence children's growth and development, perhaps the most influential is the one that exists between parent and child (Frosch, Schoppe-Sullivan & O'Banion, 2021:45). Families continue to remain as important as before, but modern, globalising social forces are leading to many changes in its structure, functioning, and roles (Mohammed & Engler, 2022:1). Adebayo *et al.* (2019:433) agree that social pressures can occasionally prevent families from providing a supportive environment for vulnerable children, leading to the realisation that safe spaces for their nurturing until they reach adulthood are often located in care institutions, such as kinship placements, residential facilities, or foster homes.

There are about 220 million children globally who lack sufficient parental care or face the risk of losing it and one in 10 children under the age of 18 years are living with neither biological parent, while a large percentage of these children are orphans who have lost one or both parents (African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 2023:1). Internationally, there has been a notable change in the perspective on children's rights, as children are now seen, not as objects, but as holders of subjective rights (van der Waldt, 2024:1039).

In contemporary South Africa, many families continue to face a range of challenges as many communities continue to be spaces of crime, violence and substance abuse, while gender-based violence continues at untenable levels (Department of Social Development, 2021:185). The statistics on violence against children in South Africa are overwhelming and reveal the need for an urgent response from the government, non-profit organisations, higher educational institutions and specifically the child protection system (Strydom, Schiller & Orme, 2020:383). This is confirmed by the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa (2019:1), indicating that in 2019, it was estimated that 3.7 million to 5.7 million children needed care and protection in South Africa.

2.4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Since the new dawn in 1994, the child protection system in South Africa has undergone significant changes (Thebe & Malan, 2025:2100). Post-apartheid, the democratic government implemented various measures to support formerly disadvantaged citizens who had been stripped of numerous rights and access to resources in South Africa (Hendricks, 2021:104). This resulted in the modification of the law and adoption of policies that govern the delivery of service in the country, such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) and the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Mogale, 2019:19).

2.4.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996 is the principal legal document aimed at protecting and safeguarding children from harm, despite not outlining every aspect of childcare and protection for those requiring such support, as this is covered in the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Nkosi, 2020:44). Section 28(1) (a)-(h) of the Constitution of South Africa (Republic of South Africa 1996: Section 28(1)) states that (a) every child is entitled to a name and nationality from birth, (b) every child has the right to familial or parental care, or suitable alternative care when separated from the family setting, (c) every child is entitled to essential nutrition, housing, basic healthcare services, and social support, and (d) every child has the right to protection from harm, mistreatment, neglect, abuse, or humiliation, to mention a few. Therefore, regardless of a child's placement in alternative care, they possess all the rights articulated in Section 28(1) of the Constitution of South Africa (Nkosi, 2020:44).

2.4.2 White Paper on Social Welfare (1997)

The White Paper on Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa, 1997) indicates that families must be reinforced and offer a supportive environment for their members. The foster care system seeks to offer care for families whose children are found to need care and protection as enshrined in Section 150(1) and (2) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Dhludhlu, 2024:557). This is in line with Section 28(1)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, which stipulates that every child has the right to family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment (Dhludhlu, 2024:557). Guidelines

have been developed to put the White Paper on Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa, 1997) into practice, including the Financial Policy for Development-Related Social Services (RSA, 1999), which was approved for implementation in October 2004 and came into effect in April 2005 (Herselman, Schiller & Tanga, 2023:67). The Department of Social Development has been mandated to meet the constitutional and statutory obligations for the provision of social services to ensure that the best possible services are delivered (Herselman *et al.*, 2023:67). The White Paper on Social Welfare of 1997 presented a paradigm shift for the Republic of South Africa which aimed at addressing the numerous societal inequalities and to ensure service delivery to previously marginalised groups (Strydom *et al.*, 2020:384).

2.4.3 Children's Act 38 of 2005

In the Republic of South Africa, Beukes and Gannon (1996) have attempted to explore the origin of the child protection system and trace it as far back as 1856 when the initial Alternative Care Act (Master and Servant Act) came into effect (Nkosi, 2020:36). This Act was later repealed and followed by several Acts, namely the Children's Protection Act in 1913, followed by the Children's Act 1937, the Children's Act of 1960 and the Child Care Act 74 of 1983 (Nkosi, 2020:36).

To address the historical challenges experienced during the apartheid era and under the previous South Africa of Child Care Act, Act No. 74 of 1983, where the focus was more residual and institutional compared to developmental social welfare, the new Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005, as amended) was introduced to enhance measures to protect all children in South Africa from abuse and neglect (Strydom *et al.*, 2020:384). The Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended, emphasises that designated social workers are the sole category of social workers in the Republic of South Africa authorised to safeguard children requiring care and protection through the provision of statutory services (Nkosi, 2020:49). In terms of Section 6 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2007: Section 6(2)), all proceedings, actions or decisions in a matter concerning a child must, amongst others, (a) respect, protect, promote and fulfil the child's rights set out in the in section 7 and the rights and principles set out in this Act, subject to any lawful limitation. Thus, the Children's Act creates the legal framework that governs child protection work concerning children and harmonises South African laws with global treaties (Nkosi, 2020:38).

2.5 THE PROCESS OF FINDING A CHILD IN NEED OF CARE AND PROTECTION

Although the welfare system transitioned from a punitive viewpoint to a more rights-oriented and child-centred approach during the democratic era, the nation continues to struggle with the grim reality of violence and neglect affecting children (Thebe & Malan, 2025:2100). Research in South Africa regarding child protection, the struggles faced by children and families, and policies on childcare and family welfare highlights various factors that increase vulnerability among children and families in the nation, including domestic violence against women and children, substance abuse, adolescent pregnancy, lack of parental responsibility, and health issues (Emovon, Gutura, & Ntombela, 2019:11). Consequently, these situations put a child in danger of abuse, neglect, abandonment, and becoming orphaned (Emovon *et al.*, 2019:11). South Africa's choice to implement the Children's Act 38 of 2005 in 2010 show the nation's dedication to safeguarding children since the Act outlines guidelines for how children requiring care and protection should be treated and supported (Nkosi, 2020:38). In terms of Section 150 (1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended in 2022 (Republic of South Africa, 2022: Section 150(1)(a)-(i)), "a child is in need of care and protection if such a child-

- (a) has been abandoned or orphaned and has no family member who is able and suitable to care for that child;
- (b) displays behaviour which cannot be controlled by the parent or caregiver;
- (c) lives or works on the streets or begs for a living;
- (d) is addicted to dependence-producing substances and is without any support to obtain treatment for such dependency;
- (e) has been exploited or lives in circumstances that expose the child to exploitation;
- (f) lives in or is exposed to circumstances which may seriously harm that child's physical, mental or social well-being;
- (g) may be at risk if returned to the custody of the parent, guardian or caregiver of the child, as there is reason to believe that he or she will live in or be exposed

to circumstances which may seriously harm the physical, mental or social well-being of the child;

- (h) is in a state of physical or mental neglect;
- (i) is being maltreated, abused, deliberately neglected or degraded by a parent, a care-giver, a person who has parental responsibilities and rights or a family member of the child or by a person in whose care the child is;
- (j) is an unaccompanied migrant child from another country;
- (k) is a victim of trafficking; or
- (l) has been sold by a parent, caregiver or guardian”.

Section 150(2) of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 150(2) further stipulates that a child found in the following circumstances may be a child in need of care and protection and must be referred for investigation by a designated social worker:

- (a) a child who is a victim of child labour; and
- (b) a child in a child-headed household.

Nkosi (2020:49) concludes that, in terms of Section 150 of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005, as amended, a report outlines the conditions in which intervention for child protection by the designated social workers might be necessary. A social worker is an individual who is officially registered or considered registered as a social worker, as per Section 17 of the Social Services Professions Act (Act 110 of 1978) (Republic of South Africa, 1978: Section 1). Section 1(1) of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section1(1)) state that, unless the context indicates otherwise, designated social worker means a social worker in the service of “(a) the Department or a provincial department of social development; (b) a designated child protection organisation; or (c) a municipality”. In terms of Section 156 (1) of the Children’s Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 156(1)), the children’s court can make an order stipulating, amongst others, that the child found in need of care and protection be returned to the person under whose care the child was before they were placed in temporary safe care or be placed in alternative care.

2.6 PLACEMENT IN ALTERNATIVE CARE

Section 167(1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 167(1)(a)-(c)) clarifies that a child is in alternative care if the child has been placed (a) in foster care; (b) in the care of a child and youth care centre following an order of a court in terms of this Act, Section 29 or Chapter 10 of the Child Justice Act of 2008; and (c) in temporary safe care. Yin (2025:634) contends that alternative childcare denotes interventions offered by state and civil society organisations when a child's family cannot supply sufficient care due to incapacity, abandonment, or other situations. It encompasses all forms of temporary care, including foster care, assisted independent living, and residential care (Zimudzi & Dhludhlu, 2024:2). For this study, the focus is on foster care as a form of alternative care.

2.6.1 Foster care as a form of alternative care

The social worker working in child protection has many duties and responsibilities, the main obligation being to respect the child's best interests and, with priority, to try and keep the child in the family environment (Georgevici & Dragoi, 2023:151). Harlow (2022:177) discusses that when children cannot live with their birth families, maintaining them within their communities may mean facilitating placements with other members of their kin. That is, before placing a child in an institution, or to remove a child from an institution, placement with a member of their extended family may be an option. The Revised White Paper on Families in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2021:182) clarifies that the responsibility to care for individuals is not limited to families. After families, the state is the most recognised caretaker of individuals, and hence it is assigned to support families in their caregiving tasks (Department of Social Development, 2021:182).

Khoo and Skoog (cited in Nkosi, 2020:33) indicate that foster care is practised globally, although it varies based on the needs of the child or children requiring care and protection. The protection of children has been outlined in child rights laws in several nations throughout the world, with all the nations, except the United States of America (USA), ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which calls on all state parties to protect children, promote their survival and development and to always act in their best interest (Mpofu & Machingauta, 2024:1). The definition of foster care varies across different countries; nonetheless, all these

definitions highlight the safeguarding of children lacking sufficient parental support (Nkosi, 2020:33). For example, Jonson (2005) in Nkosi (2020:33) indicates that foster care in the United Kingdom (UK), offers a family environment for children who are unable to stay with their parents. In Zambia, foster care refers to the care provided to a child who does not belong to you and needs support but placed in care for a designated period, and it is preferred over institutionalisation to promote the child's development as they are cared for in a natural setting (Nkosi, 2020:33).

Chibwana (2019:118) attests that foster care is one of the instruments that can be used to ensure that children grow up in a family environment. Mpofu and Machingauta (2024:1) further highlight that although foster care is not traditionally prevalent, it is a concept that is gradually gaining traction and becoming more common across various countries. In the United States, foster care offers continuous substitute care for almost 700,000 children who are separated from their birth families each year, either temporarily or permanently, and most of these children require physical or mental health services (Font & Gershoff, 2020:1).

The Fostering Network (2021) also reveals that the UK reported that 57,380 children were in foster care placements as of 31 March 2021. Ntshongwana and Tanga (2018:16) highlight that in African countries, the Demographics and Health Surveys (DHS) indicate that between 9% and 35% of households sheltered foster children in 2018.

South Africa is often viewed as a nation that firmly advocates for foster care instead of institutionalising children requiring care and protection (Manamela, Rapholo & Singwane, 2024:252). It has consistently been a crucial choice for alternative assistance for children requiring care and protection (Nkosi, 2020:34). The South African Social Security Agency (2021:26) states that over 230,785 children were living in foster care as of 31 March 2021 due to various reasons. The children's court in South Africa can make an order, in terms of Section 156(1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 156(1)(e)(i)) which states that if a child found as needing care and protection lacks a parent or caregiver, or has a parent or caregiver who is unable or unfit to provide care, the child should be placed in foster care with an appropriate foster parent or within a group or organisation managing a cluster foster care scheme.

The Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended, addresses foster care to fulfil two kinds of needs for children: (i) children who have experienced abuse, abandonment, or neglect, who receive protection via a Court order as detailed in Section 150 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, and (ii) children residing with family members as a result of the passing, incapacity, or absence of their birth parents (Nkosi, 2020:39). It is a crucial part of the system of child protection in South Africa (Emovon *et al.*, 2019:12).

The Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 181 (a), (b) and (c)), regards foster care as the main source of alternative care in South Africa, which intends:

“to protect and nurture children by providing a safe, healthy environment with positive support; promote the goals of permanency planning, first towards family reunification, or by connecting children to other safe and nurturing family relationships intended to last a lifetime and respect the individual and family by demonstrating a respect for cultural, ethnic and community diversity.”

Section 9 (1) of the regulation of the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004 (Republic of South Africa, 2022: Section 9 (1) (a) (i) (ii) and (c)) indicates that besides the criteria outlined in Section 8 of the Act, a foster parent or their representative qualifies for a foster child grant if “(a) the foster parent is (i) a South African citizen, a permanent resident, or a refugee; and (ii) resides in the Republic and (c) the child is placed and remains in the care of the foster parent or cluster foster care scheme in terms of the Children's Act”.

Section 180 (3) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 180 (3)) stipulates that a children's court may place a child found in need of care and protection in three forms of foster care, which are kinship care, non-kinship care and cluster foster care.

2.6.1.1 Kinship care

Kinship care is seen as the arrangement of placing a child in foster care with the child's family members (Mogale, 2019:25). It is a placement within the child's extended family or with family acquaintances that the child is familiar with (Bak & Szot, 2018:9). Section 180 of the Children's Act of 2005 as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 180(3)(b)) describes this kind of placement as placing a child with a family member

who is not the guardian or parent. South Africa has a high number of children who are orphaned, abandoned or living separately from their parents, and most of these children are looked after by relatives in kinship care (Department of Social Development, 2019:85). This emphasises that kinship care honours the cultural ties, values, and love that the child has with their biological family (Mogale, 2019:25).

2.6.1.2 Non-kinship care

In terms of Section 180(3) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 180(1)(a)), a child is in non-kinship care if he or she is found in need of care and protection and placed with a person who is not a family member of that child. Scharein (2023:24) cautions that the care of a child in non-kinship care is not considered ideal, however, when circumstances dictate that there is no alternative, non-kinship care placement is carried out with the purpose of being an interim intervention until the child can either be reunified with his or her parents or family members or placed in a long-term family environment where he or she will be kept safe, nurtured and have the opportunity to build stable relationships. It is designed with careful attention to various factors, including the large population of children requiring care and protection, the distinct South African social welfare environment characterised by diverse racial and cultural elements, and the diminishing strength of the extended family support system (Emovon *et al.*, 2019:12).

2.6.1.3 Cluster foster care

Section 180(3) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 180(1)(c)) indicates that the children's court may also place a child or children found in need of care and protection in a cluster foster care which is defined as the reception of children in foster care in accordance with a cluster foster care scheme, registered by the provincial head of the Department of Social Development and managed by a designated child protection organisation that complies with governing laws and regulation. The aim of the registered cluster foster care scheme is to pool resources and provide community-based care to foster children by caregivers (Department of Social Development, 2019:57). The organisations managing cluster foster care schemes are expected to operate or manage the cluster foster care as a non-profit organisation registered in terms of the Nonprofit Organisation Act (Act 71 of 1997) as stipulated in Section 183(1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Republic of

South Africa, 2006: Section 183(1)(a)), however, Section 183 (1) (a) of the Children's Amendment Act (Act 17 of 2022) restricts organisations that may operate and manage a cluster foster care scheme to be a designated child protection organisation and not a non-profit organisation.

2.7 THE CHALLENGES FACED BY CHILDREN PLACED IN FOSTER CARE

Zimudzi and Dhludhlu (2024:2) highlight that children in foster care have been removed from their birth parents due to abuse or neglect, and many of these children originate from historically marginalised communities. Between 70% to 80% of children who enter foster care have been exposed to significant levels of violence, including a history of child abuse or neglect (O'Donnell, 2021:160). Elements leading to children being placed in foster care involve personal aspects like mental health issues, troubled family relationships (including domestic violence, loss of a parent or guardian, and strained parent-child bonds) and problematic community conditions like unemployment and elevated crime rates (Mogale, 2019:12).

Foster care is a vital social service for children and youth requiring out-of-home placements, representing an unfortunate but continually increasing demand in our society (Hayes, Tongs, Bhaskara & Buus, 2023:1). However, children who enter the foster care system experience an ecological upheaval (Turner & Burton, 2023:14). Emovon, Gutura and Ntombela (2021:3) argue that foster parents are burdened with the responsibility of providing for the daily physical, health and welfare needs, such as food, shelter, and clothes of the children placed in their care. Foster parents are tasked with caring for and safeguarding children who cannot reside with their families, and many of these children face notable behavioural, emotional, and developmental challenges (Ntshongwana & Tanga, 2018:15).

Research indicates that foster care disruptions happen for numerous reasons, as children in foster care face various difficulties they need to navigate while in the system (Nkosi, 2020:53). A study by Deedat (2020:40-42) indicates that various factors can contribute to the disruption in foster care placements including, age, problem behaviour, medical/mental health needs, larger sibling group, and attachment/bonding difficulties.

Konijn, Admiraal, Baart, van Rooij, Stams, Colonnaesi, Lindauer and Assink (2019:494) also found in their study that when children who are fostered at a later age, have

experienced maltreatment in their birth family, and have developed behaviour problems, the risk of instability of foster care placement increases. Feeny (2020:25) confirms that children in foster care encounter adverse childhood experiences at higher rates than those living below the poverty line and those raised in single-mother households. They face the danger of developing behavioural issues like defiance or aggression; additionally, behavioural problems can lead to significant frustration for families and are recognised as a risk factor for foster care placement disruption (Hadler, & Van Schalkwyk, 2025:1). The unattended mental, emotional and behavioural problems of children in foster care are likely to manifest as obsessive-compulsive disorder, learning disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, conduct disorder or eating disorder, and anxiety disorder, and these challenges need the intervention of professionals (Nkosi, 2020:57). To help resolve these behavioural difficulties, foster children must learn life and social skills (Swezey, 2018:2).

2.8 SOCIAL SKILLS ESSENTIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOSTER CHILDREN

Section 156(3) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 156(3) (a)(i)) stipulates that an order made by the court in terms of subsection (1) is subject to such conditions as the court may determine which, in the case of the placement of a child in terms of subsections (1) (e) (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) or (v), may include a condition- (i) rendering the placement of the child subject to supervision services by a designated social worker or authorised officer. Children in foster care, similar to other kids, have developmental needs that they must navigate while in the system (Nkosi, 2020:53). Some of the new challenges consist of, but are not restricted to, exhibiting uncontrollable behaviours like sexual misconduct, withdrawal, excessive clinginess, and disobedience (Manamela *et al.*, 2024:255). Ossorio and De Carvalho (2021:20) confirm that research indicates the rates of emotional and behavioural issues in foster care children are significantly higher than those in non-foster care children. Thus, social workers are crucial in offering therapeutic assistance to foster children to address not only their physical needs, but also their emotional and psychological needs (Nkosi, 2020:52). They offer assistance and support regarding the elements of the foster care placement process and routinely oversee the progress of foster children (Manamela *et al.*, 2024:257). Zimudzi and Dhludhlu (2024:2) concur that children in foster care should receive high-quality care and placement prioritising

their developmental, safety, and well-being requirements. Salik and Mushtaq (2023:89) indicate that practical interventions, like applying methods to improve social skills in foster children, are essential.

2.8.1 Social competence

As children move through different phases of development, they gain a variety of skills and capabilities that influence their engagement with the surrounding world (Yaun, 2023:1). This suggests that humans are unable to live in isolation and they consistently form connections with others (Aliim & Ayriza, 2019:304). To interact well within a group or community, a person needs social skills, which are referred to as social competencies (Aliim & Ayriza, 2019:304). Even though each individual possesses unique traits, personality, cognitive abilities, and emotional expressions, all people require social competency (Singh, Chandra & Kumar, 2022:2331).

Priti and Rani (2018:667) define social competency as an individual's ability and interpersonal skills to effectively engage with personal interactions or to successfully navigate individual environmental influences. Aliim and Ayriza (2019:305) add that social competence refers to social, emotional, and cognitive skills and behaviours needed by individuals for successful adaptation to the environment. Siboni, Sigaroudi, Pouralizadeh and Maroufizadeh (2023:141) add that social competence is the ability to care for oneself and others. Social competence does not present a fixed quality but should be viewed as a construct that marks development and is not innate but acquired and refined through experience and guidance. (Bashir & Peerzada, 2022:259; Yaun, 2023:1).

2.8.2 Components of social competence

In the process of competence development, all educational factors should be involved, which are a family, the social environment in which the individual lives, the attendance of preschool and school institutions, friends with whom the child socialises, children's organisations that organise extracurricular activities, and the psycho-physical condition of the individual (Selimovic, Selimovic & Opic, 2018:18). Social competence involves a combination of skills like cooperating, assisting, forming connections, seeking help, regulating emotions, fostering empathy, expressing gratitude, and demonstrating respect (Salimi, Dardiri & Sujarwo, 2021:211). Rajput and Renu

(2024:4055) further elaborate that social skills components might vary, but some common ones include the following:

- **Verbal communication**, which involves communicating verbally, encompassing the sharing of ideas and thoughts, along with initiating and maintaining conversations.
- **Non-verbal communication**, which outlines how meaning and feelings are conveyed via body language, facial expressions, gestures, and vocal tone.
- **Empathy**, which is the ability to understand and empathise with the feelings of others and to respond in a caring and supportive way.
- **Assertiveness**, which involves articulating one's thoughts and needs clearly and respectfully, while also being mindful of others.
- **Active listening**, which entails listening actively when others talk, showing engagement and understanding, and replying appropriately.
- **Conflict resolution** that entails the capability to handle disagreements and conflicts in a positive and respectful manner, while striving for a solution that benefits both parties.
- **Problem solving**, this entails the capacity to recognise and assess issues, develop potential solutions, and determine the effectiveness of those solutions.

2.8.3 Benefits of social competence

The human mind is activated and influenced by countless and continuous psychological, emotional, and environmental factors, and the balanced and holistic development of these aspects gives rise to appropriate and socially acceptable human behaviour (Singh *et al.*, 2022:2331). Developing social competence is essential for future functioning in society and for reducing the risk of behavioural and emotional problems (Junge, Valkenburg, Dekovic, & Branje, 2020:2). According to Silveira-Zaldivar, Ozerk and Ozerk (2021:347), appropriate social and adaptive skills (such as listening, eye-contact, sharing, turn-taking, empathy, cooperation, compliance, collaboration, initiation, functional communication, following the rules, helping each other, solving problems together, handling conflict together, etc.) can yield the following results:

- (a) Improved social awareness and healthier peer relationships;
- (b) Increased learning opportunities;
- (c) Improved perspective-taking skills and improved empathy;
- (d) Increased social acceptance and higher quality friendships;
- (e) Increased self-care and safety skills;
- (f) Reduced stress; and
- (g) Greater success in school.

A study conducted by Zhukova (2018:26) at the Kharkiv National University with the second-year students of the Faculty of Chemistry revealed that the participants had chosen, amongst others, the following abilities as the effective outcomes of social competence:

- To successfully engage with the environment;
- To make sense of reality;
- To be a member of the community, a loyal supporter, an equal part of society;
- To be receptive to new perceptions and effectively adjust to the socio-economic circumstances or settings;
- To engage in a complicated network of social interactions;
- Identify and comprehend the reasons behind an action, selecting the most efficient methods of engagement;
- To make well-considered and knowledgeable decisions;
- To address issues at the level of innovation;
- To tackle challenges in establishing objectives and addressing pressing issues;
- To build amicable connections, demonstrate patience, and find middle ground;
- To collaborate and effectively address conflict situations;

- To achieve emotional stability, deliberately manage one's own actions and accept accountability for the outcomes, while assessing their personal accomplishments;
- To hear, comprehend, acknowledge, and back the perspectives of communication partners; and
- To shield oneself from negative emotions and manage ambiguity during communication.

Siboni *et al.* (2023:141) highlight that these skills are so important that their lack is associated with loneliness, social anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, job and academic failure, and reduced responsibility.

2.9 SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS

Everyone in society aims to lead a healthy, tolerant, secure, inclusive, and equitable life (Woyike & Uzorka, 2021:374). Social work services have an essential contribution to make in assisting society to achieve this goal (Shrivastava, 2020:3107). This section will explore the purpose of social work and its methods of intervention.

2.9.1 Purpose of social work

The history of social work is a chronological account of changing methods, with a significant milestone originating in England around 1800 with charitable organisations established to manage aid for individuals and groups affected by the industrial revolution (Woyike & Uzorka, 2021:374) However, in modern society, the social work profession is described as playing an essential developmental role in bringing about positive change, particularly is helping the most vulnerable individuals of the population by way of contributing to the building of a fairer society and collective unity (Simonovich, Sharabi & Shahor, 2021:594). Social workers came up with an orientation that fosters help for people but with more emphasis on putting their potential to use, so that they do not forever depend on charities (Ebue, Uche & Agha, 2017:84). Homelessness, family welfare, old age care, education, correctional services, child protection, mental health, migration, disability, health care, and administration are some of the areas where social work as a profession is practiced (Arshad, Khalid & Hassan, 2020:950). In Africa, academics agree that social work is commonly recognised as an embodiment of social justice and human dignity as well as a solution to the many social ills confronting societies (Mathebane, 2020:77).

Arshad *et al.* (2020:950) indicate that the International Federation of Social Work defines social work as a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that facilitates social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversity are the central principles in social work (Arshad *et al.*, 2020:950). It is a scientific profession that draws knowledge from other disciplines to guide its interventions (Chukwu, Chukwu & Nwadike, 2017:44).

Child protection is an important field where a social worker offers services to children who suffer from abuse, neglect, or other negative treatment on a holistic level, addressing physical, emotional and environmental concerns (Arshad *et al.*, 2020:950). While working with children, social workers make efforts to manage the factors that cause threatening situations for children and provide a safe environment and consistent support according to the child's circumstances, and this requires knowledge in methods of social work, which direct and facilitate social workers' intervention in solving problems for this segment of society (Arshad *et al.*, 2020:950).

2.9.2 Methods of social work

Social work, as both an academic and professional practice, has methods of engagement (Smit, 2017:1). Uranta and Ogbanga (2017:60) attest that social work is regarded as a profession and has developed certain methods and techniques which have been tested over time. These techniques and methods have evolved into the foundation of social work practices, and are referred to as "social work activities," "social work methods", or "social work processes" (Tamilnadu, 2020:2282). These methods are grouped as primary and secondary, which direct and facilitate social workers in solving problems of different segments of society (Arshad *et al.*, 2020:950). Primary methods include case work, social group work and community organisation, which is also known as community work (Arshad *et al.*, 2020:950). The secondary methods are social action, social welfare administration and social work research (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:44). They are referred to as methods since they involve organised and systematic approaches, and they have become the pillars of social work practices (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:44).

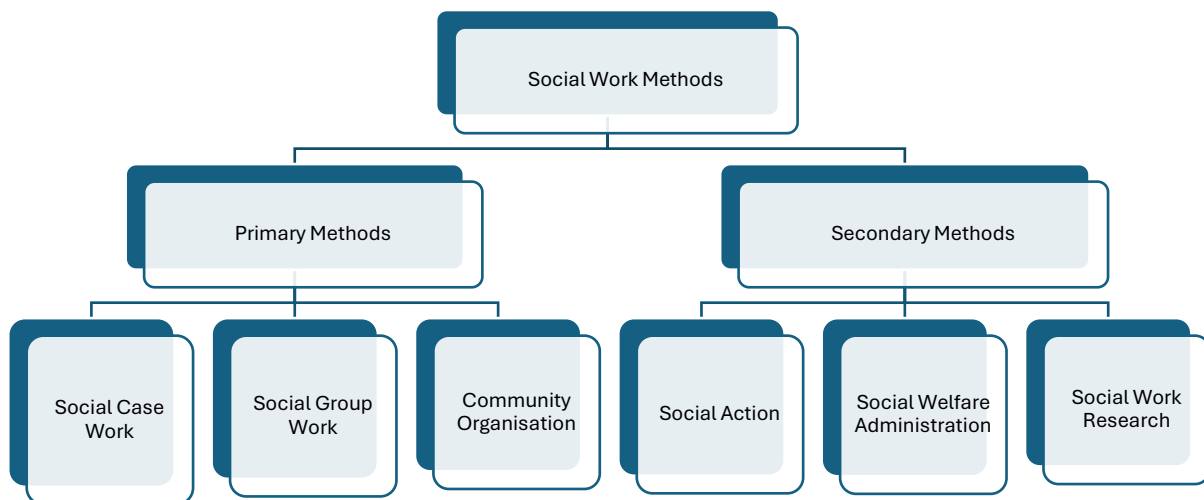


Figure 2.1: Primary and secondary methods of social work

Source: Adapted from Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:44

2.9.3 Primary methods

The primary methods are practised directly with clients who need professional services (Arshad *et al.*, 2020:950). These are referred to as direct intervention methods, in which a social worker intervenes directly with clients requiring professional social work services at the individual, group, and community levels (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:45). These are social case work, social group work and community work and they are thought to be the foundations of social work (Diraditsile & Ntseane, 2022:59).

(i) Social case work

Social case work holds a leading role as it is the oldest method in social work and the approach utilised by most practitioners (Uranta & Ogbanga, 2017:61). It is an exceptional approach to addressing issues that assists a person in resolving their psychosocial challenges (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:45). It focuses on tackling the individual's personal difficulties, relying on a case worker for resolving those difficulties (Shrivastava, 2020:3108). In this method, the social worker helps the client to act to achieve personal or social goals by utilising the available resources in terms of the strengths or personality of the client, his social system or material provisions available in the community and/or organisation (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:46). Gaas (2022:1637)

affirms that social case work is a supportive process that involves a range of activities, which may encompass providing material aid; referrals to additional community resources; and offering emotional and psychological support. Social case workers engage in human services, including child welfare, elderly care, disability support, health services, mental health, youth programmes, as well as courts and police services (Uranta & Ogbanga, 2017:61).

(ii) Social group work

In social work, when three or more people have a shared issue, the social worker creates a social group or groups to resolve their issue (Matlakala, Makhubele & Nyahunda, 2022:4). A group is described as two or more people who are linked to each other by social relationship and is a fundamental part of human experience and social life (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:47). Social group work is a technique that emerged during a resurgence of division within the field among social workers who mainly viewed the origins of social issues as internal to individuals and those who attributed these origins primarily to the social contexts surrounding troubled individuals (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:47).

Social group work is based on the idea that individuals gain value from interactions shaped by mutually established objectives, fulfilling relationships with peers, and collaborative choices regarding the group's activities (Uranta & Ogbanga, 2017:62). Depending on the context, certain groups have defined goals, whereas others might evolve their purpose gradually (Gaas, 2022:1637). Social group work is carried out in facilities for the elderly and disabled, programmes for single mothers, adoption agencies, correctional facilities, psychiatric hospitals and outpatient clinics, halfway houses, drug rehabilitation centres, physical therapy centres, public educational institutions, and family service organisations (Uranta & Ogbanga, 2017:61).

(iii) Community organisation or community work

The emphasis of community work is on transformative social changes in the circumstances affecting broad populations (Uranta & Ogbanga, 2017:63). It focuses on collaborating with communities and groups to promote positive social change, inclusivity, and equity (Woyike & Uzorka, 2021:375). As a primary approach in social work, community work addresses issues affecting communities, whether they are rural, tribal, or urban, including poverty, unemployment, corruption, illiteracy, drug

addiction, inadequate housing, and poor sanitation (Ronad, 2022:2). Matlakala *et al.* (2022:4) add that social workers function within a broader context and the individuals they assist may sometimes lack information; consequently, they employ their community work approach to raise awareness and engage in conversations about their responsibilities, roles, and functions within communities.

2.9.4 Secondary methods

The secondary methods help social workers in practising the primary methods (Arshad *et al.*, 2020:950). During the implementation of secondary methods, social workers indirectly address the clients' problems (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:453). These are social action, social welfare administration and social work research (Diraditsile & Ntseane, 2022:60).

(i) Social action

Unlike other methods, the social action method highlights lasting fundamental transformations in existing social institution (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:53). Social action can be seen as a collective and largely peaceful method employed to alter or improve existing social and economic systems that are malfunctioning, leading to the ineffectiveness of social work (Uranta & Ogbanga, 2017:64). This approach acknowledges that within every community, there exist individuals who are oppressed and marginalised, requiring organisation, likely alongside others, to curb the excesses of those in authority to guarantee social justice, equality, equity, and fair resource distribution (Woyike & Uzorka; 2021:378). It includes actions for social, religious, and political change, social laws, racial and social equality, human rights, liberty, and civic freedoms (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:53).

(ii) Social welfare administration

Modern social issues like poor health, poverty, disability, internal displacement, crime, and destitution necessitate the creation of social welfare organisations by the government, NGOs, CBOs, religious groups, and private individuals (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:55). Social welfare administration involves the organisation and management of these agencies, encompassing all activities required to provide services to clients and communities (Uranta & Ogbanga, 2017:64) and therefore necessitate the hiring of individuals with expertise in the agency's objectives, initiatives, approaches to social care, and social resources (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:55). For social welfare administration

to be effective and achievable, realistic goals must be established (Uranta & Ogbanga, 2017:64). Chukwu *et al.* (2017:56) concur that the administration of social welfare employs scientific and managerial methods for planning, executing, guiding, overseeing, structuring, documenting, coordinating, and assessing the services provided for the welfare and advancement of individuals.

(iii) Social work research

Research applies scientific methods to seek solutions for societal issues (Ronad, 2022:2). Social work research involves a systematic and critical examination of issues in the field of social welfare, aiming to provide solutions to social work challenges and to expand and generalise knowledge and concepts within social work (Uranta & Ogbanga, 2017:65). As a researcher, a social worker engages in the scientific study of social and personal issues that hinder development (Shrivastava, 2020:3109). Research in social work is a vital resource for evaluating community social issues, identifying the individuals impacted by these problems, and examining the strategies employed to address them (Uranta & Ogbanga, 2017:65). It is crucial for the successful planning and execution of development programmes and projects as it delivers trustworthy, sufficient, and accurate data (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:56).

2.10 SOCIAL GROUP WORK AS A METHOD TO ADVANCE SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF FOSTER CHILDREN

The severity and complexity of the behaviours exhibited by children in the foster care system indicate a substantial demand for enhanced services for this group (Smith, 2022:1). Social work is one of the human service professions dedicated to the welfare of individuals dealing with various biological, psychological, social, economic, and spiritual issues (Azam & Mazid, 2022:6). It emphasises assisting individuals in need to build skills that enable self-sufficiency (Tamilnadu, 2020:2281) and this objective can be achieved through various practice techniques, including social group work (Azam & Mazid, 2022:7). Uranta and Ogbanga (2017:62) highlight that social group work aims to promote positive changes in clients' communication abilities, self-awareness, assessment of reality, and the adoption of beneficial societal values to assist in achieving selected life objectives. The group worker aids in elevating the awareness of group members about various issues of interest and educates them on sustainable development (Shrivastava, 2020:3108). It has been a core method in social work with

multiple aims, including social control, social action, education, and therapy (Gaas, 2022:1637).

2.10.1 Nature and purpose of social group work

Social group work takes place when two or more individuals with shared interests collaborate to achieve a common objective (Matlakala *et al.*, 2022:4). Social group work is a social work approach that aids individuals in adjusting to their issues and surroundings by facilitating learning, altering behaviour, and enhancing skills to manage the changing demands of life (Antony, 2020:1). It is a structured, organised set of worker actions performed within the scope of professional interaction with individuals (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:27). Chukwu *et al.* (2017:47) add that social group work presents a broad domain of direct social work practice where social workers work with a variety of groups in all settings in which social work is practiced.

In this approach, the social worker can exchange information, address behavioural issues, and demonstrate activities that can aid in problem-solving, developing coping skills, relaxation, and leisure (Antony, 2020:1). Maphosa (2022:49) attests that social group work endorses and substantiates corrective experiences where interpersonal styles, social skills, and change can be recognised and applied. The idea is that no individual is isolated, and no person exists alone since humans are continually engaging with different communities in their surroundings (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:47). Social group work is a productive approach that promotes change and develops individuals' skills within a non-judgmental setting (Antony, 2020:9). It enables members to engage in more intricate and larger activities; it serves as an important space for socialisation and learning; and offers an environment where connections can develop and flourish, as well as a place for members to receive assistance and encouragement (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:47). Groups can be classified as closed or open based on whether the same members remain in a session or if anyone is allowed to join the group (Ezhumalai, Muralidhar, Dhanasekarapandian & Nikketha, 2018:516). Toseland and Rivas (2022:29) also clarify that social group work can be categorised as either formed, where individuals unite due to external influences or interventions, or natural, where individuals gather organically through spontaneous events, personal attraction, or shared perceived needs.

2.10.2 Types of groups

Gaas (2022:1637) indicates that group work within social contexts has been an essential approach in social work, serving multiple objectives. The recreational, educational, and therapeutic aims of social group work have been thoroughly documented by numerous specialists in the area of social group work (Antony, 2020:9). Social group work can be divided into two categories based on their intended purpose: task groups and treatment groups (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:29).

2.10.2.1 Task group

A task group refers to any group where the primary aim is to achieve a goal that is not inherently or directly connected to the requirements of the group's members (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:29). This group can be formed to achieve particular objectives, fulfil the aims of an organisation, modify a law or policy, or create a new programme (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:48). While the efforts of the task group might eventually influence its members, the main objective is to achieve a goal that will impact a wider audience beyond just the group itself. These groups include groups that meet clients' needs, those that meet organisational needs and those that meet community needs (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:29-53). Task groups are also called social action groups because they are used by social workers to bring about social change in the society (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:48).

2.10.2.2 Treatment group

Treatment groups are typically created to address emotional or behavioural issues (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:48). These groups refer to groups primarily aimed at addressing the socio-emotional needs of its members (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:29). The social worker's role in such a group involves facilitating treatment through their professional expertise and methods, and much of social work with groups operates within this area (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:48). The six main types of treatment groups are support groups, educational groups, growth groups, therapy groups, socialisation groups, and self-help groups (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:29). Treatment groups exist to provide various support, which could include bereavement counselling, medical support, mental health support, family support, life transition, etc (Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:48). In practical contexts, there are countless variations of treatment groups that combine these purposes (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:36).

2.10.3 Advantages and disadvantages of social group work

As indicated in Table 2.1 there are several advantages and disadvantages of using social group work rather than individual effort to meet the needs of the individuals, organisations and communities (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:32-35; Chukwu *et al.*, 2017:50).

Table 2.1: Advantages and disadvantages of social group work

Advantages of social group work	Disadvantages of social group work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The benefits of a group arise from the presence of the worker, as well as the members, to support one another. Members offer opportunities for social interaction, as well as for affirmation and normalisation of issues and concerns. ✓ Groups offer a setting where the mere presence of others facing similar issues creates significant comfort for the participants. Personal issues, when discussed in groups, transform into collective problems. ✓ Opposition to change is reduced when individuals impacted are allowed to engage in the change via group discussions and collaborative decision-making. Members have the chance to gain insights from their peers' experiences, obtain feedback, and engage with role models and practice partners who can assist in their change efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Groups can promote conformity among members and foster dependency among them. When individuals reveal personal information to fellow members through self-disclosure, they expose themselves to violations of privacy and other negative consequences. ✓ Groups occasionally pay attention to a select few confident or chatty individuals. This may pose a risk that the issues of these members will be addressed while those of quieter or less vocal members will get minimal assistance. ✓ Groups are occasionally utilised to make straightforward decisions or resolve simple issues that individuals could manage more easily. Under these circumstances, group meetings may be expensive for an organisation and irritating and pointless for participants.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The increased quantity of information available in groups can be beneficial for generating alternative action plans, for problem-solving and for making decisions. ✓ Group work conserves time and resources as multiple individuals' issues are addressed simultaneously rather than individually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Groups generally perform better than individuals when addressing challenges with established solutions as opposed to situations lacking clear right or wrong answers. ✓ Group problem-solving might require more time than individual problem-solving, and the involvement of other members could hinder the effectiveness of well-functioning members' problem-solving skills.
--	--

Although Table 2.1 indicates that social group work methods possess numerous advantages on their own, within a generalist practice framework, they are also beneficial as components of a broader, organised change initiative that might incorporate other approaches like social casework and community work to reach specific objectives (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:35).

2.10.4 The significant roles of a social worker in group work

In social work, a qualified social work professional implements social group work after receiving sufficient supervision during fieldwork (Ezhumalai *et al.*, 2018:515). A social worker is someone who has finished their education and training in social work, working in various organisations (both government and non-government) to assist and address the needs of individuals, groups, and the broader community (Ronad, 2022:2).

In South Africa, a social worker must be registered or considered registered as a social worker according to section 17 in terms of the Social Services Professions Act 110 of 1978, to practice (Republic of South Africa, 1978: Section 1). Social workers are specialists in a multidisciplinary field, drawing on insights from various disciplines and professions, with extensive research and practice spanning multiple areas and sectors (Finne *et al.*, 2022:444). More than ever, social work demands an extensive knowledge base to successfully address others' needs while also helping clients discover hope throughout the journey (Marvit, 2025:8). During their interventions,

social workers fulfil various roles to different extents at any given moment (Kamrujjaman, Demetriou, Alvarez & Delgado, 2023:629). These roles include the following:

2.10.4.1 Group facilitator

A social worker acting as a group facilitator can lead various groups, such as task groups, psychoeducational, or support groups, aimed at enhancing members' abilities in areas requiring improvement (Marvit, 2025:12). The group facilitator employs group work tasks to assist members in their personal growth and development (Ezhumalai *et al.*, 2018:515).

2.10.4.2 Broker

A social worker serves as a mediator to help connect individuals with services or resources (Marvit, 2025:12). At times, the needs of members exceed what social work can address (Matlakala *et al.*, 2022:5). In this role, after evaluating needs and identifying potential services, the social worker acts as a broker to help the members select the most suitable service option (Marvit, 2025:11).

2.10.4.3 Advocacy

Advocacy serves as a crucial and essential function within the social work field, as it is vital to advance overall wellness (Marvit, 2025:11). A social worker's role as an advocate attempt to analytically influence decision-making related to a social problem (Kamrujjaman *et al.*, 2023:629). A social worker can engage in advocacy by representing an individual client or by advocating for groups of clients to safeguard their rights and guarantee access to and use of the services they deserve (Marvit, 2025:11).

2.10.4.4 Empowerer

Social work is a practice-oriented field and a helping profession dedicated to achieving social justice, improving the quality of life, and fostering the complete potential of individuals, groups, and communities (Azam & Mazid, 2022:9). The role of a social worker as an empowerer involves assisting individuals in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to make choices that enhance their lives (Marvit, 2025:9).

2.10.4.5 Mediator

Social work utilises theories of human behaviour and social systems while engaging with their environments to promote social justice (Kamrujjaman *et al.*, 2023:629). Conflict underlies numerous aspects of social work; as a result, social workers frequently serve as mediators, adopting a neutral position to help divided groups find compromises and encourage them to develop their own solutions (Marvit, 2025:12).

2.10.4.6 Educator

Social workers empower clients by providing information, utilising current knowledge, and enhancing their skills (Kamrujjaman *et al.*, 2023:629). They act as educators to assist clients in gaining an understanding of their actions. This is achieved by offering education designed to teach them skills that allow them to cope with challenging situations and recognise different life options (Marvit, 2025:12). Matlakala *et al.* (2022:5) add that the social worker can utilise this position to alter and transform the negative behaviours of clients.

2.11 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Fouché and Geyer (2021:81), the theoretical framework is a part of the research that describes the theories or the conceptual basis that underpin it. Yamauchi, Ponte, Ratliffe and Traynor (2017:11) add that theory assists in shaping data sets and concentrates on a particular event or activity connected to the research. Theoretical frameworks typically act as the foundational structure that supports the research process in social sciences, offering an analytical perspective through which scholars interpret intricate social phenomena (van der Waldt, 2024:1). Researchers apply theory to guide their studies and prevent the risk of not formulating and investigating theoretically robust questions, leading to findings with restricted or minimal significance (Yamauchi *et al.*, 2017:11). The theoretical frameworks which underpin this study are the ecological system theory and the role theory.

2.11.1 Ecological system theory

In the 1970s, Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological systems theory to clarify how larger environmental elements, such as social, cultural, economic, and political aspects, affect individuals and communities (Gunhidzirai, 2023:286). In social work, the ecological approach considers individuals, families, cultures, communities, and policies to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their interactions, aiming to

enhance these relationships (Singh & Azman, 2022:26). The five tiers of the ecological systems theory, as depicted in Figure 2:2, respectively entail the following:

- **The microsystem** as described by Bronfenbrenner, is the sequence of activities, roles, and social interactions encountered by an individual over time within a specific context that has distinct physical and material attributes (Crawford, 2020:1). It pertains to a person's nearest surroundings that typically influence their characteristics and interactions with those around them (Singh & Azman, 2022:26). The focus is on the idea that experiences are essential for comprehending how the microsystem's influences operate (Crawford, 2020:2). In this research study, the persons would be social workers rendering foster care supervision services. The direct interaction between social workers and their microsystem can inform the study regarding their views on the use of social group work to advance the social competence of foster children. The researcher wished to explore what role these microsystems played in the formulation of perceptions that social workers may have regarding the utilisation of social group work as part of foster care supervision services.
- **The mesosystem** serves as a comprehensive system illustrating the interactive process among various microsystems (Singh & Azman, 2022:26). Bronfenbrenner's different systems can function in harmony or conflict within an individual's life, and the interactions among various microsystems form the layers of the mesosystem (Crawford, 2020:2). Social workers are involved in partnerships daily that are an important part of foster care services, and all these partnerships or systems have their own interactional suggestions. Thus, this level addresses how these interactional processes inform and create the social workers' perceptions of the use of social group work to advance the social competence of foster children.
- **The exosystem** includes the link between formal and informal social environments where individuals do not have an active or direct role (Mangolele, 2024:61). The exosystem resembles the mesosystem in that it consists of microsystems that interconnect; however, in the exosystem, one or more of the microsystems cannot include the person at the core of the system (Crawford, 2020:2). This level considers how external factors indirectly affect the delivery of social work services. In this instance, it could mean social workers may be

responsible for implementing social group work with foster children as part of foster care supervision services, but they are not part of the management that makes decisions on how services should be rendered to foster children.

- **The macrosystem** establishes a framework of interaction within and between the various micro-, meso-, and exosystems (Crawford, 2020:2). It is the overarching system that affects people, including political, cultural, economic, and social functions (Singh & Azman, 2022:26). This may encompass recognising and responding to the wider organisation's values, objectives, guidelines, and economic factors that influence social workers' perspectives on utilising group work to enhance the social skills of foster children. By acknowledging these broad factors, social workers can create pertinent strategies and promote system change regarding the use of group work.
- **The chronosystem.** When Bronfenbrenner initially created the ecological systems theory, he overlooked the role of time in human development. He later incorporated this concept, noting that numerous developmental theories had primarily examined time in relation to aging while also recognising the need to consider how environmental and life changes affect an individual's lifespan (Crawford, 2020:2). Organisational changes like restructuring or budget reductions can result in events that have specific effects, whether beneficial or detrimental, on service delivery, which in the context of this study, would be the utilisation of group work as a method of intervention in foster care.

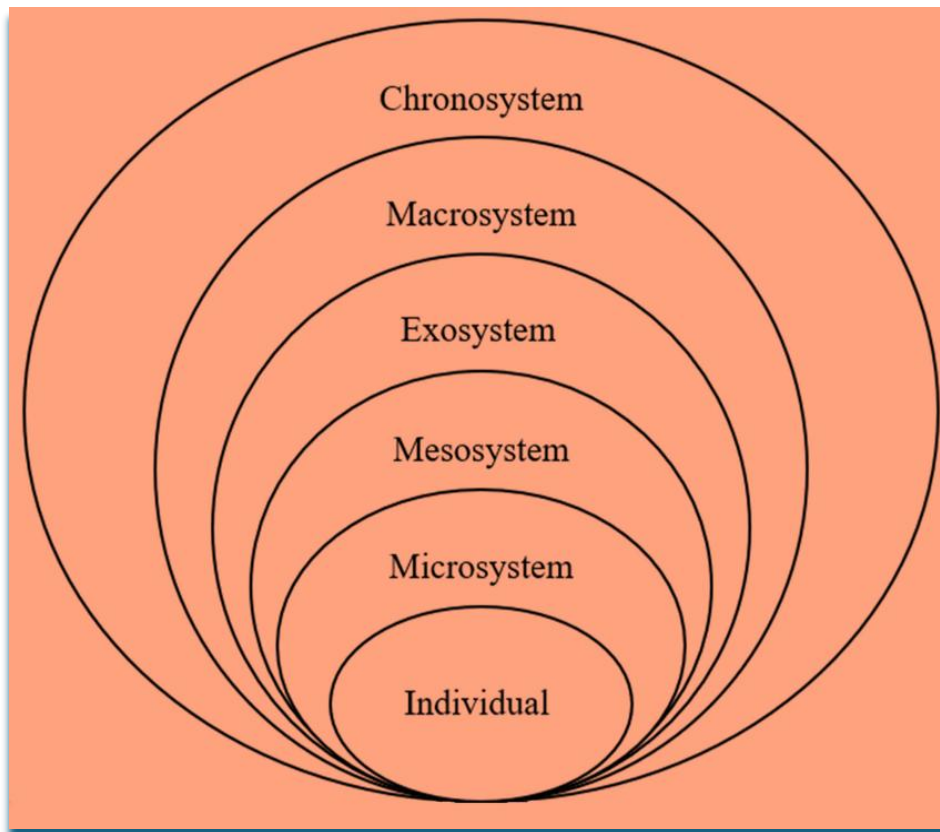


Figure 2.2: Illustration of the levels of ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979)

2.11.2 The role theory

The second viewpoint that supports this research is the role theory. During the 1920s and early 1930s, Bruce Biddle wrote extensively about role theory, noting that it emerges across various fields and has been utilised to elucidate patterns of human behaviour or roles (Zwebathu, 2018:9). Biddle asserted that role theory is grounded in the core idea that individuals take on various roles in their daily lives, and these roles influence their behaviour, self-perception, and how others view their actions (Anglin *et al.*, 2022:2).

Role theory is pertinent in clarifying operations within organisations and professions (Zwebathu, 2018:9). In a structural organisation, roles are connected and reliant on one another, and when expectations about a role differ or become unmanageable, confusion arises (Mosala, 2022:22). Social workers are a category of professionals who face diverse expectations from different individuals they engage with (Zwebathu, 2018:9). Thus, based on role theory, their behaviour can be comprehended and anticipated if one is aware of the roles they hold and the associated behavioural

expectations linked to those roles (Anglin *et al.*, 2022:2). The responsibilities of social workers differ from one organisation to another (Zwebathu, 2018:37). In this study's context, utilising a role theory perspective enables the researcher to grasp the effects of the different roles of social workers on the utilisation of group work to advance the social competence of foster children, and then identify areas where conflicts may arise, if there are any and develop interventions for them to navigate their various roles to ensure that the utilisation of group work with foster children is on par with other methods of social work intervention.

2.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the literature review revealed that child protection services remain a challenging issue across the globe despite efforts to mitigate the scourge of violence against children. Systems have been put in place to remedy the situation, however authors and researchers in different disciplines reveal in their findings that the fight against child violence is a continuous battle around the world, and more and more children enter the child protection system. It has been revealed through studying the literature that South Africa has made a significant improvement since the new democratic era to strengthen its child protection system through the introduction of the Constitution of the Republic South Africa, the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended and other legislative frameworks, however, it appears that more still needs to be done as more children are continuing to be enrolled in the child protection system.

The plight of children in need of care and protection is recognised internationally, and many countries resort to foster care as a way of providing alternative care to those who need care outside their parental environment. While the process of finding children in need of care and protection and arranging for alternative care falls within the field of social work, social workers find themselves with added responsibilities of ensuring that these children's needs are met. Studies have revealed that children in alternative care have psychosocial needs that come with them to their placements, which need intensive intervention. This requires social workers to be multi-skilled in their approach and to use various social work methods at their disposal. Social group work, as one of the primary methods of social work intervention, has proven and is documented to be useful in facilitating the development of skills that children in alternative care need to be able to function optimally in the general society. Studies have revealed that children with improved social skills have a better chance of

succeeding in life. Therefore, the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children is a subject that needs to be explored, and the findings should be documented to improve the social services to this vulnerable segment of society. The following chapter addresses the research methods used in the study.

CHAPTER 3:

APPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children was discussed through the critical review of literature. In this chapter, the research methodology employed in this study will be discussed. Dewi (2021:27) explains that research methodology refers to the techniques used to uncover the truth about a phenomenon through systematic inquiry aligned with the reality being studied. It encompasses the entire process of planning for the study, designing and executing the study, and interpreting and presenting the findings (Adeoye, 2024:30). It is the science of studying how research is conducted, by sensibly adopting various steps (Swarooprani, 2022:537). Bahishti (2022:1) also asserts that research methodology is the process of designing, conducting and analysing research studies. In congruence with Adeoye (2024:30), this chapter will clearly outline the research process, focusing on the research paradigm, research approach, research design, sampling strategies, research methods, pilot study and method of data collection. The method of data analysis, the measures to provide trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations are also discussed.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm is a set of assumptions, beliefs or theories that serves as the foundation of concepts (such as identity) or institutions (such as religion) (Turin, Raihan & Chowdhury, 2024:1). Khatri (2020:1436), asserts that all researchers are required to be informed by some underlying philosophical assumptions about what constitute valid research, and it is important to know what these assumptions are. A research paradigm is a set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists on how problems should be understood and addressed (Kumar, 2022:2). Turin *et al.* (2024:1) and Khatri (2020:1436) agree that a research paradigm is the researcher's worldview, a standard, perspective or set of ideas that shape how he or she sees the world and how he or she interprets and acts within that world. Gamage (2025:94) and Turin *et al.* (2024:1) bring to the fore that there are three major research paradigms, which are positivism, which focuses on objective, quantitative research methods, interpretivism (also known as constructivism), focusing on subjective, qualitative

research methods and pragmatism, which uses mixed research methods to address the research problem.

The qualitative approach used in this research allowed the researcher to gather subjective views from the participants through one-on-one interviews using a semi-structured interview schedule. Interpretivism, therefore, served as a suitable paradigm as it provided the researcher with an opportunity to explore the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children. According to the interpretivism paradigm, researchers employing this paradigm seek to uncover the underlying meanings and interactions that give rise to human actions and behaviour (Gamage, 2025:94). It focuses not only on understanding how individuals experience their reality but also on the interpretation that they give to their reality (Turin *et al.*, 2024:2).

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Proper utilisation of research approaches is considered a key element in the scientific community, facilitating the generation of knowledge based on evidence (Mehrad & Zangeneh, 2019:1). Research approaches are frameworks and strategies for investigation that involve the steps from general assumptions to specific techniques of gathering, analysing, and interpreting data (De-xin, 2018:197). Different kinds of research are categorised according to several criteria, such as the purpose of the study, the goals of the study, and the information being sought (Taherdoost, 2022:53). Research approaches can generally be classified into two types, which are quantitative and qualitative research (Barroga, Matanguihan, Furuta, Arima, Tsuchiya, Kawahara, Takamiya & Izumi, 2023:3). The quantitative research approach involves number-based research which measures behaviour, attitude and performance in numbers (Shaikh, 2022:4107). It involves a deductive approach to prove or disprove the hypothesis that was developed (Barroga *et al.*, 2023:3). In contrast, the qualitative approach's aim is to evaluate knowledge, behaviours, attitudes and opinions of people about the research topic and size is a lesser consideration in this research approach (Shaikh, 2022:4107). In cases where employing one of these approaches is not adequate for the study, an integration of both methods known as the mixed-method approach can be used which makes it the third research approach (Taherdoost, 2022:54). The findings of qualitative and quantitative research are integrated to

address the weaknesses of both research approaches to have a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Barroga *et al.*, 2023:11).

In this study, a qualitative research approach was used. Authors such as Kinyua (2023:194) explain that the qualitative research approach is adopted when the problem is not well understood, and there is a desire to explore the problem thoroughly. It aims to create perceptions into a problem's context and provides not only ideas, but also hypotheses (Ghanad, 2023:3794). In this approach, many questions are used to generate rich narratives from participant interviews, and these narratives are analysed to answer the research question (Kinyua, 2023:194). The semi-structured one-on-one interviews utilised in this research enabled the researcher to gain subjective views of the participants about the topic. The social work interview skills employed by the researcher, such as the open and closed-ended questions, exploration, and non-verbal skills, all assisted the researcher to gather rich information from the participants' experiences and feelings on the topic under study. Therefore, a qualitative research approach was relevant for this study as it assisted the researcher in drawing forth thick and rich data directly from the participants.

The selection of this research approach can also be motivated by the following characteristics of the qualitative approach, as indicated by Dubey and Kothari (2022:131):

- Qualitative research is based on observation and experience. The researcher used his own senses to approach data collection, especially by seeing and hearing in a systematic and meaningful way.
- It aims to study the phenomenon using several organised systems such as in-depth interviews, experience, and participant observation. As mentioned, the researcher gathered much information through semi-structured interviews, on the views of social workers' use of group work to advance foster children's social competence.
- The questions used for data collection were open-ended and the data were presented in the form of notes and recordings. The researcher captured the responses in the form of narratives and notes to ensure that their elaborations were well documented.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

After a researcher determines their area of study, the next question they should ask themselves is how they are going to conduct their study, and the response to this question forms the foundation of a research design (Khanday & Khanam, 2019:367). Research design involves employing evidence-based methods, protocols, and guidelines that offer the instruments and framework for carrying out a research study (Majid, 2018:1). It serves as the framework for gathering, evaluating, and interpreting data (Indu & Vidhukumar, 2020:64).

In the research design, research problems are converted into data for analysis to provide appropriate answers to research questions (Siddiqua, 2023:18). In the current study, the research question was: *“What are the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children?”*. This research question directed the formulation of the aim of the study, which was to explore the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children. Using the exploratory research design assisted the researcher to collect and analyse data to answer the research question (Gamage, 2025:92). Samanth (2024:27) states that the exploratory research design is undertaken to address fresh problem areas that have not been explored before and establishes the groundwork for more thorough data collection and analysis. Mosala (2022:26) agrees that the exploratory research design does not aim to provide the final and conclusive answers to the research questions but delves into research topic with variable levels of depth (Mosala, 2022:26).

3.5 STUDY SETTING

The nature, context, environment and logistics of a research site can affect how research is conducted (Majid, 2018:3). Thus, by observing a research site prior to data collection, the researcher can proactively address real-world problems related to the organisation, structure, or arrangement of a research site (Majid, 2018:3). There are ten service points with Tshwane Region Department of Social Development; however, one service point, Bronkhorstspuit service point where the researcher works was excluded to minimise possible bias. In this study, data was gathered from the social workers in the Department of Social Development Gauteng Province Tshwane Region at nine service points. These service points are Mamelodi service point, Ekangala

service point, Pretoria service point, Mabopane service point, Ga-Rankuwa service point, Winterveldt service point, New-Eesterust service point, Themba service point and Soshanguve service point. The service points operate as intake and field units which are responsible for statutory work and to render foster care supervision services. Social workers at intake level are responsible for the opening of new foster care inquiry files and those case files are allocated to social workers who investigate and present them to children’s court for foster care placements and supervision services. The service points are managed by three social work managers who are each responsible for three service points. Each service point is comprised of a minimum of three to a maximum of six social work supervisors, depending on the size of the office.

Below is a detailed map of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality to indicate the geographical demarcation where the Department of Social Development Tshwane Region Service Points are located:

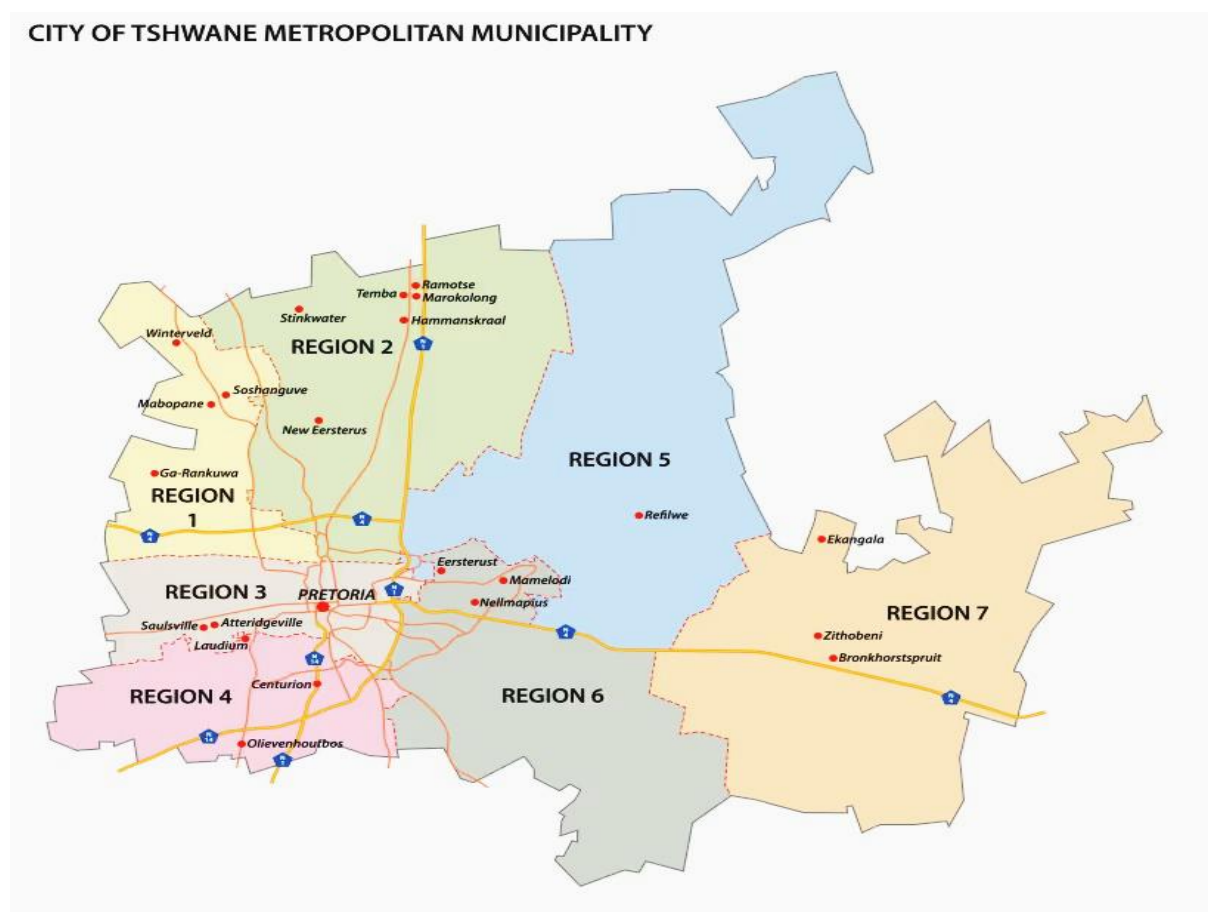


Figure 3.1: Geographical demarcation of the Department of Social Development, Tshwane Region Service Points

Source: Lesniewski (2020)

3.6 POPULATION

A study population refers to a group of individuals, objects, or other units from which a sample is taken for measurement (Dubey & Kothari, 2022:67). Casteel and Bridier (2021:343) elaborate that the study's population includes the individuals, pairs, groups, organisations, or other entities being examined and to whom the findings may be generalised or transferred, and it is the main group of interest for the research. The consequences of a poorly defined population cannot be overstated, as it can result in sampling bias, lack of generalisability, misinterpretation of the findings, inadequate research design, wastage of resources and ethical concerns (Willie, 2024:78). Thus, considering the characteristics of the ideal research participants is a crucial method to understand the population of interest, eligibility requirements, study environment, and the sampling techniques that will enhance recruitment and retention (Majid, 2018:3). The research population for this study consisted of all registered social workers in the employ of the Department of Social Development Tshwane Region. As the researcher is based in the Tshwane region, focusing on this population will reduce the cost of the research.

3.7 SAMPLING STRATEGY

In circumstances where the entire targeted population cannot participate in the study or if the members of the targeted population cannot all be identified, sampling is used to gather data that would be presumed to be representative of the targeted population (Stratton, 2021:373). Riak and Bill (2022:169) also agree that if the population is larger or immeasurable, sampling would need to be used. Makwana, Engineer, Dabhi, and Chudasama (2023:763) define sampling as the process of selecting a sample from a population for a specific research objective. As motivated by Makwana *et al.* (2023:763), a sample was chosen for this study because it would have been extremely expensive and time-consuming to survey the entire population of social workers rendering foster care supervision services.

There are mainly two different strategies that are adopted in research for the selection of participants, namely, probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Ahmed, 2024:2). In probability sampling, the principle is that the sample is representative by controlling the probability of each individual being chosen to participate in the study (Riak & Bill, 2022:170). Stratton (2021:374) further clarifies that in this sampling

strategy, each member of the target population has an equal probability of being selected to participate in the study. On the contrary, the non-probability sampling strategy is embedded in the principle that the likelihood of each member of the target population being selected for the study is not known (Makwana *et al.*, 2023:766). In this study, a non-probability sampling strategy was used, as there was no actual list, directory, or database of social workers from which the researcher drew the sample, thereby offering equal opportunity for each social worker to be included in the study.

Qualitative research focuses on making sense of lived, observed phenomena in a specific context, with specific selected individuals, rather than attempting to generalise from sample to population. Therefore, the sampling design in qualitative research is not random (Johnson *et al.*, 2020:141). Sampling in qualitative research uses non-random methods, which are, convenience sampling (where participants self-select if they wish to participate), purposive sampling (where participants are directly selected to participate), snowball sampling (where participants are referred to the researcher) and quota sampling (where participants selection is based on pre-established criteria or standards) (Muzari, Shava & Shonhiwa, 2022:16; Stratton, 2021:374; Chakraborty, 2024:526).

In this study, participants were purposefully selected. Bazen, Barg and Takeshita (2021:242) highlight that in purposive sampling, participants who have specific characteristics and are knowledgeable about or have experience with a topic of interest are recruited. The individuals with these shared characteristics are recruited to gain a rich and in-depth understanding of their lived experiences (Jowsey, Deng & Weller, 2021:474). Participants in this study were purposefully selected according to the following inclusion criteria:

- Social workers employed in the Department of Social Development, Gauteng province, Tshwane region.
- Social workers who have a minimum of three years of experience in rendering foster care services.
- Social workers registered at the SACSSP.

Social workers who did not meet the above inclusion criteria were excluded from being part of the sample for the study. After the researcher determined the inclusion criteria, a request was made to the Head of Department (HOD) of the Department of Social

Development in Gauteng province to seek permission to conduct a study in the Tshwane region and the approval was granted. The researcher then used the granted approval to approach the regional director of the Tshwane region. She acknowledged the approval and shared with the researcher the contact details of the social work managers of the service points where the researcher was intending to conduct the study. The service points' social work managers also acknowledged the approval and shared the contact details of the service points' social workers. Each of the nine service points provided the researcher with two social workers who met the inclusion criteria to participate in the study. A total of 18 sampled social workers participated in the study.

When gathering qualitative data, it is essential for a researcher to determine if the data has been adequately collected (Mwita, 2022:414). Saturation in qualitative research signifies the point where data collection and analysis have been thoroughly explored and understood, with no new themes arising (Naeem *et al.*, 2024:1). The saturation point guarantees both the reliability and authenticity of information for the research while also conserving researchers' time and effort in gathering identical data (Mwita, 2022:414). When saturation is reached, the researcher will ascertain that their research process has entirely or nearly addressed a theoretical gap. In this study, saturation was achieved between 12 and 15 interviews, as aided by the homogeneity of the sampled participants and the data collection method used.

3.8 THE PILOT TEST

The main research study can be carried out more effectively by first assessing its viability (Anupama, Chaudhary & Lakshmi, 2023:33). Therefore, an important tool, which is a pilot test, assists in assessing the processes to be used in the main study, to identify problematic issues and to devise a corrective action plan (Kunselman, 2024:901). Shakir and Rahman (2022:1620) also highlight that a pilot test is crucial as it assists the researcher to identify and resolve ethical and practical issues that could jeopardise the main trial or violate participants' human rights.

During preparation for this process, the research supervisor suggested that the researcher make journal study notes during the pilot study so that potential challenges could be identified and iterative improvements could be made. The first two participants who volunteered to participate and met the inclusion criteria constituted

the pilot test. During the pilot test, the participants were asked to make comments on the effectiveness of the research design and the instrument used to collect data. It was evident from the comments received from the participants that the questions asked covered all aspects that were relevant to the topic. The researcher journaled the following feedback from the pilot test, which guided and contributed significantly to the main study:

- **Appointment with the participants**

When the researcher arranged interviews with the participants, he suggested a date. The participants later requested that the interview be rescheduled to a new date due to other official commitments. Due to the pilot test, the researcher learnt that allowing the participants to suggest a date for the interview within the prescribed timeframe fostered ownership on the side of the participants and demonstrated respect for their time and sense of responsibility for the success of the interview. As a result, no rescheduling was experienced in the main study.

- **Study interview setting**

The researcher's working environment is quite well-resourced, where officials have privacy, as they do not share offices. The researcher, therefore, approached the pilot study with the view and anticipation that the interview setting would be private and free from disruptions. However, the researcher discovered on the date of the interview that the setting was not conducive, and improvisation had to be made to get a more private interview room that allowed for the interview to flow freely without disruptions. The pilot test taught the researcher to pay attention to logistics, such as ensuring an environment in advance that would be conducive for the interview.

- **Administration of data collection tool (semi-structured interview schedule)**

Although the participants gave feedback that the questions were relevant to the topic and would elicit the fullest responses from the participants, a few areas of concern emerged regarding the interview process, and these observations were also confirmed by the research supervisor when she reviewed the pilot test transcripts. It was discovered that in some instances, the researcher would unnecessarily probe the participants' responses, which encouraged participants to lose focus slightly on the topic and start talking about their personal concerns and interests. The pilot test,

therefore, taught the researcher the importance of maintaining some balance between flexibility and managing time.

- **Assessing the feasibility of sampling criteria**

The pilot test undertaken helped the researcher to assess whether the inclusion criteria were attainable. The responses of the participants during the pilot test with regard to their biographical information confirmed that the inclusion criteria were indeed attainable for the main study.

- **Confidence of the researcher**

The researcher observed that the pilot test provided sufficient practice on how to take field notes, test the audio recording, how the recorder should be positioned for proper recording and when to administer consent forms to participate in the study. The researcher also observed that having a few informal chats with the participants before the interview helped them to get to know the researcher and establish a rapport. This positively impacted the main study as it helped to build trust between the researcher and the participants.

3.9 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is one of the most significant stages in a study because the quality of research is largely determined by the quality and completeness of the data collected (Dewi, 2021:23). Data collection methods are generally divided into two main categories, namely, the primary data collection methods and secondary data collection methods (Taherdoost, 2021:12). Primary data is collected directly from the participants where data collection methods such as questionnaires, surveys, interviews, measurement methods, and direct observations are used (Dubey & Kothari, 2022:11). On the contrary, the secondary data is data that has already been gathered by someone else for another reason and can be used for other purposes in a research study (Dubey & Kothari, 2022:11; Taherdoost, 2021:12). In this study, primary data was collected through interviews.

3.9.1 Interviews as a method of data collection

Interviews are the predominant method of collecting data in qualitative research (Muzari *et al.*, 2022:17). Qualitative research places a greater emphasis on ideas and experiences than on numbers and finds interviews to be the most helpful (Ugwu &

Eze, 2023:26). The interview generates data through verbal interaction between the researcher and the participants making it effective in eliciting information from the participants in their natural social settings (Muzari *et al.*, 2022:17). As supported by Riak and Bill (2022:168) the rationale for employing interviews in this study was that it provided the researcher with an opportunity to find out about the topic in more depth because participants were more likely to give detailed information when talking than writing and the researcher could probe more on particular points of interest.

Interviews can be differentiated by the degree to which they are structured namely, structured, unstructured and semi-structured (Taherdoost, 2021:18). Structured interviews often involve close-ended questions to which the participants can only respond with no or yes answers and the interviewees each are typically asked the exact questions in the same order (Ugwu & Eze, 2023:26). Unstructured interviews are informal in nature as they do not have a specific structure or guide and interviewers conduct casual conversations (Taherdoost, 2021:19). For this study, the semi-structured interview method was used, which will be described in the next section.

3.9.2 Semi-structured interviews

This study adopted an exploratory research design to answer the research question; therefore, the semi-structured interview method was suitable to gather data from the participants. This decision was supported by Muzari *et al.* (2022:17) who affirm that semi-structured interviews are of importance when the study is exploratory with little known about the subject area. As opposed to the structured interviews and unstructured interviews, the semi-structured interviews combine elements of structured interviews and unstructured interviews and are generally performed one-on-one with the interviewer asking the study participants closed-ended and open-ended questions about a specific topic (Ugwu & Eze, 2023:26; Bazen *et al.*, 2021:242). They are formal in nature, and are conducted based on a guide, however, should the interviewers need extra information, they are able to continue the conversation based on the questions that would have been provided ahead of time (Taherdoost, 2021:18).

In this study, the researcher designed a semi-structured interview schedule, which had pre-determined closed-ended and open-ended questions and the interviews were guided by the schedule rather than controlled by it. The closed-ended questions were mainly used to generate factual data about the participants, such as gender, age and

other responses that needed no elaborations. The open-ended questions were used to allow the participants to express themselves freely as well as to elaborate on their answers and to make recommendations. The interview schedule was divided into two parts, part A and part B (See Appendix 8). Part A included the biographical and background information of the participants, such as their age, gender, and number of years practising social work in the field of foster care supervision. Part B included exploratory questions to understand the views of the participants regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 sampled social workers at their respective service points, comprising two participants per service point. The duration of the interviews was between 40 and 90 minutes. There are different ways to record research interviews, which include self-reports, paper-based, tape-record or audio-record interviews (Taherdoost, 2021:18). In this study, all the interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants, and written notes were also taken by the researcher, which helped to internalise key points and to generate insightful follow-up questions.

3.9.3 Communication techniques

According to Geyer (2021:374), interviewing is not only centred around asking questions and capturing responses, but it is also about how such questions were communicated to the interviewee. Message clarity is an important element underlying good communication, and it minimises misunderstandings (Soid, Fatih, Fauzi & Norman, 2025:666). Therefore, it was important for the researcher to apply the best communication techniques possible to elicit in-depth experiences from the participants. In this study, several communication techniques were employed during the interview as identified by Geyer (2021:374):

- (a) *Paraphrasing*: The researcher can enhance the participants' understanding and create a pause for the participants to process and formulate responses by rephrasing the questions.
- (b) *Clarification*: The purpose of this technique is to make vague or unclear statements easier to understand by using clarifying questions to eliminate confusion and advance accuracy in communication.

- (c) *Minimal verbal responses*: Words such as “yes” or “okay”, “mm-mm” are used by the researcher to show active listening and encourage participants to continue to share their views and experiences.
- (d) *Probing*: This technique helps the researcher to gain rich insights by persuading the participants to elaborate more and provide deeper accounts of their experiences and views.
- (e) *Reflection*: This technique seeks to examine participants’ statements or experiences by reflecting on what they said to gain a deeper understanding and draw meaningful conclusions.

3.10 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

After the compilation of data, the researcher focused on the procedure of analysing the collected data (Swarooprani, 2022:541). To analyse the collected data, it must be transcribed into protocols and transcripts (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020:4). The goal of data analysis is to go beyond describing the data, aiming to unearth the deeper patterns, relationships and meanings embedded within (Lim, 2025:218). It is the process that is designed to condense raw data into categories and themes (Shava *et al.*, 2021:554).

Each of the in-depth interviews was transcribed and analysed. The process of data interpretation and analysis was conducted through thematic analysis. According to Dawadi (2020:62), thematic analysis is a method that is used to systematically organise and analyse complex data sets. Jowsey *et al.* (2021:472) further elaborate that thematic analysis is a process of assigning data to a number of codes, grouping codes into themes, and subsequently identifying patterns and interconnectedness between these themes. The researcher followed the seven-phase thematic approach of Lester, Cho, and Lochmiller (2020:98) to analyse data.

Phase 1: Preparing and organising the data for analysis. This is the foundational phase in the thematic data analysis. The researcher collected all 18 audio recordings and written notes of the interviews in one place to prepare for the next phases of data analysis.

Phase 2: Transcribing the data. Phase 2 entails a transcription process where the researcher takes time to transcribe data to prepare for further analysis and to capture each participant's utterances to serve as an exact record of the discussion. All 18

recordings were transcribed in a verbatim format to obtain a precise and complete representation of the original recordings.

Phase 3: Becoming familiar with the data. Phase 3 allowed the researcher to familiarise himself with the data transcribed to gain a sense of what was said by the participants. This involved a thorough, repetitive examination of the transcripts to gain a complete grasp of the dataset's content.

Phase 4. Memoing the data. During this phase, the researcher was able to define initial thoughts about the data and the explanations that occurred. This was not about the field notes or transcription but consisted of reflective writings for the researcher to articulate his thoughts about the data to pave the way for coding.

Phase 5: Coding the data. This entails creating concise labels for key characteristics of the data that are pertinent to the research inquiries. Phase 5 helped the researcher to divide complex information into smaller sections and allocate a brief word or phrase that summarises its significance. Dubey and Kothari (2022:162) concur that coding involves the assignment of numbers or various symbols to categorise responses into specific groups

Phase 6: Moving from codes to categories and categories to themes. During Phase 6, the researcher moved from individual cases to broader interpretations where codes were applied, categories developed, and ultimately created themes. As a result of this process, six themes and twenty-six subthemes were created, and they were named according to the purpose of this study.

Phase 7: Making the analytic process transparent. During data exploration, it is essential to present information regarding the analysis process in a clear and verifiable way. This involves outlining the process, creating a comprehensive audit trail that describes the connections between data sources, codes, categories, and themes, the degree of code application to the dataset, and the extent to which the codes contribute to forming quality themes for readers.

The data analysed was examined by the supervisor as part of the credibility to check how the researcher identified the themes and subthemes. A coding analysis report from the researcher and a report from the independent coder, a retired social work professor, containing analytic narratives and data extracts were discussed with the supervisor to outline the process followed in analysing data and, where necessary,

adjustments on the themes, subthemes and categories were made, emanating from an agreement that some storylines revealed the need to discard, rearrange or merge themes, subthemes and categories.

3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Kakar, Rasheed, Rashid and Akhter (2023:154), many researchers developed a trustworthiness model to improve the credibility of qualitative research; however, the Lincoln and Guba (1985) model is the most popular and suitable. This model comprises four criteria that determine the trustworthiness of qualitative research, which are credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability (Stahl & King, 2020:26).

3.11.1 Credibility

Credibility asks the question “how congruent are the findings with reality” (Stahl & King, 2020:26). Kakar *et al.* (2023:155) clarify that the study is reliable if the qualitative data findings are readily identifiable by readers and effectively communicated to others. The researchers detail individual experiences and opinions that could have led to methodological bias and accurately and clearly convey participants' narratives and viewpoints (Noble & Smith, 2025:1). In this study, several steps were taken to safeguard its credibility. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 participants from nine different service points within the Tshwane region who have different experiences in foster care supervision services. This triangulation enhanced the study's representation and credibility. The researcher recorded all the interviews for reference, and communication techniques were used to allow the participants to provide in-depth information and experiences. Credibility was further enhanced by the peer briefing with the supervisor to discuss the study's process and the data analysis.

3.11.2 Dependability

The second criterion of trustworthiness offered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is dependability. In qualitative research, dependability refers to the reliability or consistency of the research study (Kakar *et al.*, 2023:157; Riak & Bill, 2022:171). According to Mosala (2022:35), given the inherent characteristics of qualitative research, establishing dependability can be challenging unless the researcher maintains a thorough and detailed account of every facet of the process that other researchers can replicate. Kakar *et al.* (2023:157) agree that this technique of

consistency would ensure that if the study were to be conducted again with the same methods, similar participants and similar contexts, similar results would be achieved. The dependability of this study was enhanced by observing various key aspects that express the consistency, stability and equivalence of research outcomes. This was achieved by establishing an audit trail that traces the study's compilation, the methods of data collection and analysis, the presentation of findings, the drawing of conclusions, and the formulation of recommendations.

3.11.3 Transferability

Qualitative research aims to enhance comprehension by applying results from one setting to another (Stahl & King, 2020:27). The outcome of qualitative research will be deemed relevant when those not involved in the study or the readers can connect it to their own experiences (Kakar *et al.*, 2023:156). If an individual cannot gain insights from study extensions that align with future situations, the effect of the initial study is restricted (Stahl & King, 2020:27). According to Mosala (2022:35), although establishing transferability may be challenging because of the methodology, the researcher needs to adjust in qualitative studies to ensure transferability. By collecting ample data during the semi-structured individual interviews, the researcher improved the transferability through detailed descriptions of data, which acknowledged the participants as knowledgeable individuals. The researcher also enhanced transferability by providing a detailed description of the setting in which the study took place, as this could be used to assess and confirm whether the researcher's findings align with the context.

3.11.4 Conformability

The fourth criterion on trustworthiness is conformability. In this study, the data gathered was verified by means of conformability. Confirmability refers to the extent of impartiality in outcomes, which entails the authenticity of initial responses from study participants and the absence of any type of bias (Kakar *et al.*, 2023:160). Instead of building a reality through findings, qualitative researchers who seek and uphold objectivity depend on concepts such as precision and accuracy in their research methodology and the engagement of other researchers (Stahl & King, 2020:28).

In this study, confirmability was enhanced using data triangulation, which involved conducting individual interviews and taking notes as participants described their

experiences. After analysing the data, it was provided to the supervisor, who was also able to verify that the transcripts' narratives were accurately represented. An independent coder was assigned to examine the transcripts and help develop narratives, and her resulting narratives were compared with those of the researcher and validated as accurately representing the same. The approach by the researcher of employing experts' opinions is supported by Kakar *et al.* (2023:167), who assert that expert insights significantly enhance the tools for data collection, the data gathering procedures, analytical methods, and the interpretation of the research study.

3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The topic of a good study must be engaging, accurate, realistic, new, an enquiry or problematic, contemporary and most importantly, ethical (Hasan, Rana, Chowdhury, Dola & Rony, 2021:2). Ethical guidelines are essential in directing research practices, guaranteeing that investigations are carried out with honesty, regard for participants, and responsibility (Ali, Ndubuisi, Obiorah, Aku, Nesiama & Agbakhamen, 2025:94). Ethics pertains to the principles and standards that direct choices related to data gathering and its analysis, along with the sharing of results (Mirza, Bellalem & Mirza, 2023:442). Qualitative approaches, like other research approaches, are constrained by research ethics (Firdaus, Zulfadilla & Caniago, 2021:7). Researchers have a definitive responsibility to ensure that they recognise and protect the rights and welfare of the individuals involved in the study (Kang & Hwang, 2021:5).

To avoid exposing participants to unethical practices, the researcher ensured that the following factors were taken into account: confidentiality and anonymity, informed consent, avoidance of harm, deception of participants, and debriefing of participants. According to Lim (2025:225), these factors cover different elements of the research process, from recruiting participants to managing data, and are essential for maintaining the integrity of the study.

3.12.1 Confidentiality and anonymity

Safeguarding the privacy of research participants requires a rigorous commitment to the principles of confidentiality and anonymity (Dev, 2024:9). The anonymity of participants is crucial, particularly when handling sensitive data (Lim, 2025:226). Revealing such private information could result in unlawful exploitation of participants' identities, diminished self-worth, feelings of hatred, or even suicide (Kang & Hwang,

2021:8). Therefore, before initiating data collection sessions, it is essential to inform participants about confidentiality and anonymity and to include these aspects in the researcher-participant agreement (Mirza *et al.*, 2023:444). To maintain confidentiality and anonymity for the participants, the researcher handled the process in the following manner: the researcher guaranteed that the details provided by the participants were not accessible to the public, except when a written consent was obtained. The participants were assured that their names would not be mentioned at any point during or after the discussion session, and that no dialogue would take place that could relate to any of the participants, which would further protect their anonymity. Information collected during the interviewing process was saved on the researcher's laptop, which is consistently password-protected for safety and security. Participants were also informed that the data would be stored securely for five years, accessible only to the researcher and the supervisor. Subsequently, the audio files and written transcripts would be destroyed.

3.12.2 Informed consent

In qualitative and quantitative research alike, acquiring informed consent from participants is a crucial ethical obligation that honours their autonomy and right to make knowledgeable choices regarding their participation (Lim, 2025:225). Informed consent refers to giving participants the necessary information to enable them to decide whether or not to take part in the study (Dubey & Kothari, 2022:266). An informed consent letter must be provided to every participant, detailing the primary purpose and goals of the study, along with the ethical considerations of the research (Mirza, *et al.*, 2023:443). The participants must voluntarily engage in the study and have the option to decide whether to take part or not (Kang & Hwang, 2021:7).

To obtain informed consent from the participants, the researcher emailed the participants a participant information sheet (Appendix 6) and the consent to participate in the study form (Appendix 7) in advance for the participants to familiarise themselves with the aim and ethical aspects of the study. Sometimes it is believed that social workers, being both participants and colleagues of the researcher, have an unspoken duty to engage. Thus, the researcher informed the participants that they had the choice to opt out of the study and that they could withdraw at any moment if they desired to do so, as participation is obligation-free.

3.12.3 Avoidance of harm

According to Lim (2025:226), researchers must perform an ethical review process to assess possible advantages and risks, ensuring that the study has a positive impact without harming participants. Mirza *et al.* (2023:442) indicate that when studying individuals, the welfare of research participants should always come first; if it comes down to harming the participants or compromising the research, the latter should be the one that is compromised. Before administering the interview schedule, the researcher informed participants that should they experience discomfort during the study or after the study resulting from their participation, a referral to a specialist would be made for them to obtain free psychosocial support services. The researcher conducted the interviews with extra caution to ensure that the participants did not suffer undue physical or psychological harm. The researcher upheld a professional connection with participants while striving to carry out interviews in a sensitive and professional manner under the supervision of the research supervisor, as required by the University of South Africa.

3.12.4 Deception of participants

Deception involves researchers providing participants with misleading or inaccurate information about the study in question (Wendler, 2022:559). Researchers should always ensure that they conduct studies truthfully and transparently, ensuring that data is accurately represented without manipulation or selective reporting (Ali *et al.*, 2025:96). However, Dubey and Kothari (2022:266) highlight that deception can be essential, but in very special circumstances to avoid participant bias in surveys, to maintain the integrity of results, and to safeguard the confidentiality of third parties. Kang and Hwang (2021:8) caution that participants may provide inaccurate information upon realising the researcher's deceptive intentions, which can negatively impact the study's integrity. In this study, the researcher had no intention to exercise deception as he shared all information regarding the study with the participants. In particular, the researcher made sure to address the aim of the study, which was also clearly outlined in the participant information sheet (Appendix 6).

3.12.5 Debriefing of participants

The primary purposes of debriefing include de-hoaxing, which informs participants about the misleading elements of the survey, and desensitisation, which aids

participants in alleviating any stress or discomfort that the survey may have induced (Dubey & Kothari, 2022:267). Following every interview session, the researcher upheld this ethical principle by allowing participants to inquire, share their emotions, and provide feedback to adjust any potential thoughts and feelings that may have arisen from the interview.

3.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This study aimed to determine social workers' perspectives on utilising group work as an intervention strategy to enhance the social competence of foster children. The researcher employed a qualitative approach and an exploratory design aimed at examining the experiences of social workers regarding the topic. A pilot test was conducted to assess if the methodology, sampling, and content of the interview schedule were suitable for this research. A purposive sampling method was employed, and individuals with particular traits and expertise on the topic were recruited. The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule to collect data. The data was processed, analysed, and supplemented with verbatim responses. In alignment with the tenets of social work and research, ethical standards were followed.

The subsequent chapter reveals the results from the empirical investigation.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the results from the empirical investigation with regard to the views of social workers on the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children will be outlined. To achieve the third objective of the study, this chapter will start with the presentation of the demographic profiles of the participants, followed by a focus on the presentation of the research findings. which are based on the themes, subthemes and categories that emerged from the data analysis process. The themes and confirmation of the narratives through quotations from the interview transcripts were subjected to literature control from various sources.

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

The researcher used a purposive method to select a sample, as each sampled participant had certain qualities that the researcher was interested in (Casteel & Bridier, 2021:350). Eighteen registered social workers were sampled from nine service points in the Department of Social Development, Tshwane Region. The social workers participated in individual in-depth interviews. The charts below identify the particulars of the participants in terms of age, gender, years of work experience in foster care supervision service delivery, number of foster children the sampled participants have in their caseload, methods of social work intervention utilised by participants in foster care supervision, and the frequency of the utilisation of group work as a method of intervention in foster care. The anonymity of the participants is maintained throughout the presentation of the findings, as their names are not indicated in the report, so that their responses cannot be traced to them. The biographical and background information of the participants is presented in the table.

Table 4.1: Summary of biographical and background information of participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Race	Years of experience in foster care supervision	Number of foster children	Frequency of utilisation of group work
1	F	52	A	3	70	Seldom
2	F	43	A	10	54	Seldom
3	F	42	A	5	32	Not applied
4	F	40	A	4	70	Seldom
5	M	39	A	4	86	Regularly
6	F	37	A	9	36	Not applied
7	F	36	I	8	61	Seldom
8	F	36	A	8	31	Seldom
9	F	35	A	11	36	Regularly
10	F	34	A	9	58	Regularly
11	F	34	A	13	54	Not applied
12	F	33	A	5	63	Seldom
13	F	33	A	11	35	Regularly
14	F	33	A	5	54	Seldom
15	F	31	A	5	54	Seldom
16	F	30	A	5	100	Not applied
17	F	29	A	5	30	Seldom
18	F	27	A	5	56	Regularly

4.2.1 Gender of participants

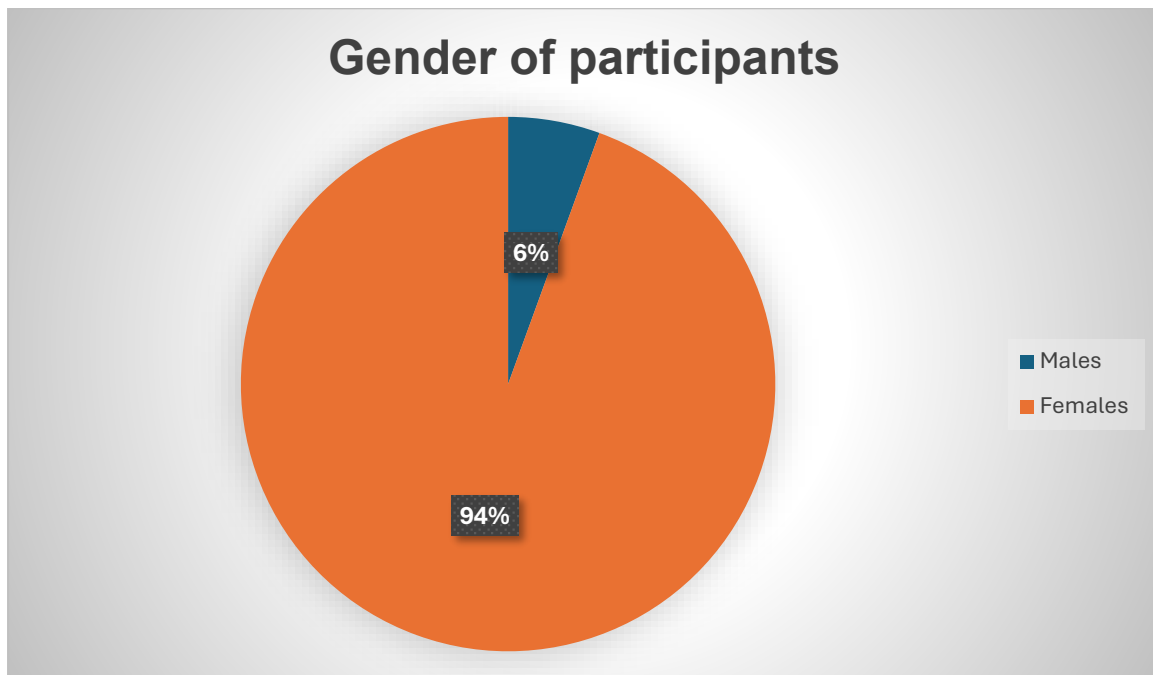


Figure 4.1: Gender of participants

The semi-structured interviews involved 18 participants (social workers) from nine service points in the Department of Social Development within the Tshwane Region in Gauteng. As indicated in Figure 4.1, 17 participants were female, comprising 94% of the participants, while one (6%) was a male participant. During the interviews, participants were requested to clearly state their gender identity, taking into account the gender diversity and sexual orientation in the South African workplace; however, only male and female emerged as gender reflections of the participants.

4.2.2 Ages of the participants

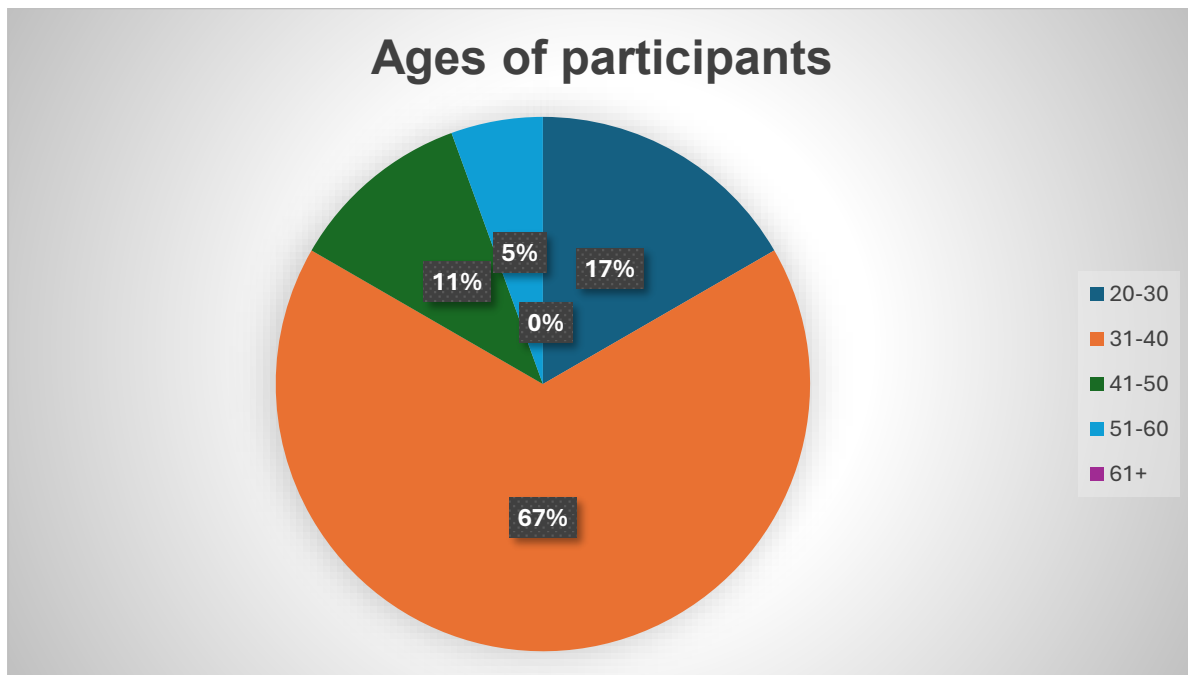


Figure 4.2: Ages of participants

From the analysis of the ages of participants, it is evident that the largest portion of participants (12 = 67%) were between the ages of 31 and 40 years. This is followed by three participants (17%) who were between the ages of 20 and 30 years, and two participants (11%) who were between the ages of 41 and 50 years. The minority of participants (5%) were between 51 and 60 years. Most participants can therefore be classified as adults, followed by young adults. These figures point out that foster care service is primarily rendered by social workers either in adulthood or young adulthood.

4.2.3 Races of participants

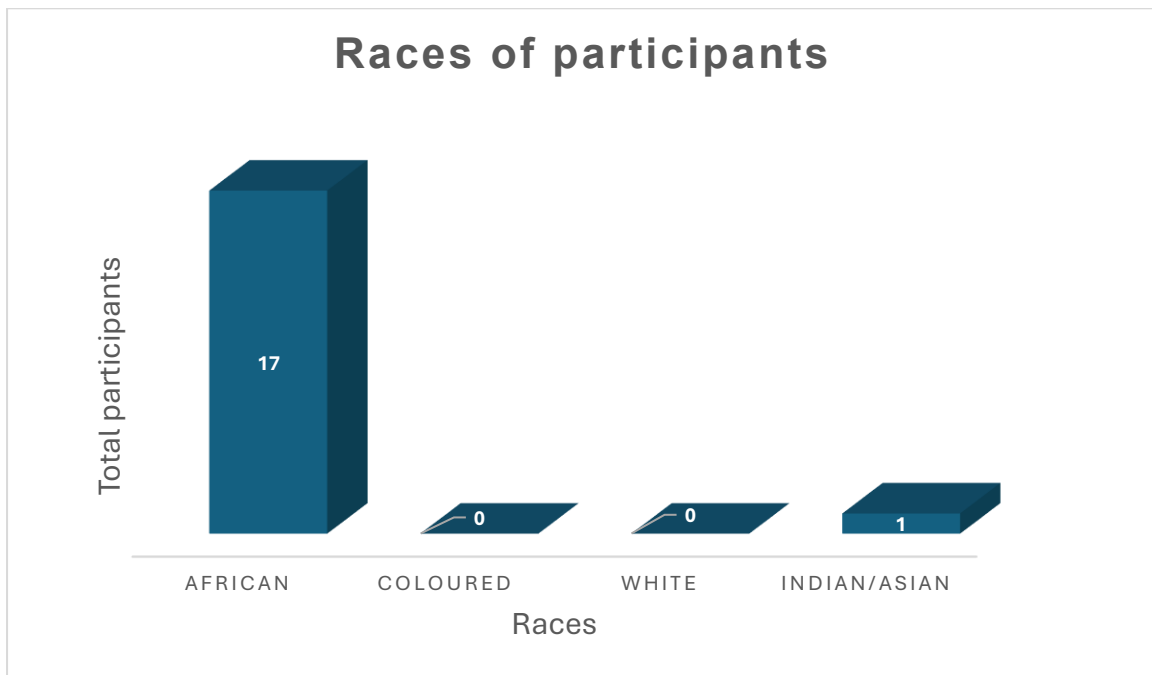


Figure 4.3: Races of participants

In the interview schedule, no specific question was included regarding the race of participants because the researcher could not find literature to justify its inclusion as a factor in this study. However, the researcher observed that the majority of participants (17 = 94%) were Africans, while one participant (6%) was an Indian. The inclusion of race composition as a demographic factor was not necessarily intended to improve understanding of the phenomenon under study. However, Sharghi, Khalatbari, Laird, Lapidus, Enders, Meizen-Derr, Tapia and Ciolino (2024:2) highlight that transparency in data use, analysis, and reporting is key to building trust and collaboration with the audience, even though the inclusion of this factor is not intended to dictate a particular interpretation. In instances where the researcher is tracing race for a specific purpose, a scientific, social or political justification must be provided to avoid reinforcing stereotypes or contributing to prejudice (Sharghi, Khalatbari, Laird, Lapidus, Enders, Meizen-Derr, Tapia & Ciolino, 2024:1).

4.2.4 Years of work experience in foster care supervision service delivery

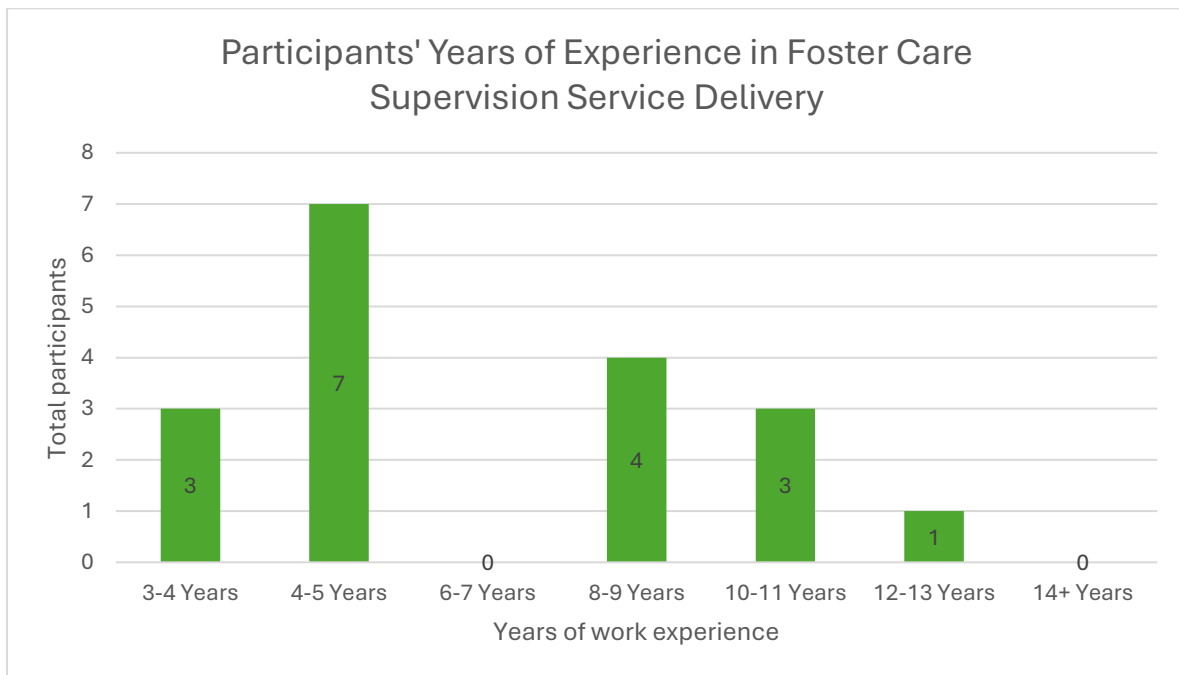


Figure 4.4: Years of work experience in foster care supervision service delivery

Participants were asked to indicate their years of work experience in the delivery of foster care supervision services. Figure 4.4 shows that seven participants (39%) indicated that they had between four and five years of working experience in foster care supervision service delivery, and four participants (22%) had between eight and nine years. Three participants (17%) were in the category of three to four years, and another three participants (17%) fell into the category of ten to 11 years. Lastly, only one participant (5%) indicated having 12 to 13 years of work experience. A balance of work experience is evident among the participants, since the study included individuals with both less and extensive experience in foster care supervision service delivery.

4.2.5 Number of foster children participants had in their caseload

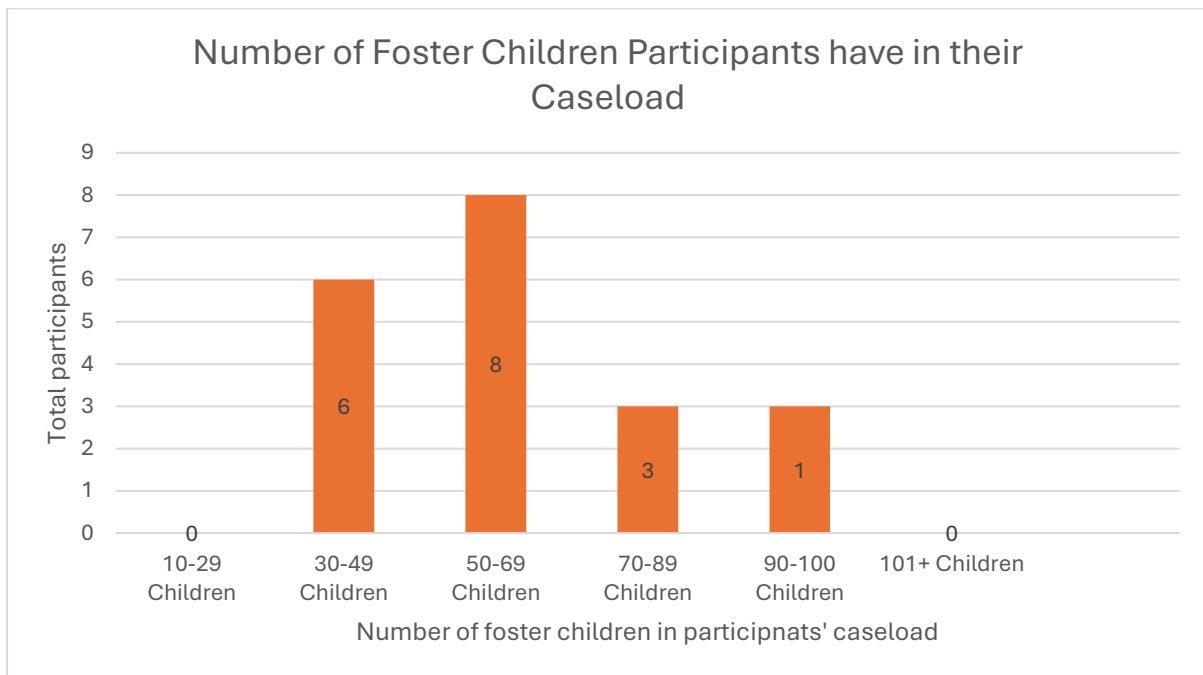


Figure 4.5: Number of foster children participants had in their caseload

The participants were asked to give an indication of the number of foster children they had in their caseload on the date of the interview. It emerged, as reflected in Figure 4.5, that the ratio of caseload of foster children amongst social workers differed significantly. Figure 4.5 shows that eight participants (44%) had 50 to 69 foster children in their caseload, while, in contrast, six participants (33%) shared that they had 30 to 49 children. This is followed by three participants (17%) who shared that they had 70 to 89 children, while only one (6%) indicated having 90 to 100 children.

4.2.6 Methods of social work intervention utilised by participants in foster care supervision

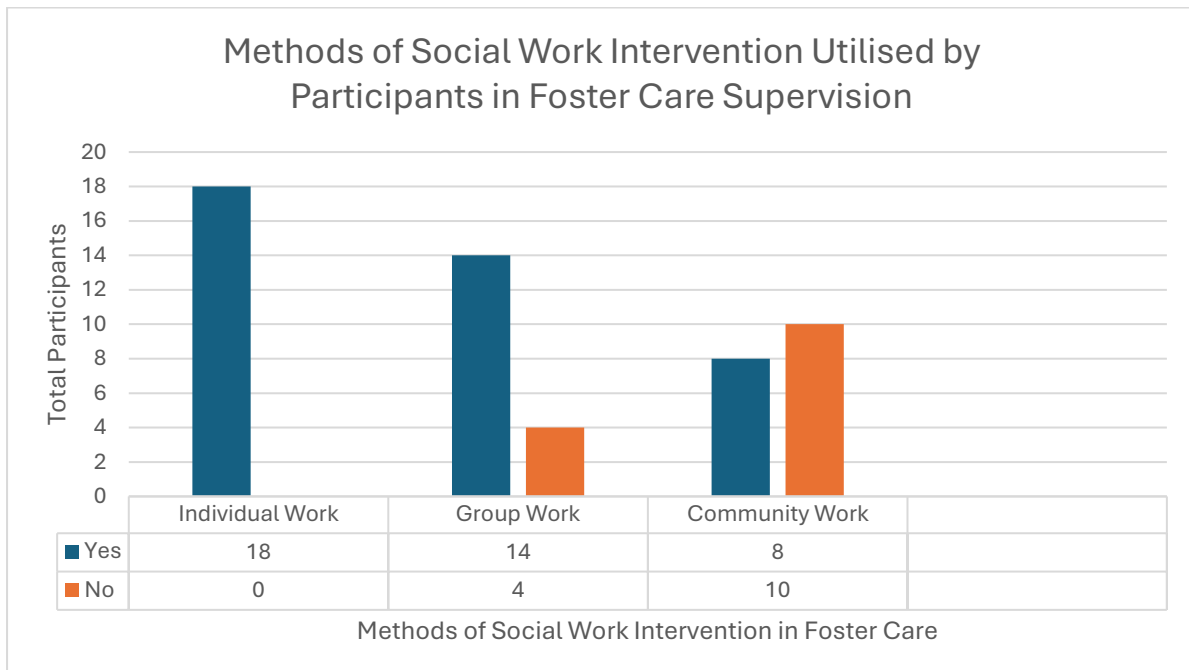


Figure 4.6: Methods of social work intervention utilised by participants in foster care supervision

In the interview schedule, three methods of social work intervention were listed, namely, social casework (also known as individual work), group work, and community work. Participants were asked to indicate which of these methods they were utilising in their offices as part of foster care services to foster children. The following deductions can be made from Figure 4.6 with regard to social casework or individual work. Eighteen participants (100%) indicated that they utilised the individual work method in foster care supervision services. Concerning group work, fourteen participants (78%) shared that they utilised group work, while only four (22%) indicated that they did not utilise group work as a method of intervention in foster care supervision services. Lastly, eight participants (44%) indicated that they utilised community work in foster care supervision services, while ten (56%) revealed that they did not utilise community work as a method of intervention in foster care supervision services.

According to Figure 4.6, it is evident that individual work takes the lead as a method of intervention in foster care supervision services, followed by group work. Community work emerged as the least used intervention methodology in foster care supervision services.

4.2.7 Frequency of the utilisation of group work as a method of intervention in foster care services

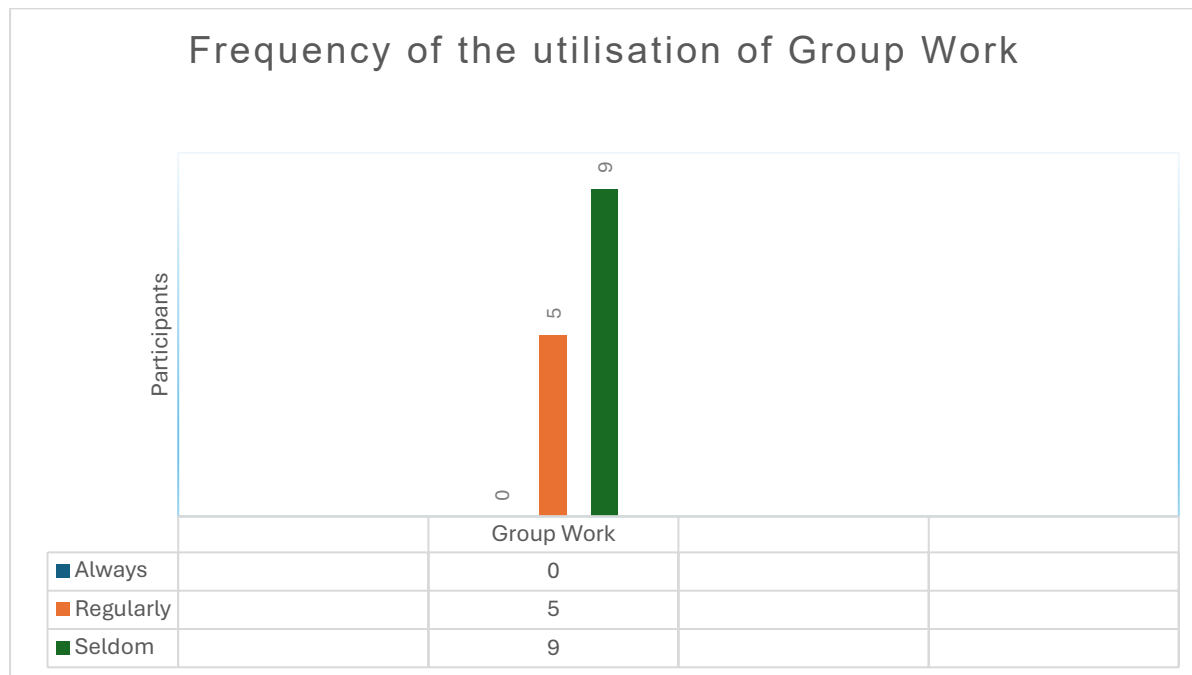


Figure 4.7: Frequency of the utilisation of group work as a method of intervention in foster care services

The purpose of this study was to explore the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children. With reference to Figure 4.6, 14 participants (78%) out of 18 revealed that they utilised group work as a methodology of intervention in foster care services. Therefore, it is important to establish the frequency of the utilisation of group work by those who utilised group work. Participants were requested to indicate how frequently they used group work as a method of intervention in foster care services and why. Participants were afforded an opportunity to rate their frequencies through the three adverbs, namely, Always, Regularly and Seldom. From Figure 4.7, it is clear that group work is not always utilised because none (0%) of the 18 participants indicated that they always utilised group work. Five participants (36%) shared that they utilised group work regularly, which is in line with their contract of performance, indicating that they must implement two

groups per year. Nine participants (64%) shared that they seldom utilised group work, meaning that they utilised group work very rarely or almost never. Participants' multiple responses on why they utilised group work in the manner they do are explained in the themes, subthemes, and categories that emerged during the data analysis process.

4.3 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

A total of six themes, related subthemes and categories were identified from the data analysis process after the interviews were conducted with the participants. In Table 4.2, a summary of all identified themes, with their related subthemes and respective categories, is presented.

Table 4.2: Themes, subthemes and categories that emerged from the semi-structured interviews with participants

Theme	Subtheme	Categories
1. Participants' definition and understanding of social competence	1.1. Definition of social competence	
	1.2. Understanding of social competence	1.2.1. Cognitive aspects of social competence 1.2.2. Behavioural aspects of social competence
	1.3. Benefits of social competence to foster children	1.3.1. Effective communication 1.3.2. Problem-solving 1.3.3. Personal achievements 1.3.4. Decision-making 1.3.5. Self-confidence 1.3.6. Good relationships 1.3.7. Manage peer pressure 1.3.8. Resilience
2. Participants' views on suitable	2.1. Work with individuals 2.2. Work with groups	

methods to develop social competence in foster children	2.3. Work with communities	
3. Group work as a method to advance and enhance social competence in foster children	3.1. Advancing social competence in foster children 3.2. Enhancing social competence in foster children	
4. Participants' experiences in group work	4.1. Challenges experienced by foster parents 4.2. Number of groups conducted 4.3. Aspects addressed through group work with foster children 4.4. Evaluation of group work effectiveness	
5. Work-related factors impeding the application of group work	5.1. Work allocation and high caseload 5.2. Administrative duties 5.3. Office infrastructure 5.4. Lack of budget for group activities 5.5. Shortage of cars	
	5.6. Impediments to conducting groups	5.6.1. Managers' lack of interest in group work

		<p>5.6.2. Time constraints</p> <p>5.6.3. Availability of foster children for group sessions</p> <p>5.6.4. Suitable time for children to attend group sessions</p> <p>5.6.5. No consequences for not conducting two groups per year</p> <p>5.6.6. Transport costs to travel to social workers' offices</p> <p>5.6.7. Lack of capacity building for social workers</p>
<p>6. Suggestions and recommendations for the employer</p>	<p>6.1. Encourage managers to adopt a positive attitude towards group work</p> <p>6.2. Improve human resources</p> <p>6.3. Provide adequate and conducive space for group work</p> <p>6.4. Budget for group work activities and refreshments</p> <p>6.5. Transport for social workers and children</p> <p>6.6. Review of performance contract</p>	

	<p>6.7. Monitoring and reporting on group work activities</p> <p>6.8. Participants' need for further training</p>	
--	---	--

4.3.1 Theme 1: Participants' definition and understanding of social competence

The aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children. The theme discussed in this section provides the participants' definition and understanding of social competence. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is a fundamental framework for analysing the complex influences on human development, as it considers the external systems and their effects on a child's socialisation, as well as how the interplay of these systems forms the social frameworks of a child's existence (Crawford, 2020:3). To assess the participants' definitions and comprehension of social competence, the researcher needed to examine through the ecological systems theory how their definitions reflect a foster child's reciprocal connection with their surroundings. Rather than considering social competence as a static internal characteristic, the ecological system theory posits that social competence is a transactional process shaped by interconnected layers of the environment (Singh & Azman, 2022:26). For example, with reference to microsystem, do participants view social competence as an individual internal ability, or do they take into account the child's direct interactions with family, school, and peers, along with the advantages that social competence provides to the system (foster child) and the surrounding interconnected systems. The participants' perspectives revealed that they see social competence as the capacity to create a positive and healthy alignment with one's own surroundings by utilising personal, interpersonal, and institutional resources to fulfil their needs. Three subthemes were identified from this theme, which are the definition of social competence, understanding of social competence and the benefits of social competence to foster children.

4.3.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Definition of social competence

Participants were asked to share their understanding of what social competence entails. It was important for the researcher to get clarity early in the interview so that he could make a determination on whether or not the participants knew and understood what social competence is in the context of foster care. The participants first gave a definition of social competence, focusing mostly on social interactions between the individual and their social surroundings. For example, three participants said,

“...is about the children’s ability to communicate effectively...” -(P1)

“...I think it is when the child is able to mingle or interact with other children... it is when the child is able to understand that regardless of my situation, I can succeed in life just like any other child who has biological parents...” -(P4)

“...Social competence are skills that one should possess, such as good behaviour, the skill to cope with challenges, the skill to manoeuvre in life regardless of the challenges that one might face...” -(P13)

With reference to the above narratives, there was also a strong focus on the fact that social competency skills are critical social skills that one needs to achieve effective social interaction and successful relationships with peers and society. Dicataldo, Moscardino, Roch, and Mammarella (2023:1) agree with the participants that social competence is about the efficacy with which people can use social interactions to achieve their personal goals through their capacity to initiate and sustain positive social relationships. These are practical skills that one must learn directly through their interactions with others and the forming of relationships with others (Suswandari, Siswandari, Sunardi & Gunarhadi, 2020:153).

4.3.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: Understanding of social competence

During the interview, the researcher probed the definitions provided by the participants on what social competence entails and from their responses, three categories emerged, which are, cognitive aspects of social competence and behavioural aspects of social competence as discussed below. Siboni *et al.* (2023:141) agree that the development in every individual’s life is accompanied by, amongst other skills, cognitive and behavioural skills.

(i) Category 1.2.1: Cognitive aspects of social competence

Participants indicated that social competence encompasses the cognitive processes necessary to comprehend and manoeuvre through the social environment. The subsequent narratives recount their comprehension of the cognitive dimension of social competence:

“...is the ability of a person to deal with different situations that he or she come across successfully...” (P17)

“...people know them (foster children) for being that different person or stigmatise because of being a foster child or relying on the state. You know children can be mean towards one another sometimes, So, if they can know how to deal with such pressure and circumstances, that is when we say they are socially competent...” (P3)

Participants further expanded the concept of social competence by highlighting the following as the cognitive aspect of social competence:

“...is about being able to adapt to a new environment, to deal with challenges that you may experience, that is social competence...” (P5)

“...is the skill to cope with challenges, the skill to manoeuvre in life regardless of the challenges that one might face...” (P12)

“...that the child is able to make his or her own informed decisions about his life or her life...” (P16)

From the above narratives, it is evident that the participants understand the role of social competence in the cognitive development of a child. While emotional competence includes all aspects of emotional understanding, expression and regulation, cognitive competence encompasses a high degree of mental ability to deal with circumstances, such as problem-solving and decision-making (Kaizar & Alordiah, 2023:138). Kaizar and Alordiah (2023:138) further attest that a vital period in a person's life is when they are developing not only socially and emotionally, but also cognitively.

(ii) Category 1.2.2: Behavioural aspects of social competence

The second category that emerged from the participants' responses with regard to their understanding of social competence is the behavioural aspect of social competence. The following narratives support the findings:

"...is the ability to effectively interact with other people and maintain a close relationship with other people..." (P8)

"...it is one's ability to follow certain norms, rules and the ability to be part of the community, meaning being able to do what they do..." (P14)

In addition, another participant indicated that:

"...It is more about helping one to develop relationships with other people, being able to support other people..." (P9)

The narratives mentioned above draw attention to the correlation between social competence and sustainable relationships. Kaizar and Alordiah (2023:138) indicate that the behavioural aspect of social competence encompasses social abilities, which include relationships. Yaun (2023:2) reveals that the ability to form and sustain relationships is important for a child's overall well-being. It involves the ability to establish, sustain and develop connections with other people (Singh *et al.*, 2022:2332).

It could thus be argued that the responses by the participants reveal that both the cognitive and behavioural aspects of social competence have significant benefits to children. The next subtheme will therefore explore the benefits of social competence to foster children, as per the views of the participants.

4.3.1.3 Subtheme 1.3: Benefits of social competence to foster children

The participants' responses indicated that social competence consists of a wide range of social skills which are beneficial to those who demonstrate them. They also revealed that social competence does not represent a fixed quality, but a manifestation of competencies that mark development. The following are the categories that emerged from the analysis of the participants' responses as the benefits of social competence.

(i) Category 1.3.1: Effective communication

The participants identified effective communication as one of the benefits of social competence of foster children. This category came out strongly from the responses provided by the participants, and the narratives related to this category are as follows:

“...the child would also have good communication skills, how to communicate with other people...” (P8)

“...social competence eliminate self-doubt; they would also be able to be more assertive and independent, and also...with better communication skills...” (P3)

“...I would say if they have mastered communication skills, they will be able to communicate well...” (P12)

These narratives present a view that social competence has significant benefits by enabling one to communicate effectively with the surrounding individuals and the environment. Ciftci, Ceylan and Colak (2021:436) agree with these narratives by contextualising social competence as associated with, amongst other benefits, children’s well-being, decision-making and effective communication. Dogan and Camurcu (2025:103) define communication as the process of transferring information, feelings, thoughts and meanings between individuals or groups through different means. Good communication can enable a child to have less difficulty socialising in their environment (Zubaedah, Sianturi, Nabila & Resviani, 2024:2761). Dogan and Camurcu (2025:103) further highlight that effective communication helps a child to recognise themselves and others, to establish satisfying relationships and to adapt to the environment.

(ii) Category 1.3.2: Problem-solving

A few participants also pointed out problem-solving as one of the benefits of social competence. They indicated that children who are socially competent possess the skills to resolve problems in their lives. The following is what some of the participants shared:

“...so, when you are socially competent, you are able to resolve them [problems] positively...” (P8)

“...to be able to communicate more freely when they have problems and to be able to resolve them...” (P1)

Another participant said that:

“...if that child experiences problems, he or she would be able to deal with them or seek help because he or she would have been capacitated...” (P14)

These narratives are confirmed by several studies. Adheisat (2022:1237) indicates that social skills are fundamental elements in the social development of a child as they enable the child not only to communicate and learn, but also to solve problems. According to Kayili and Erdal (2021:43), problem-solving skills are about directing cognitive and emotional processes to a target to display behavioural reactions to adapt to external or internal demands in real life. Problem-solving is one of the most important skills that can preserve and enhance children’s mental health in the face of current and future problems (Marandi, Kakabaraee & Hosseini, 2020:131).

Social competency skills help the child to initiate relations with others as they provide him or her with self-confidence, which is important for shouldering responsibility and facing problems (Adheisat, 2022:1239). Children who are equipped with problem-solving skills are able to establish healthy relationships with their friends, they understand the emotions of the people around them and are able to look at events from the perspective of other people (Ozbey & Gozeler, 2020:78).

(iii) Category 1.3.3: Personal achievements

The participants further revealed personal achievements as one of the benefits for a socially competent individual. The participants’ narratives highlighted a link between social competence and both academic and workplace success. The first two narratives below confirm academic success as one of the benefits of social competence:

“...be able to navigate life challenges, do well in school and progress in life in general...” (P14)

“...we will see it in his or her progress in school, that child will be performing well...” (P12)

These narratives are confirmed by Preety and Rani (2023:130), who indicate that a child who possesses good social skills is more likely to not only behave well but also to perform well in school. Rajput and Renu (2024:4056) elaborate that social skills play an important role in academic achievement. Children with strong social skills are more

likely to engage actively in classroom discussions, ask questions and request help when needed. As a result, this engagement can lead to better understanding and higher academic achievement. Enhanced social competence enables children to adjust more effectively to classroom settings, which has a significant influence on their academic success. (Risnawati, Rahmanadia, Rahmawati & Gusti, 2023:282).

Mohsin and Ghalavandi (2025:36) further agree that although academic achievement is affected by many factors, the role of social skills in academic performance cannot be ignored because having social skills is one of the basic necessities for children to do well in an academic environment. Social skills help children to cope with any difficulties in school and encourage them to achieve optimally (Salimi *et al.*, 2021:213). While social skills have a significant contribution to the academic success of a child, the lack of such skills produces negative consequences in the student's daily school assignments, exams and absenteeism (Sial, Naz & Rasheed, 2021:233).

The second aspect referred to by participants as a benefit of social competence is success in the workplace. They shared that social competence has benefits not only during childhood, but also later in the life of an individual. The narratives below confirm this finding:

“...the benefits of being socially competent would be for that child to survive in a difficult world; the chances of being successful in the workplace are high...”

(P3)

“...the children would grow up to be responsible adults; they will succeed in social life and in a workspace...(P8)

The following narrative sums up the benefits of social competence:

“...the child would strive in a society; the child would be able to contribute positively to the society...” (P14)

These findings are confirmed by Rajput and Renu (2024:4056), who indicate that social skills are an essential component of successful interpersonal relationships and can have a significant impact on various aspects of life, including career success. Social skills are essential as they enable one to navigate office politics, build a strong professional network and negotiate effectively. Social skills are important to human beings throughout their lives because by refining these skills, they can succeed not

only in their school-going age but also as adults, which includes employability, productivity and career success (Preety & Rani, 2023:130).

(iv) Category 1.3.4: Decision-making

Decision-making emerged as another key benefit of social competence. Participants shared that when foster children are socially competent, they are able to make not only informed decisions but also show the ability to make decisions quickly and effectively.

“...they get to be able to make sound decisions, which basically means being able to know what is right and what is wrong as foster children...” (P11)

“...They get to be able to make informed decisions, to challenge certain things that are done around and within their lives...and not feel like a charity case...” (P3)

In reviewing literature, it emerged that decision-making, as one of the social competency skills, has significant benefits for children. Pekdogan and Akgul (2021:27) highlight that knowledge alone is not enough for children to be successful in the world, they must acquire skills such as problem-solving and decision-making. These skills constitute a crucial part of social and emotional development in the context of social adaptation (Pekdogan & Akgul, 2021:27). Yurtseven, Baysal, and Ocak (2021:2119) agree that decision-making is a critical cognitive process that is required in every area of human life. It involves critical thinking whereby children question their own assumptions as well as those of others to decide to solve a problem (Yurtseven *et al.*, 2021:2119). Pekdogan and Akgul (2021:27) conclude that children who develop socially have good decision-making skills compared to those who are stagnant in their development.

(v) Category 1.3.5: Self-confidence

The fifth category under the benefits of social competence, as revealed by participants, is self-confidence. The participants shared that social competence holds benefits for the confidence of a child, as reported in the narratives below:

“...if they are socially competent, they will be able to communicate how they feel and to seek help when is needed...” (P12)

“...the child will be having high self-confidence ...” (P9)

In facing the reality of the general world, one of the participants added the following as part of the benefits of social competence towards the self-confidence of foster children:

“...being socially competent comes in handy because they (foster children) will be able to tackle any challenges that comes to their lives...” (P11)

According to Foudad (2020:1), self-confidence refers to trusting one’s own ability in carrying out a particular task, especially the belief in achieving set goals. Good social skills are often associated with higher levels of self-confidence (Rajput & Renu, 2024:4056), and it is one aspect of personality that is very crucial in human life (Sarkowi, Widat, Wadifah & Rohmatika, 2023:3098). Children who are confident are more likely to take on challenges, set higher goals and handle obstacles progressively (Rajput & Renu, 2024:4056). Nurindahsari and Rocmah (2024:331) further elaborate that self-confidence is very important to develop early in childhood, as it is very useful in the child’s subsequent life. For example, children with high self-confidence will find it easier to socialise and adapt to new environments.

(vi) Category 1.3.6: Good relationships

The participants narrated that the benefits of social competence for foster children encompass having a good relationship with other people. The following participant highlighted that, in their view, one of the key benefits of social competence is the ability to form positive relationships:

“...the child would be able to have a good relationship with other people in the society...” (P8)

“...that child would be able to make a relationship, will be able to relate with other people well...” (P3)

“...they would be able to contribute positively to their relationships because they would have learned how to interact with other people...” (P9)

Salik and Mushtaq (2023:81) draw attention to the analysis that the interacting abilities of an individual, which give birth to and help maintain positive social relationships, are considered as one’s social skills. Fostering harmonious social relationships with other individuals is a skill that must be developed from the early years of an individual’s life (Suswandari *et al.*, 2020:153). Childhood is an important period for children to acquire

basic skills that enable them to become socially competent individuals. Ciftci *et al.* (2021:436) also agree that the benefits of acquiring social skills in early childhood include the ability to develop and support relationships with others.

(vii) Category 1.3.7: Manage peer pressure

This category unpacks the ability to handle pressure as one of the benefits of social competence. The participants shared that they are of the view that when children are socially competent, they are able to manage peer pressure, and the following narratives confirm this finding:

“...they would not be persuaded to participate in all sorts of social problems, problem behaviour... and being able to stand up to the peer pressure...” (P1)

“...so, if they are socially competent, they will be able to stand up to peer pressure...” (P13)

Another participant elaborated that:

“...social competence will enable the foster child to deal with peer pressure because we know that children are vulnerable to peer pressure, so they get to be able to know what to take from friends and what not to take ...” (P11)

Peer pressure occurs when a child’s experience demonstrates a conviction to adopt similar goals, values and beliefs to engage in peer-group-like activities (Gobingca & Mqolombeni, 2024:529). It encompasses a range of social processes through which individuals are influenced by their peers to conform to certain norms, attitudes, or behaviours (Sharma & Charulatha, 2024:1). Vyas and Gupta (2020:159) and Bhujbal and Verma (2024:4) agree that peer pressure can result in either positive or negative effects, depending on the nature and context of the pressure exerted.

According to Sharma and Charulatha (2024:1), the positive outcomes may include, amongst other aspects, increased connectedness, enhanced self-esteem and adaptive behaviour change. It can motivate children to adopt constructive behaviour and strive for personal improvement (Bhujbal & Verma, 2024:5). On the other hand, negative consequences can range from engaging in risky behaviour such as substance abuse and reckless driving, to psychological distress and identity confusion. Vyas and Gupta (2020:160) agree that the negative effect of peer pressure can include social ills such drinking alcohol while one is underage, bullying or teasing others and

having sexual relations before one is ready which can lead to pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

In the context of the narratives provided by the participant in this study, managing peer pressure as one of the benefits of social competence refers to the ability to withstand negative peer pressure. Being part of a peer group requires one to navigate social interactions, understanding the perspective of others and resolving conflicts (Bhujbal & Verma, 2024:5). The views of Rajput and Renu (2024:4056) and Singh and Chandel (2022:1796) support the narratives of the participants by asserting that children with strong social skills are more likely to be able to resist negative pressure and influence and to be surrounded by peers who value education and academic success, which in return can positively influence their own attitudes towards learning.

(viii) Category 1.3.8: Resilience

The participants also indicated resilience as a benefit of social competence, noting that foster children who are socially competent are able to deal with life challenges effectively. The following narratives confirm this finding:

“...they are able to develop some resilience which assists them to deal with different circumstances...” (P9)

“...they can be whatever they want to be regardless of whether they have a parent or not...” (P6)

It was further elaborated by participant three (3) that:

“...people know them for being that different person or stigmatise because of being a foster child or relying on the state. You know, children can be mean towards one another sometimes, So if they can know how to deal with such pressure and circumstances, that is when we say they are socially competent...” (P3)

The world is changing rapidly, and people face many difficulties with children being the most affected group (Alzahrani, 2021:19). Therefore, building resiliency capacity allows children to respond and adapt to challenges as well as short- and long-term risks (Neumann, 2023:34). Kapoor and Sethi (2024:1390) describe resilience as the capacity to adjust, recover and move on after hardship, tragedy or extreme stress. It is the ability to overcome traumas by balancing between the negative emotions of the

traumas and calming down (Alzahrani, 2021:20). Resilient people have more positive interactions with other people, their capacity to handle pressure and keep an optimistic view can improve empathy, support and communication during interpersonal interactions (Kapoor & Sethi, 2024:1392). The observations of the participants are consistent with Neumann's (2023:34) arguments that resilient children trust their own judgment, demonstrate confidence, perseverance, moral reasoning and courage, and proactively engage in new or challenging activities.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Participants' views on suitable methods to develop social competence in foster children

In this section, the focus is on the participants' experiences in relation to developing the social competence of foster children. The participants were asked to indicate which method, or methods, can be used to develop the social competence of foster children, and this theme emerged. Role theory offers a complex perspective for analysing social workers' experiences by evaluating how organisational frameworks, professional expectations, and interactional dynamics influence their job performance. Pawliczek, Navratilova, Kolos, Kolumber and Chlopecky (2022:11) suggest that role theory interprets many daily activities as the embodiment of specified categories, like being a teacher, social worker or manager, where each role encompasses a collection of rights, responsibilities, expectations, norms, and behaviours that one must navigate and fulfil. Taylor, Cairns and Glass (2020:2) expound that a portrayal of behaviours, traits, standards, and principles of an individual or position within the framework of role theory can offer an insightful structure to analyse role perceptions and the efficiency of those fulfilling the role. Thus, the theory assisted the researcher in identifying the roles participants most frequently assume in social work interventions and examining how these roles affect their performance, especially in group work during foster care supervision. Their responses were analysed, and the subthemes are discussed below.

4.3.2.1 Subtheme 2.1: Work with individuals

Figure 4.6 indicates that 18 out of a total of 18, which is 100% of the participants, use individual work as a method of intervention in foster care supervision services. They regard working with individuals as one of the methods that is suitable to develop social competence in foster children, and the following narratives confirm this finding:

“...I think individual work is the one that can be used to develop social competence, the reason being that the children that we are working with quite often have issues that they need to deal with, so if you miss that by sitting down with that particular child one-on-one to deal with those challenges...” (P3)

“...I would say in terms of levels, first it would be individual work because that is where you interact with the child one-on-one to learn about that child’s successes, struggles and potentials, and you can then take them to a group where they are afforded an opportunity to interact with other children and learn from each other...” (P16)

“...for me, firstly it will be individual work because that is where you focus on that child to understand what is happening in that child’s life...” (P10)

Most of the participants classified individual work as a point of entry in developing social competence, with a focus on the individual and their personal presenting needs. Individual work, also known as social case work, is a helping process which consists of a variety of activities, such as helping an individual to examine and narrate his own situation and create a better understanding of what could be the fundamental connection between his current attitude and mode of adjustment with the previous experiences (Gaas, 2022:1637). It involves subsequent interventions such as giving much-needed materials, referrals to relevant agencies, and rendering emotional and psychological support to assist an individual to regain some normalcy within the challenges experienced (Gaas, 2022:1637).

4.3.2.2 Subtheme 2.2: Work with groups

Fourteen out of 18 participants shared that they utilise group work in foster care supervision services; however, five participants indicated that they utilise group work regularly, nine shared that they seldom utilise group work, and none of the 18 always utilise group work as a method of intervention in foster care services. They, nonetheless, all acknowledged group work as one of the methods that is suitable to advance social competence. The following narratives state:

“...even though we do not do group work as much as we do individual work, but I think group work could be the method that would produce more change, positive change or would enhance social competence as compared to other methods...” (P2)

“...I think group work can really advance social competence in foster children because the majority of foster children are in foster care due to similar challenges, and it is easier for them to relate, unlike when you are dealing with them individually...” (P4)

“...I think group work does modify behaviour of a child because in a group, one child may share his or her views about being a foster child and what her or his dreams are, and that can change another child who had a negative perception about being a foster child...” (P10)

Participants shared that group work is suitable to develop social competence as it provides a platform for foster children to associate, observe and learn from one another. Gaas (2022:1637) indicates that group work intervention has been fundamental for many centuries as it has multiple purposes such as social action, social control, education and therapy. It helps individuals to adapt to their problems and environment through learning, changing behaviour and improving skills to cope with the demands of life (Antony, 2020:9).

4.3.2.3 Subtheme 2.3: Work with communities

Regarding working with communities, eight out of 18 participants indicated that they use community work in foster care intervention services. When it comes to advancing the social competence of foster children through community work service, they specifically shared that they do not provide community work interventions that are targeted to foster children to advance their social competence; however, foster children become part of the awareness programmes that they conduct for children in general and not with the intention of targeting foster children. This assertion is confirmed by the following narratives:

“...We do awareness programmes, but not specifically targeting foster children... (P1)

“...We use community work maybe twice in a month, but we do not target foster children specifically, we target schools, and you find that maybe in that group there are foster children...(P8)

“...I would say yes because our community work is awareness programmes, but they are not specifically directed to foster children, they are for the community in general and foster children are sometimes part of those programmes... (P17)

It appears from the narratives that the community work services implemented by participants are mainly awareness programmes, which involve sharing information. However, there is no information provided by the participants that indicates whether or not these awareness programmes have contributed to developing the social competence of foster children. Nonetheless, Arshad *et al.* (2020:950) acknowledge that professional social workers require knowledge of methods of social work, including community work, which direct and facilitate social workers in solving problems. It is a conscious process of social interaction and a method of social work concerned with, among other objectives, helping people to deal more effectively with their problems (Gaas, 2022:1637). It is therefore evident that this method focuses on a broader societal intervention, rather than addressing the needs of people on an individual level.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Group work as a method to advance and enhance social competence in foster children

Participants gave an indication that group work is relevant and suitable for developing social competence in foster children. Therefore, it is important to determine what role group work can play as a method of intervention in foster care services to advance and enhance social competence in foster children. In the context of this study, 'advance' refers to the development, or the process of acquiring specific social competence or skills necessary to perform tasks or functions effectively, while 'enhance' indicates the improvement in the quality and effectiveness of the current social competence or skills. The theoretical analysis that underpins this theme is the ecological systems theory. The ecological systems theory offers a conceptual model through which the processes influencing human development can be analysed and understood (Crawford, 2020:1). To analyse the participants' response in relation to group work as a method of advancing and enhancing social competence, the researcher used the ecological systems theory lens as it offers a perspective that group work is an evolving setting where foster children build social skills through engagement across different environmental levels. It changes from seeing group work as a standalone individual skill development task, to recognising it as a dynamic intervention within the foster child's intricate network of relationships and societal factors and ensuring that the intervention remains holistic and contextually

appropriate. The following subthemes were identified from the analysis of the participants' responses:

4.3.3.1 Subtheme 3.1: Advancing social competence in foster children

According to participants, group work is a suitable tool to advance social competence in foster children. Although participants had varied reports on the frequency of the utilisation of group work in foster care intervention services, they firmly applaud group work's capability to advance the social competence of foster children, and their narratives testify:

"...group work can develop children to be independent, it will strengthen their communication skills, and it will encourage independent accountability in them when they grow older so that they add value in society... (P1)

"...I think it is more applicable in advancing social competence of foster children because you know that a group can be therapeutic, which is something that can be done also in individual work... (P4)

"...it can provide that environment where children are able to develop their own coping mechanism, and we know that when children feel in charge of something, they are likely to own it and live by it..." (P11)

These narratives serve as testaments of the relevance of group work in facilitating the development of social competence. A study by Maphosa (2022:58) found that participation in group sessions facilitates, among other benefits, the development of healthy relationships, which in turn assists in improving behaviours to become more socially acceptable. Yaun (2023:1) attests that children with well-developed social skills tend to have better relationships with their peers. They experience lower levels of conflict and exhibit higher self-esteem and self-confidence. Antony (2020:6) explains that group facilitators draw on theories to conceptualise group processes and to gain insight into the underlying motives of individuals. Through free association and interactive sessions, members are encouraged to share their thoughts, which in turn helps uncover core issues and problems that require attention.

4.3.3.2 Subtheme 3.2: Enhancing social competence in foster children

The participants further shared through their narratives that group work not only develops social competence, but it can also enhance social competence. The participants gave the following accounts:

“...group work is relevant, and it can be used to enhance social competence of foster children. For example, we have foster children who are in foster care whose fathers are unknown, although the father is known; just because foster parents need a foster care grant, they tell lies... So, bringing them in a group can help them deal with the issue of absent fathers and other challenges...”
(P11)

“...group work is the most effective when it comes to empowering foster children and even adults, as human beings, we do well when our stories relate with those of others...” (P8)

“...group work presents another version of life, another version of how to be resilient and to believe that you can strive in life and there is always help when there are challenges...”(P18)

Regardless of whether participants were able to implement group work, they all agreed that group work can provide a supportive environment for the enhancement of social skills. While some children naturally develop social skills with ease, others may need more support and guidance to be able to navigate challenges (Yaun, 2023:1). According to Maphosa (2022:53), the group process empowers children with life skills, and these skills include self-esteem/self-confidence, decision-making skills, conflict-resolution skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills and anger management skills.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Participants’ experiences in group work

As presented in Figure 4.7, participants shared that they utilise group work as a method of intervention in foster care services; however, the frequency of their use varied. Although no specific question was asked of the participants regarding their experiences with group work, some participants shared their experiences with groups that they implemented. The researcher used the ecological systems theory to analyse the participants’ experiences in group work. To implement the ecological system theory effectively, researchers must adopt an ecological perspective that indicates that the

experiences of social workers cannot be understood in isolation, as they are shaped by multiple environments and structures in which they function (Nkosi, 2020:16). The researcher used Bronfenbrenner's nested ecological systems theory (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem) to evaluate participants' experiences of group work so that all elements affecting their experiences at these different levels were considered and enabled social workers and organisations to foster environments that support effective group work initiatives. This theoretical perspective was pertinent for examining participants' experiences with group work since it demonstrated that group work interventions can address the immediate social context, while also promoting changes at the policy or community level to enhance the overall environment and that there are factors that need attention to improve the utilisation of group work. Four subthemes emerged from their reflections and are discussed below.

4.3.4.1 Subtheme 4.1: Challenges experienced by children in foster care

During the interviews, participants shared that there were challenges that they dealt with regarding the children in their foster care caseload. These challenges included poor academic performance as well as strained relationships between the foster parents and foster children, due to the behaviour of the foster children. This finding is confirmed by the following narratives:

"...the common challenges...are mostly behavioural problems and not being able to do well at school, and where the foster children do not spend time with their books, and some of them are said to be spending most of their time outside playing with friends, some of them sleeping outside the foster home..." (P14)

"...it is mostly..., at school, they are not performing well..." (P1)

"...where children had some educational challenges, behavioural issues and were not attending school well..." (P18)

Participant 17 also narrates the following challenge:

"...the concerns raised by foster parents that the foster children make unrealistic demands from the foster parents..." (P17)

Children who have lost parental care are regarded as the most vulnerable group in society (Virbaliene & Cizikiene, 2024:811). The arguments of Dalgaard, Villumsen,

Sorensen, Midgley, Vaever, Almlund and Pontoppidan (2023:2) correspond with the narratives that children in foster care are vulnerable psychologically and that they show more social, behavioural and developmental problems than children who live with their own families of origin. They have poor mental health outcomes and socialisation difficulties, struggle with more depression, anxiety, and impulsivity compared to their non-foster peers (Trueba & Pluck, 2021:39). While a secure long-term placement is associated with better long-term outcomes for children placed in foster care, placement is not immune to breakdown, which can have devastating consequences not only for the child, but also for society (Dalgaard *et al.*, 2023:2). Therefore, to provide them with effective help, social workers must constantly improve their skills and find new, creative ways to resolve their challenges (Virbaliene & Cizikiene, 2024:811).

4.3.4.2 Subtheme 4.2: Number of groups and sessions conducted

Participants revealed during the interviews that their performance contracts stipulate that they are expected to implement two groups per year, and these groups can be used to address any need and not necessarily with foster children. As reflected in Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7, a significant number of participants shared that they do utilise group work in foster care intervention services; however, the frequency, life span and the format of these groups vary significantly, and some are in contrast with basic principles of group work processes. The narratives below confirm this observation:

“...I conducted two, the other one could not be completed because I could not finish the sessions because the schools closed as we were doing them at the school...” (P1)

“...I will say four times in a year because I often conduct group work when the schools are closed. So, it is March, June, September and December...run only one group for the whole year and only one session per quarter - run four sessions in a year...” (P10)

“...let me talk about the recent one that I had for boys, I had to terminate the group at session number four, out of seven sessions that were planned. It was a forced termination because of poor attendance due to distance, not having a conducive space for the session, and having nothing to give them, I mean, refreshments...” (P9)

Although the participants indicated that they apply group work as a method of intervention in foster care, it is evident from their narratives that there is inconsistency regarding the application of the basic principles and standards of group work practice, as the efficacy of group work is largely dependent on the practitioner's ability to integrate these principles and standards. Group work is a purpose-driven effort that involves organised, systematic tasks performed within the framework of professional dealings with individuals (Toseland & Rivas, 2022:27). In this method, social workers need to adhere to practical instructions for planning and executing group work, which involve defining the objective of the group work, outlining the process of group work, identifying and utilising necessary resources, establishing selection criteria for participant recruitment, recruiting the participants (preferably 8-12 individuals), executing the process plan to complete the group work sessions, and assessing the group to review the process and outcomes to ensure that the objectives are met as intended (Antony, 2020:1-4). Toseland and Rivas (2022:27) emphasise the significance of following the updated and approved standards for social work groups established by the International Association for Social Work with Groups (IASWG). These standards encompass the fundamental knowledge and principles that form the basis of social work with groups, the tasks required at each stage (planning, beginning, assessment, middle, ending, and evaluation) of group work, and the necessary knowledge to perform the tasks at each stage.

4.3.4.3 Subtheme 4.3: Aspects addressed through group work with foster children

The participants who implemented group work shared that there were various issues that were discussed and addressed during the group sessions.

"...we do not do group work with foster children more often, but the topics that we did were about self-care, communication skills, issues around child abuse, and discipline..." (P13)

"...basically, our focus was on life skills of our foster children, and we have agreed to continue focusing on that because it is very important for the foster children to be empowered with life skills..." (P5)

"... [the groups] were more about behavioural issues, where I started with the members by assisting them to understand who they are..." (P9)

“...we discussed in those groups were behavioural problems of the foster children, demanding foster care grants from their foster parent, poor academic performance and dating at an early age and some of them moving out of the foster home to stay with their boyfriends...” (P10)

It is evident, as narrated by the participants, that group work as a primary method of intervention addresses a wide range of aspects related to an individual’s well-being. Maphosa (2022:54) made an interesting observation in her study that a positive difference was noticed among the participants as they were empowered to communicate with ease, to make informed decisions and effectively resolve conflicts.

Group work is a much-needed, knowledge-informed and evidence-based practice as it has the power to change people’s lives by helping them develop skills and coping abilities, improve self-understanding and enhance their self-esteem (Coholic, 2024:301). It is the prime responsibility of the social worker to help people develop the skills to deal with their challenges by themselves (Azam & Mazid, 2022:13). Arshad *et al.* (2020:950) explain that social workers, through their methods, strive to address factors that create threatening situations for children and to provide consistent support tailored to each child’s circumstances.

4.3.4.4 Subtheme 4.4: Evaluation of group work effectiveness

To establish the effectiveness of the group work process, participants shared that they were able to evaluate the groups that they conducted by allowing the members and others who had an interest in the members’ participation to express their views on the impact of the group. They shared that they received positive feedback regarding the groups they conducted, as stated in the narratives below:

“...I found them effective because at the end of the group we issued evaluation forms, the forms were inquiring from the children as to what they learn... the feedback was very positive, and other children did indicate that they had learned a lot...” (P16)

“...those [children] who preferred verbal evaluation did indicate that they enjoyed the groups, and they found the group helpful and those who provided us with written feedback also indicated that they were happy that they participated in the group...” (P5)

“...those groups were very helpful because after we were done with the sessions, we were able to evaluate by going back to the foster parents to check how the children were doing... and the feedback was positive...” (P14)

“...I relied on the feedback from the parents where they would indicate whether or not the behaviour had improved, and I would also see through their school performance that their attitude towards schooling had changed...” (P10)

With reference to the narratives provided by the participants, it is clear that they used various methods to evaluate the effectiveness of their groups. The group work evaluation methods suggested by Antony (2020:4) correspond with those used by the participants, as he stipulates that feedback given by the group members and observations made by the facilitators can be used to evaluate the efficacy of groups. Biggs, Hind, Gossage-Worrall, Sprange, White, Wright, Chatters, Berry, Papaioannou, Bradburn, Walters and Cooper (2020:13) highlight that group interventions are complex interventions by nature, and participants can have different outcomes even if the group intervention was conducted by the same facilitator.

Antony (2020:9) suggests that various approaches can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the group intervention, including spending a few minutes at the end of each session to review the content of the session, and process and experience of the participants, and this can assist in consolidating the gains and recording them for future sessions. Biggs *et al.* (2020:13) agree that group process evaluations should be done alongside group intervention evaluations to provide information on when the intervention might be successful or when it might fail. These narratives demonstrate that participants were aware of the stages of group intervention.

4.3.5 Theme 5: Work-related factors impeding the application of group work

As reflected in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.7, 14 out of 18 participants indicated that they apply group work as a method of intervention in foster care services. However, five out of 18 indicated that they apply group work regularly, whereas nine out of 18 participants indicated that they seldom apply group work. Four out of eighteen 18 participants revealed that they do not apply group work as a method of intervention in foster care services. The participants' multiple views revealed factors impeding the application of group work as a method of intervention in foster care services, and specifically to enhance the social competence of foster children. To understand these

impeding factors, through the lens of ecological system theory, it was shown that the factors obstructing group work implementation may arise from various, interconnected system levels both within and surrounding the workplace, and these hindering elements are interrelated, interacting with each other to produce intricate negative or positive outcomes. According to Bronfenbrenner, various systems can interact positively or negatively in an individual's life (Crawford, 2020:2). With reference to one of the five tiers of ecological systems theory, the mesosystem which is about the relationships between two or more settings in which the social workers are participating, offered an in-depth perspective to explore the challenges, opportunities, and legislative framework affecting social workers' practice, especially in using group work for delivering foster care supervision services. The following subthemes and categories confirm the findings.

4.3.5.1 Subtheme 5.1: Work allocation and high caseload

Through the microsystem lens of the ecological system theory, the immediate environment where social workers operate emerged as having a significant impact on the application of group work (Singh & Azman, 2022:26). Some participants expressed the view that unequal allocation of work leaves them overwhelmed and this subsequently affects the application of group work. The following narratives from the participants support this view.

“...Okay, look that is also one part that gets some of us overwhelmed and not able to implement group work effectively....some have 40, some have 35 while some of us have 55 finalised cases which, as I have indicated, they give you more than 80 children, and how do I do my work effectively with that kind of caseload...” (P5)

“...the workload is not equally distributed here... there are people who are doing substance abuse programme only, but we do some of the substance abuse activities, but they do not do anything that is related to foster care, you see. The same with the HIV/Aids programme, those who are responsible for that programme are not doing anything in relation to foster care. Our managers, especially in this unit, need to look into this thing of equal distribution of work so that we can do what we are supposed to do in terms of the methods of intervention...” (P8)

The findings of this study correlate with the findings of previous studies, where it was revealed that unequal allocation of work not only affects the implementation of group work as a method of social work intervention, but also other social work interventions. A study by Mokgalapa and Rapholo (2021:283) revealed that unequal allocation of work contributes to ineffective service delivery, such as foster care services, which results in lapsed foster care court orders.

The second aspect that was shared by the participants in relation to work demands is a high caseload. The impact of a high caseload as one of the factors impeding the application of group work is aptly captured by the participants as follows:

“...I think it is because we have a lot of work that we are doing as we are doing everything, what they call generic social work...my caseload of foster children is high, so I do not get time to really plan for a group...” (P16)

“...the case files that we have are very high and that come with high numbers of reports and process notes that we need to write...I am not complaining about managing my cases, but the number of cases that I need to manage is very high, and I cannot even implement group work the way it should be done...” (P18)

“...with regard to my work, I feel like there is a lot of work that we need to do on a daily basis. We are doing everything, like we need to do awareness programmes, conduct home visits, mediation services, admin work, which is too much, where we have to update foster care databases and process notes, and we have CYCCs cases that we need to attend to...” (P1)

It is evident from the narratives of the participants that high caseloads are a concern in the management of not only group work, but also their work in general. This is confirmed by Velasquez and Merrill (2023:35), who highlight that the size of the caseload of social workers in conjunction with their monthly duties is by far the biggest barrier affecting their social work practice. It has a negative influence on services and subsequently on the public perception of social work (Nyathi, 2022:48). The social workers find themselves overburdened with juggling crisis interventions, awareness campaigns, counselling, court proceedings, reunification services and aftercare services (Thebe & Malan, 2025:2109). This has the potential to affect not only service delivery, but also their well-being because they face a lot of stress, fatigue and even

depression (Georgevici & Dragoi, 2023:152). Khanyi and Malesa (2022:31) further elaborate that excessive caseloads contribute to low working morale and burnout in social workers.

4.3.5.2 Subtheme 5.2: Administrative duties and human resources

Participants pointed out administrative duties as one of the factors impeding the application of group work in general and with foster children in particular. They indicated with great concern that most of their office's daily duties involve administrative tasks, and they are unable to implement their plans. The following narratives from participants confirm the statement:

“...because most of my work is on admin, for example, when we go out there to do awareness programmes, you need to capture all the beneficiaries on the register, which will become part of stats for that month, and that takes a lot of time to complete...” (P5)

“...I was working at an institution where group work was our daily task, so when I got here, that is when I was able to implement those two groups, but since then, I could not continue with that consistency because of the admin that we do, the focus that we have on individual work...” (P4)

“...the unplanned admin that we do, it does not allow us to implement our plans and to also plan and implement group work because you are always rushing to submit something that you did not plan for...” (P10)

Georgevici and Dragoi (2023:152) confirm that administrative expectations can add an additional burden and delay intervention processes, affecting the effectiveness of the intervention. Babic, Zganec and Berc (2021:359) highlight that administrative duties intensify workload pressures, given the complexity of the job, its high level of responsibility, and the excessive amount of work involved. A study by Viljoen (2020:113) also acknowledges that the emphasis is on the administrative aspect of social work, as supervision even focuses on ensuring that all administration is up to date.

Another hindrance to the application of group work as a method of intervention was revealed as a human resource shortage. The participants indicated that additional staff would alleviate the burden of dealing with a high workload. The following narratives support this statement:

“... maybe if they can hire more staff members, because I feel like there is a lot of work that we need to do on a daily basis...” (P1)

In agreement, the other participants echoed that:

“...we need more social workers so that we can be able to focus on the other methods of intervention in our profession, especially group work because at this stage, I feel like we have a lot to do, and the staff members are very few...” (P16)

“...I feel like if they can hire more staff so that we can be able to do our work well without pressure, maybe if they can say that each and every social worker must have one social auxiliary worker so that they can support us...” (P18)

It can be concluded that there is a shortage of human resources in the field of social services. Various authors mentioned that inadequate human resources affect the delivery services. Thebe and Malan (2025:2109) indicate that inefficiency in rendering social work services is a result of a shortage of social workers. The shortage of social workers is one of the biggest challenges because the few social workers end up having a high caseload, which in return effects service delivery to clients (Mosala & Wilson, 2024:6). Therefore, if there were more social workers and social auxiliary workers, service delivery could be rendered effectively and efficiently (Mokgalapa & Rapholo, 2021:281).

4.3.5.3 Subtheme 5.3: Office infrastructure

Lack of office infrastructure also emerged as one of the factors that affect the implementation of group work with foster children. During the interview, participants mentioned that their office environment is not conducive to group work. The following are some of the narratives from participants confirming office space as an impediment towards the application of group work:

“...here we do not have enough space to conduct group work, so I had to do them at our other office at Zone 5, but the boardroom there is also not enough for a larger group, but it is doable...” (P1)

“...we do not have enough space to conduct group work. We have a boardroom here, but it is very small, and those things are very important when you do group

work because group members must be comfortable in their space and not feel clustered in a more structured environment...” (P3)

“...with regard to space..., we do not have enough space to be able to conduct group work, and when we have to do group work, we have to use the waiting area and that waiting area is very small...” (P14)

Lack of office infrastructure has been a long-standing challenge affecting social workers and is well-documented in various studies. Several researchers have found that social workers are confronted with a series of challenges in the line of duty, which not only affect group work implementation, but all other methods of intervention in general, and their findings corroborate the findings of this study as narrated above. Phillip (2020:68) found in his study that social workers experience a lack of basic resources, such as inadequate office equipment, including locked cabinets and office space. Social workers' sharing of offices is almost normal for them due to the working conditions they are subjected to, they have to attend to their clients in the presence of their colleagues which compromises confidentiality (Ntshongwana & Tanga, 2022:45). Babic, Zganec and Berc (2021:359) further elaborate that inadequate office space not only affects confidentiality of clients, but also the quality of the service provision. Thebe and Malan (2025:2109) conclude that a study done by van Staden and Malan (2023) titled the “Feasibility of the signs-of-safety approach in the child protection” revealed that the poor working conditions experienced by social workers are classified as the second contributor when it comes to the ineffectiveness of social workers in service delivery.

4.3.5.4 Subtheme 5.4: Lack of budget for group activities (stationery and refreshments)

Lack of budget limits the efficiency and productivity of social workers when viewed through the ecological lens, as obstacles in the mesosystem and exosystem adversely impact the direct microsystem (social workers). Therefore, neglecting the mesosystem and exosystem levels undermines the vital efforts at the microlevel, resulting in reduced overall productivity (Crawford, 2020:2). The participants reported that there is no budget allocated for group work, in general and with foster families. As a result, they are unable to provide items for group work, such as stationery and refreshments, and this impedes the application of group work. The following statements summarise

the general concern expressed by participants when it comes to the budget for group work activities:

“...we do not have even stationery for ourselves as employees, and what about for a group, it is going to be a challenge because a group session should have activities...” (P11)

“...we also use the little stationery that they give us, even that stationery, it is not meant for group work, it is for us staff members, so we end up using it for our session because there is no stationery allocated for group work...” (P1)

“...with regard to resources, we do not have such things as resources. Remember, when you engage with children, you need to be prepared, to be able to display things, so we do not have stationery to be able to do that...” (P18)

Providing group work members with refreshments was also highlighted as one of the challenges they experience when implementing group work, as some of the participants indicated that they are forced to provide refreshments for group members from their own pockets, and it is costly for them. This statement is supported by the following narratives:

“...We end up using our own money to buy some snacks for members, stationery for them to be able to do some activities. We really need a budget for that, or maybe the employer can procure these things for group work...” (P18)

“...other thing is lack of funds or provision of refreshments for group members. You invite children to come for sessions and then what are you going to give them...” (P8)

“...another thing is refreshments for our group members. The last group I had with foster parents, I was co-facilitating it with my colleague..., and we had to contribute money from our own pockets, and it was expensive for us...” (P13)

In line with these findings, a study by Alamu (2022:119) indicates that social workers are familiar with what needs to be done to improve the welfare of the people they service, but they are unable to exercise this ability due to the non-availability of funds, and this infers inadequate facilities and office stationery which results in poor functionality of social workers and the organisation. Velasquez and Merrill (2023:34) concur that social workers are inundated with a high workload, but they lack funding

to support all the work that comes with it, and this largely leaves social workers feeling unsupported and undervalued in their quest for service delivery. The same sentiment is expressed by Skhosana (2020:116), who found in her study that, regardless of all the efforts and programmes aimed at addressing the challenges faced by vulnerable groups, the needs of the social workers are simply not being met as a result of the lack of sufficient resources, such as funding. It is evident from the narratives shared by the participants, supported by the findings of several studies, that there is a general concern about funding, not only in the implementation of group work, but in various service areas.

4.3.5.5 Subtheme 5.5: Shortage of cars

Access to non-human resources, such as cars, emerged as one of the challenges the participants experienced, which affects how they render services, including group work within the field of foster care. The participants stated that the shortage of cars not only affects the implementation of group work but also affects how social work is practised. Three participants (P6, P9 and P13) each had no less than nine years of experience in foster care supervision services, and they shared the following experiences regarding the shortage of cars:

“...the other thing, it is about transport, cars. We are working in a community where people cannot afford to catch a taxi to come to the office for group work, therefore we need cars so that we can be mobile, to go out there and collect people to be part of group work because they will tell you that they do not have money for transport...” (P6)

“...another thing is transport, you cannot expect foster children to come to the sessions every day or not even every day, but you cannot expect them to come here on their own because most of them rely on the foster care grant to survive and spending money on travelling to the group session might not be their priority. I think the employer must add more cars...” (P9)

Participant 13 also attested that:

“...shortage of cars also impacts negatively because our clients live below the poverty line, so they cannot use their own little money to come here, we need to fetch them, and some of them are too young to come here on their own, as we know our communities are not safe...” (P13)

A shortage of cars for social workers has been well documented by several studies as one of the biggest challenges impeding service delivery. A study by Mosala and Wilson (2024:6) reveals that the shortage of cars is one of the causes of shallow work, as social workers are forced to share cars; there are no vehicles for them to efficiently conduct their duties. This finding is consistent with the qualitative study by Babic, Zganec and Berc (2021:359), which agrees that the shortage of business vehicles prevents social workers from conducting their activities, such as visits scheduled for the day. Although social workers know their work, know what is supposed to be done, there are challenges that make it difficult for them to perform their tasks optimally, such as a lack of transport (Phillip, 2020:68).

4.3.5.6 Subtheme 5.6: Impediments towards conducting groups

It has already been established through the narratives of the participants that there are work-related factors impeding the application of group work to enhance social competence in foster children. Through the analysis of the participants' responses, another subtheme, impediments towards conducting groups, emerged. The ecological systems theory suggests that barriers to social work interventions arise at various levels (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem resulting in a service delivery gap and professional challenges (Gunhidzirai, 2023:286) and these levels need to be taken into account to enhance their relationship and improve service delivery (Singh & Azman, 2022:26). The following are circumstances that social workers have pointed out as impediments towards their ability to conduct group work and are classified into seven categories, namely, managers' lack of interest in group work, time constraints, availability of foster children for group sessions, suitable times for children to attend group sessions, no consequences for not conducting two groups per year, transport costs to travel to social workers' offices, and lack of capacity building for social workers.

(i) Category 5.6.1: Managers' lack of interest in group work

It emerged from the analysis of the responses provided by participants that they hold the view that there is less regard for group work by managers. The following excerpts confirm this observation:

"...what I have observed is that managers do not really pay attention to the implementation of group work, they are more focused on us submitting

indicators that reflect high numbers and less interested in the impact of our services...(P8)

"...what I have seen with regard to the commitment of supervisors and managers in relation to individual work, is not the same when it comes to group work. Individual work is the main focus here. Whether you implement group work or not is not an issue..." (P5)

"...management and the employer are not interested in this thing of group work, and maybe that is why most of the social workers are also not paying attention to group work..." (P18)

After a diligent search, no prior studies or scholarly sources were found that directly address or provide evidence for or against the validity of this category.

(ii) Category 5.6.2: Time constraints

The participants felt that they had no time to conduct groups in general and related to foster care in particular, citing various factors that consume most of their time. The following narratives explain:

"...I would say it's because we don't have time to plan and implement group work because of individual work and community awareness programmes. These two take most of our time because they are demanding..." (P2)

"...so it is time, resources, if we have to do it for the foster children, they are at school, different times, different locations and getting them all here or going to their areas is very difficult..." (P7)

In agreement with the preceding statements, another participant cites administrative duties as additional to the tasks that consume most of their time.

"...it is because we do not have time to do it because we have too many things to do around admin. We find it difficult to even plan for the group work..." (P11)

The response from participants was that a high workload, coupled with administrative duties and an emphasis on other methods of intervention, the factors consuming most of their time, and as a result, they are unable to plan and implement group work. Devkar and Waghmare (2024:1) indicate that social workers often face time constraints due to heavy workloads, which reduces their engagement with communities. Mshigeni, Borieux and Shepard (2022:33) confirm that the volume of

work is high. Social workers often feel that they do not have enough hours in the day, and unfortunately, high work demands appear to impact many of them. Ntshongwana and Tanga (2022:42) further elaborate that most social workers perform multiple role responsibilities and have many areas to cover in terms of service delivery; thus, they do not have time to do their work efficiently. According to Castro, Labra, Grenier & Dunoyer (2022:7), the emphasis on the other two methods of intervention (community and individual work) contributes to implementation reluctance as it gives the impression that group work is less in tune with the realities in the field compared to other methods of intervention.

(iii) Category 5.6.3: Availability of foster children for group sessions

Participants also cited the unavailability of foster children for group sessions as one of the factors impeding them from conducting group work. Below are some of their narratives:

“...is because I can only access children during school holidays because during the school days, children are at school...” (P1)

“...It is because they are not always available because some of the foster children are at the tertiary institutions, others attend schools very far and they get home very late. So, I cannot reach them every month, I only target them when the schools are closed...” P10)

“...is the availability of foster children. Not all foster children are available at the same time because, you know, for group work, all members must be in one place for the group to happen, and sometimes even if they are available, they are available after school hours...” (P17)

A review of the literature revealed no evidence supporting or contradicting this category.

(iv) Category 5.6.4: Suitable times for children to attend group sessions

Participants noted that, based on their experience, they can find no suitable time for the children to attend group sessions. They cited different reasons, and the following narrative testifies:

“...most of the time they are at school and when the schools close, they go away to visit their relatives...” (P1)

“...the children knock off from schools at different times, so we cannot get them together in one place and at the same time...” (P4)

The literature search yielded no evidence supporting or opposing this category.

(v) Category 5.6.5: No consequences for not conducting two groups per year

According to the participants, their performance agreements indicate that social workers should conduct two groups per year with no specification regarding the target group. Many participants shared the following concerning the lack of consequences for not conducting two groups per year:

“...Nothing happens if you do not conduct groups, because they are not paying attention to it. You implement it, it’s okay, you do not implement it, it’s also okay. So, no sanction or whatsoever...” (P8)

“...Nothing, there is nothing because they do not even see it that it is not being implemented because we do not report on it. I think that is one of the things that makes the social workers not take group work seriously because there is no penalty for non-implementation...” (P9)

“...Nothing, group is not entertained here, I guess it is because they know the challenges. So even if you do not implement it, it is not an issue at all...” (P16)

It is evident from the narratives that the participants are aware of what is expected of them; however, they cite the lack of consequences as one of the factors that contribute to the shallow implementation of group work. A basic degree in social worker ensures individuals’ capability upon completion to practice generic social work (Tsimba & Ncube, 2023:2). The practice thereafter emphasises the importance of supervision (Liang, 2025:3). Maluleke and Bhuda (2024:431) highlight that supervision sessions assist social supervisors and social workers (supervisees) to discuss any challenges that supervisees are facing in the performance of their duties. It involves, but is not limited to, teaching, enhancing their professional techniques and establishing correct work attitudes (Liang, 2025:3). It is essential as it influences the standard of social services provided to service users (Tsimba & Ncube, 2023:2). Supervision is a source of authority including power to reward and punish, coerce and enforce legalities (Liang, 2025:3), with the ultimate goal of empowering clients and emancipation (Mlynski & Czechowska-Kosacka, 2024:1059) One may therefore argue that the lack of

supervision as a tool to ensure effective delivery of service, could have severe negative effects on the methods and process of social work intervention.

(vi) Category 5.6.6: Transport costs to travel to social workers' offices

The implications of travelling costs in accessing social workers' offices for group work were also pointed out by the participants as an impediment to conducting group work. It was found that the participants bemoan that clients are unable to reach their offices for group work because it is costly for them to travel to the offices.

"...you find that it is difficult to get all the children together in one place because they will tell you that some of them have to use two taxis to get to our office, and it is very costly for them because most of them are relying on a foster care grant..." (P4)

"...we have a challenge in that the foster children live in different places, so we are unable to get them in one place. So, we are challenged in terms of transport to get them together because they need to be transported as they do not have money for their own transport..." (P14)

"...the challenge will also be transport; foster parents will complain with regard to getting children to use a taxi from home to our office, which is R17.00 to come here and R17.00 to go back, which is a lot for families relying on a foster care grant only..." (P17)

From the narratives of the participants, it can be inferred that it is a challenge to assemble and conduct a group because it is costly for the members to reach the offices. These narratives correspond with the views of Ntshongwana and Tanga (2022:42) that social workers are located at a considerable distance from the clients, which impedes their regular contact with their clients. This leads to occupational stress, whereby social workers are unable to deliver optimally on their responsibilities, resulting in poor delivery of services. Castro *et al.* (2022:10) also elaborate that the lack of public transit is another negative factor towards group intervention, as it negatively impacts the ability of members to attend groups. It is evident, as reflected in the narratives of the participants in this category and in Subtheme 5.5, that transportation is a challenge for both the participants and the intended beneficiaries of the group work intervention.

(vii) Category 5.6.7: Lack of capacity building for social workers

Although participants shared that group work was part of their social work training programme at their respective institutions of higher learning, they felt that capacity building regarding group work should continue, and their employer does not assist in this regard. This is confirmed by the following narratives:

“...I had some form of training or capacitation about group work during university days. Since I got here, I have never attended a training or workshop on group work. We attend many trainings about individual work services, but I have never heard anything about group work to date...” (P8)

“...since I arrived here, I have never gone for any training, whether it is in-service training or formal training regarding group work-related developments...” (P12)

“...there are a lot of developments around group work, we need to be continuously capacitated, but the department has never organised anything like that, we are more focused on individual work and awareness programmes...” (P9)

In South Africa, social workers are mandated to register with the statutory regulatory body of social workers, the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) (Myaka, 2021:16). The SACSSP is a statutory body established in terms of Section 2 of the Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978. The SACSSP developed the Policy on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for social workers and social auxiliary workers (Council for Social Service Professions, 2021). According to Section 10.1 of this policy, all registered social workers, excluding students are required to obtain a minimum of twenty (20) CPD points annually or forty (40) points over a two (2) year cycle after obtaining their qualification (Council for Social Service Professions, 2021:8). CPD is described as learning activities a social worker is involved in to enhance their application of expertise in their profession (Myaka, 2021:16). This is to encourage professionals to participate in a variety of activities, to ensure different levels of learning, participation and exposure (Council for Social Service Professions, 2021:8). It can be concluded that social workers function in an ever-changing world that demands they keep themselves informed with the new development around group work as a method of intervention.

4.3.6 Theme 6: Suggestions and recommendations for the employer

From the above-mentioned and with reference to the consulted literature, it seems that the challenges affecting social workers are not new. Social workers are faced with numerous impediments which negatively affect their ability to utilise group work as a method of intervention, and specifically as an intervention to facilitate social competence in foster children. After sharing the factors impeding application and the conduct of group work, participants were asked what recommendations could be made to improve the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children. To help analyse and understand the participants' suggestions and recommendations for effective utilisation of group work to advance the social competence of foster children, the ecological system theory and the role theory were applied.

The ecological perspective aided not only the discussion between the researcher and the participants, but also in analysing the participants' responses. The ecological systems theory contributes to social work practice in clear and identifiable ways, as social work values embrace cultural competence, holistic approaches, and policy action in both practice and research. Bronfenbrenner's studies on the ecological perspective enhance and inform these values (Crawford, 2020:4). The ecological system theory posits that a system cannot be comprehended or exist in isolation, as it relies on interactions with other systems for its sustainability (Nkosi, 2020:17). Thus, employing an ecological perspective offered an extensive theoretical framework for implementing effective intervention strategies to tackle factors hindering the successful use of group work as an intervention method in foster care. The second theory that underpinned the analysis of the participants' suggestions and recommendations is the role theory. This theory is based on the view that roles in organisations are connected and reliant on one another, therefore they need to be clearly defined, as the lack thereof, result in ambiguity and less productivity (Mosala, 2022:22). Therefore, this theoretical perspective was used to unpack participants' suggestions and recommendations of relation role conflict, role ambiguity and perceived role expectations to improve the utilisation of group work in foster care to advance the social competence of foster children. The participants' suggestions and recommendations are reflected in the following subthemes.

4.3.6.1 Subtheme 6.1: Encourage managers to adopt a positive attitude towards group work

Applying an ecological perspective to this recommendation involves recognising that poor utilisation of group work is influenced by multiple interconnected layers within the organisation. Therefore, an intervention through this approach can create opportunities for other layers, such as the management level, to participate in improving group work implementation. Participants emphasised the importance of management support towards encouraging the use of group work, aligning with the findings of Mangolele and Calitz (2025:5) that the management must give the employees the necessary support in their quest for service delivery by visiting offices regularly so that they witness what the employees are doing and where the challenges are.

“...it needs to be prioritised at the top management level in the same way as, for example, foster care orders...” (P17)

“...I can say that managers must step up and emphasise the use of group work in the field of foster care services...I think group work, to be honest, is not taken seriously...” (P9)

“...I feel that we are not given our space to do what we are here for and what we studied for, and managers should start speaking out about these issues so that we can practice the profession that we worked hard for... (P13)

4.3.6.2 Subtheme 6.2: Improve human resources and address high caseloads

Concerning the improvement of human resources and addressing high caseloads, the participants made the following recommendations:

“...I would also like to recommend that let us have more social workers so that we can have those who specifically deal with certain cases, for example, if I only deal with cases of children placed in CYCC, I would be able to render effective services...” (P5)

“...human resources, in the sense that we need more social workers so that we can focus on the other methods of intervention in our profession, especially group work, because at this stage, I feel like we have a lot to do, and the staff members are very few...” (P16)

“...if we can have more officials so that we are able to divide ourselves, let five do group work, five do community awareness programmes, five do foster care supervision, we would be able to balance our methods of intervention... (P13)

These recommendations are also echoed by the findings of Ntshongwana and Tanga (2022:48), who note that a high workload is a challenge for social workers; therefore, more social workers should be employed to minimise the burden of a high caseload. Sibanda (2025:14) also suggests that the Department of Social Development should hire more social workers to reduce caseloads, allowing social workers sufficient time to address challenges faced by clients. To examine this recommendation, the theoretical perspective of role theory was utilised since the aim was to move beyond merely handling a large workload (caseload) and concentrate on establishing a structured and supportive work environment that promotes improved overall group work implementation and social work interventions.

4.3.6.3 Subtheme 6.3: Provide adequate and conducive space for group work

Adequate and conducive space for group work was identified as one of the factors that the participants feel needs the attention of the management for them to be able to implement group work.

“...office space is really needed. If we can have offices that have a boardroom that is functional, it would be easier for us to do group work there effectively...”
(P18)

“...I would suggest to the employer we need offices that can accommodate things like group work, I mean, where we can run different sessions at the same time...” (P1)

“... the Department must ensure that when they locate office space for social workers, they must ensure that the offices cater for the needs of social workers in terms of service delivery. It must have space where we can do group work...”
(P13)

This recommendation corresponds with the views of Mangolele and Calitz (2025:5) that if the management regularly visited the offices, they would also be familiar with the kinds of workplaces that the social workers are working in and provide the necessary support, as this would enable social workers to carry out their duties efficiently and maintain client confidentiality.

4.3.6.4 Subtheme 6.4: Budget for group work activities and refreshments

The participants also recommended that it would be of the utmost importance for the employer to allocate sufficient resources to social workers to purchase the stationery needed for group activities and refreshments for group members. The following narratives support this recommendation:

“...there must be a budget for group work, and maybe this would also motivate social workers to implement group work...” (P11)

“...I would recommend that the Department at least should, as and when they do budgets for programmes, include the budget for group work... Yes, a budget involves many things. When you do group work, obviously, there are tools that you are going to need...” (P15)

“...the employer must make some funds available for refreshments because you cannot have members coming all the way to our office just to give them water after the session, they would not come again...” (P3)

“...We need to have that allowance to have some refreshments to offer group members and for other materials that we can use for group activities...” (P8)

No literature could be found to either substantiate or challenge this subtheme.

4.3.6.5 Subtheme 6.5: Transport for social workers and children

The study found that the shortage of cars is also one of the factors that contribute towards ineffective utilisation of group work in foster care supervision services. The findings revealed that this not only affects group work as a method of intervention, but all different service delivery areas within the social work sector. The participants gave the following recommendations in relation to transport for social workers:

“...we need extra cars to be able not only to transport group members, but also for planning because you need to do home visits to recruit members as you would have identified them from your caseload based on their needs...” (P5)

“...we need extra cars because the ones we have are mostly used for emergency, which is individual work, so they are often not available...” (P13)

Participant twelve (12) adds that:

“...Another challenge is transport because you need to arrange with children for group work, and you will find it difficult to access a car because they are few for many officials. So, the department must assist with cars for us to be able to reach our beneficiaries...” (P12)

Based on the above-mentioned narratives, it can be concluded that transportation is one of the key challenges experienced by social workers rendering foster care services. Several authors have made a similar call that this aspect needs more attention. Sotshononda (2020:110), Maphoto (2020:48), and Phillip (2020:84) recommended that assets like vehicles be made accessible to enhance the quality of foster care supervision since social workers need to travel frequently to and from their workplaces.

4.3.6.6 Subtheme 6.6: Review of performance contract

The participants further made a recommendation regarding their performance contract. They shared that their contract does not clearly spell out that they are obligated to implement group work as one of the methods of intervention, and this could be one of the contributing factors to ineffective utilisation of group work in general, and to enhancing the social competence of foster children in particular. They further shared that their contracts are compounded with individual work tasks and awareness programmes, but less emphasis is placed on group work. A study by Castro *et al.* (2022:10) confirms this trend, stating that group work interventions are a misunderstood practice, and the focus is on individual interventions. The application of role theory to this recommendation involves considering how effectively the contract defines anticipated duties, as this reduces role confusion and disputes, which are vital for optimal performance (Anglin, *et al.*, 2022:2). The following narratives confirm the recommendations of the participants concerning group work in their performance contracts:

“...I think our performance contract needs to be structured in a way that group work stands alone because group work is unlike other methods of intervention; you cannot do other things and say they are part of group work. Group work needs sessions...” (P18)

“...I would recommend that managers should look at our contract and work on it to reflect the methods of intervention so that group work can be clearly seen in there and officials can be rated accordingly...” (P13)

As per the participants' perceptions, a review of their performance contract to spell out methods of intervention would close the gaps on under-utilisation of group work. Performance contracts are recognised as effective in monitoring service delivery. Nyongesa and van der Westhuizen (2023:1) argue that performance contracting enhances service delivery by aligning personal or departmental targets with broader corporate aims. They also emphasise that when performance contracts are well-designed with explicit performance indicators and aligned with the organisation's service objectives, they can have a direct and beneficial effect on the quality, accessibility, and responsiveness of public services (Nyongesa & van der Westhuizen, 2023:1). It is therefore clear from the above arguments that if the narrated components of the performance contract are given more attention, the utilisation of group work could be enhanced.

4.3.6.7 Subtheme 6.7: Monitoring and reporting on group work activities

The ecological systems theory offers creative, practical methods to evaluate issues and address them, as various levels are crucial in finding resolutions (Singh & Azman, 2022:26). Therefore, this theory was applied to evaluate this recommendation on the premise that it advocates for interconnected efforts in the sense that if group work implementation is monitored and reported, different levels within the organisation would become aware of the success and difficulties and offer informed assistance. The participants revealed that they have observed that there is more emphasis on casework compared to group work. This observation is supported by Castro *et al.* (2022:10), who found that group work intervention is often regarded negatively, being perceived as short-term and ineffective. The participants shared that there is no monitoring tool designed to monitor implementation and reporting on group work activities. Therefore, they made the following recommendations:

“...I would recommend that the monitoring and evaluation unit should develop an indicator that speaks to group work and that would also encourage the people on the ground to implement group work as agreed in their contract...” (P5)

“...we need some monitoring tools or indicators that we can report on regarding group work, just like other methods of intervention that we use to deliver services...” (P18)

“...Another thing is monitoring as well, we have an indicator that says the number of valid court orders. We should also have an indicator that says active group work that is implemented on a monthly basis...” (P17)

It can be argued that the narratives above suggest that monitoring and evaluation of their performance in relation to group work could be vital in enhancing the utilisation of group work. Nyongesa and van der Westhuizen (2023:3) suggest that assessing performance is necessary to ascertain if outcomes align with expectations during the creation of contract reports. After implementation, it is essential to evaluate the performance results of different workers, and if service delivery does not meet expectations, corrective measures can be taken to improve service delivery in the next cycle (Nyongesa & van der Westhuizen, 2023:3).

4.3.6.8 Subtheme 6.8: Participants’ need for further training

Participants have acknowledged through the narratives below that CPD with regard to group work is important. Castro *et al.* (2022:8) note that CPD in the field, particularly in relation to group work interventions, is important because the time allocated for group work intervention training at the university is limited. Applying the ecological systems theory perspective, the researcher can accurately identify the areas requiring support across various interconnected levels, resulting in comprehensive and focused training for social group work practice. According to the participants, they wish to recommend the following:

“...we are constantly nominated to attend trainings around the programmes that we render, around individual services and some of those programmes... we really need refresher courses around group...” (P9)

“...I am well capacitated from the university when it comes to group work, but it would be great also if the employer can roll out some refresher programmes around group work so that staff members can be reminded about group work...” (P18)

“...we have all gone through training about group work, but I think things have changed, group work has evolved, so we need to continuously capacitate ourselves...” (P13)

A plea, as narrated by the above participants, for further training in the field of foster care is not a new one. A study conducted by Maphoto (2020:43) also found that social workers expressed frustration over inadequate training, which adversely impacts the foster care system. Myaka (2021:44) also expresses that social workers acknowledge that information evolves, and they must continually refresh the skills they have gained for further development.

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

An empirical investigation into the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children was conducted, and the findings obtained through semi-structured interviews were presented in this chapter to address the third objective of the research study. The identifying particulars of the participants were obtained to ensure that the participants complied with the requirements of this research study. Thereafter, themes, subthemes, and categories were identified and carefully examined using the seven-phase thematic approach of Lester, Cho, and Lochmiller (2020:98) and were confirmed by the findings of the literature study. It is concluded that although social workers are aware of the essential role group work can play in the development of social competence in foster children, they experience a variety of challenges which affect their ability to implement group work as a method of intervention in foster care supervision services. Several recommendations were made by participants to address these challenges. In the next chapter, the conclusions and recommendations regarding this research study are presented.

CHAPTER 5: CHAPTER SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The enquiry into the application of group work to advance the social competence of foster children emanated from the gap identified in the literature and a notable decline in the use of group work by social workers in foster care services. The previous chapter outlined the empirical results of the research, followed by an analysis of these results through different themes, subthemes, and categories.

This chapter provides a detailed description of the main study findings, from which conclusions will be drawn. The chapter also discusses the study's limitations and offers recommendations on how the utilisation of group work to advance social competence of foster children could be expanded, thus attending to the fifth objective of the study.

5.2 SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS

In this section, summaries and conclusions based on the literature review and theoretical framework, a description of the applied research process and the research findings are discussed.

5.2.1 Summary and conclusions based on the literature review and theoretical framework of the study

In this study, a desk review of existing literature was conducted to establish a context for this research, uncover gaps in current knowledge, and avoid duplicating previous studies. The researcher utilised various sources, including digital access to research papers, academic texts, and review articles, and assessed them to create a relevant, informative and unbiased narrative (Sajeevanie, 2021:2714). A literature review was done to assess the role and significance of families in the development of children, the status of the well-being of children within an international and South African context, the development of the child protection system in South Africa, the process of finding a child in need of care and protection, the challenges faced by children placed in foster care, how social skills are essential for the development of foster children, and group work as a method of intervention to advance social competence of foster children.

The literature review showed that while families, schools, and society are the three primary influences on children, the family is considered the fundamental element of a child's development, offering critical support for physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth (Sibanda & Lombard, 2022:332). However, worldwide social dynamics sometimes hinder families from creating a nurturing atmosphere for at-risk children, leading to their placement in care institutions such as kinship placements, residential care or foster homes (Adeboye *et al.*, 2019:433).

To effectively respond to the overwhelming violence against children, the South African democratic dispensation has introduced several legislative frameworks since 1994 to improve the delivery of services to vulnerable groups in the country (Mogale, 2019:19). These frameworks include the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the White Paper on Social Welfare (1997), and the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended (Mogale, 2019:19).

Section 150 (1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended, outlines what should be considered to determine if a child is in need of care and protection (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 150 (1)). Section 156 (1) (e) (i) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended, stipulates that if a child recognised as requiring care and protection does not have a parent or caregiver or has one who is incapable or unsuitable to provide care, the child must be put into foster care with a suitable foster parent or within a group or organisation overseeing a cluster foster care (Republic of South Africa, 2006: Section 156 (1) (e) (i)).

Child protection is a vital field where social workers provide comprehensive assistance to children experiencing various social issues addressing physical, emotional, and environmental factors (Arshad *et al.*, 2020:950). Children in foster care, like other children, have developmental needs that must be addressed while they are in the system (Nkosi, 2020:53). They need to receive high-quality care and placement that focuses on their development, safety, and well-being requirements. Despite each individual having distinct characteristics, personalities, mental capabilities, and emotional responses, everyone requires social skills (Singh *et al.*, 2022:2331). Thus, implementing practical methods to enhance social skills in foster care is crucial (Salik & Mushtaq, 2023:89).

Social work as a profession has developed certain techniques and methods of intervention (Uranta & Ogbanga, 2017:60). These methods are grouped as primary (individual work, group work method and community work) and secondary methods (social action, social welfare administration and social work research) (Arshad *et al.*, 2020:950). The focus of this study was on group work as a primary method of social work intervention. Group work focuses on improving clients' skills, such as communication abilities, self-awareness, reality assessment, and acceptance of positive social values to support them in achieving their established life objectives (Uranta & Ogbanga, 2017:62).

With reference to the reviewed literature, it can be concluded that a system has been put in place in the context of the legislative framework to protect children. Social workers remain key players in advancing the protection of children as they have a statutory obligation to provide holistic services to vulnerable children. Group work, as a means to advance the social competence of foster children, offers numerous benefits as it creates a secure setting for the client system, allowing for change and enabling group members to learn from one another.

To analyse the empirical findings on the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and the role theory provided the theoretical lens for analysis.

The ecological perspective was applied as the core theoretical underpinning of this study. Bronfenbrenner (cited in Gunhidzirai, 2023:286) states that one needs to consider the entire ecological system to comprehend human development. It highlights that the connections that exist between the person and others within a specific geographic and socially constructed setting encompass individuals, groups, families, communities, institutions, and policies (Nkosi, 2020:113). In examining human development, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model comprises microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems (Viljoen, 2020:6). As such, social workers function in a manner that can be understood as an interconnected system and this approach has allowed the researcher to understand how different levels in their field have impacted on their application of group work to advance social competence of foster children and how this approach can be used to address challenges in different levels for improved utilisation of group work.

The second theoretical lens used to analyse the social workers' views was the role theory. Role theory offers a framework for examining how roles both directly and indirectly impact behaviour (Zwebathu, 2018:17). In organisations, roles are interlinked and dependent on each other, and when changes to roles happen or roles become difficult to manage, confusion arises that impacts the anticipated results of the roles being filled (Mosala, 2022:22). Therefore, applying role theory in this study helped the researcher to understand how various roles impact the function of social workers in their line of duty and subsequently the application of group work in foster care to advance the social competence of foster children and how these roles can be managed for effective collaborations in the application of group work.

5.2.2 Summary and conclusions based on the description of the applied research process

The research question formulated at the beginning of the study was “What are the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance social competence of foster children?” The focus on social workers providing foster care services stems from their role in managing the foster care system. Their role is to place children into foster care, oversee and manage the placement (Maphoto, 2020:50). The research question helped to achieve a thorough insight into the social worker's perspectives on the implementation, difficulties, and advantages of group work to advance social competence of foster children.

Upon evaluating the aim and objectives established in Chapter 1 of the research report, the researcher determined that they guided the research process in addressing the question raised at the beginning of the study. The study aimed to understand the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children. The researcher succeeded in achieving the study's aim and consequently its objectives through empirical analysis, as detailed in Chapter 4. The objectives of the research were as follows:

- (i) To conceptualise social competence as a skill of foster children.
- (ii) To explore methods of intervention employed by social workers when working with foster children.
- (iii) To examine the views of social workers regarding the use of group work as a method of intervention when working with foster children.

- (iv) To examine the contribution of the views of social workers regarding the utilisation of group work to advance the social competence of foster children.
- (v) To make recommendations on how the utilisation of group work to advance the social competence of foster children could be expanded.

The research methodology used in this study was a qualitative approach, underpinned by an exploratory research design. This research methodology was most suitable for this research process because of the nature of the aim of the study. As not enough research studies could be found about the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children, the researcher needed to probe deeper to understand the views of social workers regarding this phenomenon.

In this study, a sample population comprising of 18 social workers from 9 Service Points of the Department of Social Development in the Tshwane Region all availed themselves for the interviews. The researcher employed a purposive sampling method to select participants, which proved to be an efficient way of recruiting participants, as all participants qualified for inclusion in the study according to the chosen inclusion criteria.

In-depth interviews were carried out utilising a semi-structured interview schedule, where participants were posed open-ended questions to promote open expression about the research subject (Maphoto, 2020:51). The interviews were efficiently conducted, and none of the participants believed that any sensitive information was disclosed, even though the researcher expected that they might feel uneasy or be triggered by certain intense work experiences. The questions that the participants were asked are in the interview schedule attached.

Data was analysed using the seven-phase thematic approach of Lester *et al.* (2020:98). These steps helped the researcher to present the findings more effectively and to gain a better understanding of what participants said through listening to the recorded audio repeatedly. Through organising the data, the researcher recognised new code categories, ultimately leading to the identification of the primary themes from the key code categories (Nyathi, 2022:57).

Throughout the design, planning, and execution stages of the design methodology, careful attention was consistently given to guarantee that the methodological decisions made by the researcher did not undermine the trustworthiness of the research results.

Recognising that reactivity is unavoidable in studies involving interaction between the researcher and participants, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal as recommended by the research supervisor to record how his actions and interpretations could influence the participants' responses. The journal assisted the researcher in effectively addressing reactivity. For instance, it was vital for the researcher to recognise his perceptions, biases, and views stemming from his background as a social worker providing foster care supervision services and ensure that he did not impose these on the participants through his conduct and attitude during the interviews. The researcher sought his supervisor's assistance to review the data, and an external coder was assigned, who also provided a favourable evaluation of the gathered data.

5.2.3 Summary and conclusions based on the research findings

In this section, the summary and conclusions are based on the empirical findings of the research study. The format is based on the themes of Chapter 4, which align with the four objectives formulated at the beginning of the research and the structure of the semi-structured interview schedule. The summary and conclusion are briefly presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Summary and conclusions based on the research findings relating to the objectives of this study

OBJECTIVES	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
	5.1.1.1. Biographical and background information
Objective 1: To conceptualise social competence as a skill of foster children	5.1.1.2. Participants' definition and understanding of social competence
Objective 2: To explore methods of intervention employed by social workers when working with foster children	5.1.1.3. Participants' views on suitable methods to develop social competence in foster children

<p>Objective 3: To examine the views of social workers regarding the use of group work as a method of intervention when working with foster children</p>	<p>5.1.1.4. Group work as a method to advance and enhance social competence in foster children</p> <p>5.1.1.5. Participants' experiences in group work</p>
<p>Objective 4: To examine the contribution of the views of social workers regarding the utilisation of group work to advance the social competence of foster children</p>	<p>5.1.1.6. Work-related factors impeding the application of group work</p>

5.2.3.1 Biographical and background information of participants

The requirements for participating in this research study specified that the participants must be social workers employed in the Department of Social Development, Gauteng province, Tshwane region, who have a minimum of three years of experience in rendering foster care service, and are registered with the SACSSP. All the social workers who participated in this research study met the inclusion criteria stated above.

As shown in Figure 4.1, Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.3, most participants (94%) were females, and 6% were males, with the majority of female participants (82%) being African, 6% being male African, and 6% being female Asian. It can therefore be concluded that the field of foster care is dominated by African female social workers. This gender disparity was a persistent factor across the study, in both the entry young adulthood (67%) and early to late adulthood (33%) cohorts.

The study also indicated that 42% of participants had between three and five years of experience, and 58% had between eight and 13 years of experience in foster care supervision services. It can therefore be concluded that the foster care programme employs social workers with both less and more extensive experience. Inclusion of social workers with a variety of experience was beneficial for the study as it ensured methodological rigour and produced well-rounded, reliable and relevant research outcomes.

An analysis of Figure 4.5, indicating the number of foster children that participants had in their caseloads, revealed significant disparity from one social worker to another. None of the participants had fewer than 30 foster children in their caseload. Forty-four percent of participants indicated having between 50 and 69 foster children, while 33% shared that they had between 30 and 49 foster children in their caseloads. This is followed by 17% who had between 70 and 89 foster children, while 6% indicated having between 90 and 100 foster children. In summary, this difference signifies an important finding that requires further investigation into the “why” and “how” behind this variation, which could have significant consequences for group work applications, as illustrated in Figure 4.6.

When participants were asked to indicate which method of social work intervention they were utilising as part of foster care supervision to foster children, the majority of participants (100%) indicated that they used individual work or social case work most of the time, followed by 78% of participants who shared that they also used social group work, while community work was the least utilised method of intervention as only 44% confirmed utilisation of community work in foster care service. This finding thus highlights a continued high usage and preference for individual work in foster care services over group work and community work interventions. Although 78% indicated that they also use group work in foster care services to foster children, establishing the frequency of its utilisation was equally significant. The research findings indicated varied usage of group work, with 36% of participants indicating that they use group work regularly, while 64% seldom use it. None of the participants indicated that they always use group work. Overall, the findings indicated that group work is undervalued compared to other interventions, particularly individual work.

5.2.3.2 Participants' definition and understanding of social competence

The examination of the research results regarding the participants' definitions and perceptions of social competence employed a diverse approach, mainly due to the concept's intricate and context-related characteristics. The analysis focused on three subthemes, including the participants' definition of social competence, their understanding of social competence, namely. cognitive aspects of social competence and behavioural aspects of social competence, and their views on the benefits of social competence to foster children.

When participants were asked to define social competence, their definitions mainly focused on social interaction between individuals and their social surroundings. Although the definitions utilised differed from participant to participant in minor ways, they all pointed out that social competence is a complex, multifaceted concept that encompasses various skills and behaviours. Participants' definitions of social competence can be summarised as skills that one should possess to be able to live with other people and cope with life challenges. This definition allows for the conclusion that social competence comprises essential skills necessary for effective social interactions and building successful relationships with peers and within society. The researcher further probed the definition of social competence as provided by participants, and two key aspects, namely, cognitive and behavioural aspects, were identified as what constitute their understanding of social competence. These aspects are summarised below.

Cognitive aspect of social competence: Participants expressed that social competence encompasses the mental capacity to handle stress and difficult situations, including making informed choices and adjusting to new surroundings. It can be inferred that this facet of social competence involves manoeuvring through complex social settings.

Behavioural aspect of social competence: Participants described the behavioural component of social competence as the visible abilities that enable foster children to effectively navigate intricate social environments and establish significant relationships. From this perspective of social competence, it can be concluded that although the cognitive component underpins these actions, the behavioural component pertains to the actual execution and appropriateness of social tasks.

Participants were asked to indicate, based on their own experiences, the benefits of social competence as a skill of foster children. The study revealed that social competence offers benefits across an individual's academic, personal and professional life. These benefits include the ability to communicate effectively, assertiveness, problem solving, personal achievement in school and work life, informed decision making, self-confidence, establishing good relationships, managing peer pressure and being resilient to deal with different circumstances. In conclusion,

the study overwhelmingly showed that social competence is a crucial developmental asset, predicting positive outcomes and overall well-being throughout life.

5.2.3.3 Participants' views on suitable methods to develop social competence in foster children

To gain an insight into the development of social competence of foster children, participants were asked to indicate the social work methods suitable to develop social competence in foster children. The findings revealed that all three methods of intervention (individual work, community work and group work) were viewed as suitable to develop the social competence of foster children. However, of greater significance was the disparities in terms of hierarchy of suitability of these methods for developing social competence in foster children.

Individual work/casework: The study revealed that individual work was viewed as the most suitable and utilised method of social work intervention in foster care to develop social competence, as all participants confirmed using this method often in foster care. It is regarded as an entry point in developing social competence compared to group work and community work. The conclusion is that the reason social workers use this method most often may be that direct practice with individuals and families constitutes the bulk of day-to-day social work interventions.

Group work: The study revealed that group work came second as a method of social work intervention to develop social competence. Although the findings revealed that group work is also suitable to develop social competence of foster children, it indicated that this method was the least utilised, as only 44% of the participants indicated that they utilised group work. Statistics further showed that social workers did not always utilise group work (0%), while only 36% of participants claimed to utilise group regularly, and 64% of participants indicated that they seldom utilised group work. The conclusion that can be drawn from these statistics is that it confirms the findings by other researchers that the broader method of group work is significantly less practised than individual work.

Community work: Although community work offers significant potential to develop social competence, the study showed that social workers did not provide community work intervention that is targeted to foster children to develop their social competence. Foster children were included in awareness programmes conducted by social workers

as part of community work, without the intention of specifically targeting foster children. It can be concluded that community work is not systematically used by social workers to develop social competence in foster children, and this may be due to systemic barriers and a focus on basic survival needs of the foster children, which are the focus of individual work.

5.2.3.4 Group work as a method to advance and enhance social competence in foster children

Research findings highlighted group work as vital and relevant for the development of social competence in foster children. It showed that group work has a role in foster care to advance and enhance social competence in foster children. In relation to advancing social competence, participants were able to distinguish it from enhancing by stating that group work has a role in facilitating the process of acquiring new skills, such as helping children to be independent, to develop their own coping mechanism and be accountable adults in the future. Concerning enhancing social competence, the findings highlighted that group work plays a role in refining the already existing skills, such as empowering foster children to be more resilient, to believe that they can strive in life and be able to seek help when there are challenges. It can therefore be concluded from the findings that group work's role in the context of social competence for foster children is in two folds, one focusing on the chronological progression of complexity, while the other pertains to the enhancement and refinement of current skills.

5.2.3.5 Participants' experience in group work

Although no specific question was posed to the participants to reflect on their own experiences in group work, it emerged during the study that participants have experiences that vary from one social worker to another on different aspects of group work. The emerged categories are challenges experienced by foster children in foster care, the number of groups and sessions conducted, aspects addressed through group work with foster children and the evaluation of group work's effectiveness.

Challenges experienced by foster children in foster care: Findings from the study indicated that children in foster care encounter ordinary childhood issues; however, the impact of these challenges is markedly amplified by their previous life experiences. These include behavioural problems, which contribute to a strained relationship

between them and their foster parents, and poor academic performance. Therefore, it can be concluded that foster children experience developmental hurdles that need professional intervention.

Number of groups and sessions conducted: The findings of the study revealed that although group work was applied by some of the social workers, the frequency of application, life span, and the format of the groups were contrary to the basic process of group work as some of the groups had far less sessions, the time between group sessions was lengthy as some of the groups held their sessions once in a school term calendar which affected the group's momentum, and some groups were terminated abruptly which had the potential to detrimentally influence the group's effect on its members. The conclusion that can be reached on this aspect is that social workers are inconsistent in their application of group work in foster care, and this has a negative impact on the quality of group outcome for the members and the organisation.

Aspects addressed through group work with foster children: The findings of the study situate group work as a method that addresses a wide range of aspects affecting foster children. These aspects include empowering foster children with life skills such as self-discipline, self-identity, self-care, dealing with dating at a young age and empowering foster children with social skills such as communication skills, mastering acceptable behaviour, as well as academic skills. The results regarding group work with foster children highlighted that it can effectively address intricate psychosocial and emotional needs that are often challenging to address through individual work alone.

Evaluation of group work effectiveness: No specific question was formulated in the interview schedule regarding the evaluation of the effectiveness of group work; however, the discussion surfaced during the study. Participants shared that they evaluated the groups they conducted through verbal and written feedback from the participants, as well as through tracking the impact of the group work on foster children by enquiry with foster parents. They shared that feedback was positive, highlighting that the groups were effective. Two conclusions can be drawn from these findings, first that group work has a place in foster care as a method of intervention, as it has been found to be effective in addressing social issues, and second, social workers prefer two methods of evaluation, which are summative evaluation and outcome or impact evaluation. Summative evaluation is performed at the end of the group's life cycle to

assess the overall effectiveness of the group. The outcome or impact evaluation measures the long-term impact that the group has on members' area of concern that brought them into the group. Formative and process evaluations are not utilised, which are critical to monitor the progress of the group and the quality of delivery.

5.2.3.6 *Work-related factors impeding the application of group work*

The study showed that there are key factors impeding the application of group work, and these factors range from systemic or organisational challenges, resource and structural deficits, to professional and education issues. These factors are summarised below as per the findings of the study:

Work allocation and high caseload: With regard to work allocation and caseload, data from the study revealed that improper work allocation and high caseloads severely hindered the effective implementation of group work, as most participants shared that they were overwhelmed and not able to implement group work effectively. They indicated that they had a high caseload and the work allocation was not balanced, which limits the time available for them to plan and implement group work.

Administrative duties and human resources: The research results indicated that social workers face overwhelming administrative responsibilities, compelling them to focus on crisis interventions, rather than preventative and developmental services, like group work. This is exacerbated by the shortage of human resources, as participants indicated that the shortage of staff worsened their inability to plan and implement group work, as they find themselves performing many duties.

Office infrastructure: A lack of office infrastructure was also identified as one of the factors that affected the implementation of group work. Participants specifically bemoaned the lack of physical office space as a challenge because their office space lacked privacy and appropriate space for group work meetings.

Lack of budget for group work activities: The study found that a lack of budget prevented social workers from implementing group work, as they do not have funds allocated for group work activities and refreshments. Those who tried to fund the groups from their own pockets eventually depleted their own budgets, and this affected not only the implementation of the groups, but also the effectiveness of the group for the members. Participants highlighted that members stopped attending the groups due to the absence of refreshments and stationery to support group activities.

Shortage of cars: A to non-human resources, such as cars, was one of the challenges that were revealed by the study. The study revealed that a shortage of cars created logistical challenges for social workers in group work preparations, as most of the official cars were used to attend to crisis cases

Managers' lack of interest in group work: The research findings indicated that managers were not interested in the utilisation of group work in foster care. Participants highlighted that managers appeared to be more focused on quantifiable outcomes, as social workers were often expected to report on high numbers of beneficiaries reached, mostly through awareness programmes and dismissed unquantifiable intervention outcomes. As a result, group work often received less attention from managers because the intervention cannot be quantified.

Time constraints: Group work is known to be an intervention that requires planning from the beginning to the end phase. The study showed that time constraints significantly impeded group work implementation as social workers spend most of their time on individual work, coupled with administrative duties and community awareness programmes. As a result, they lack time to organise and execute group work.

Availability of foster children and suitable time for children to attend group sessions: The study further revealed that one of the factors impeding the implementation of group work was the unavailability of potential group members. As they were attending different schools, it became a challenge to gather them in one venue. Some of the schools were far away from where the potential members reside, and the potential members were only be available in the late hours of the day when social workers were off duty.

No consequences for not conducting two groups per year: Participants indicated that implementing group work is part of their annual performance contract, meaning social workers are mandated to implement two groups within their performance cycle, which runs from April to March of the following year. The study shows that no consequences are in place for the non-implementation of group work. As a result, the department experienced diminished performance in relation to group work because there is no enforced accountability for effective group work.

Transport costs to travel to social workers' offices: The study indicated that travelling costs to access social workers' offices for group work were one of the

contributing factors towards non-implementation of group work because most of the foster families rely on the foster child grant for survival. Therefore, they are unable to afford the travelling costs to reach the social workers' offices for group work sessions.

Lack of capacity building for social workers: Although participants acknowledged that group work was part of their training programme at their respective institutions of higher learning, the study revealed the need for continuous professional development of social workers on group work. Participants shared that most of the training they attended was more on individual work and programmes, and nothing on group work interventions.

The study aimed to understand the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children. The research findings indicated that while group work is a valued and effective intervention in developing social skills, it can be concluded that its full potential is significantly hampered by a complex interplay of systemic and interpersonal challenges. It illustrated that the barriers to implementing group work are not just due to individual deficiencies but are intrinsically linked to organisational and systemic problems that neglect to prioritise and sufficiently support this essential method of social work intervention.

5.3 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Each research study possesses unique limitations that could influence its results (Sotshononda, 2020:110). In this study, efforts were made to roll out the study in an ethical manner, yet a few limitations were identified.

The qualitative nature of the study, the small sample size, and the fact that the study was confined to a specific setting or area in the Tshwane region meant that the research findings cannot be generalised to settings elsewhere in the country. In retrospect, the substantial sample sizes typically linked to quantitative or mixed-methods approaches would have improved this study by enhancing generalisability. Extensive representative samples could have enabled conclusions to be drawn about the broader population with a certain level of certainty.

Another limitation was that the study was limited to social workers in the employ of the Gauteng Department of Social Development, Tshwane region, yet it could have been broadened to social workers employed in NPOs and other regions, which would have given a broader sample and a broader perspective.

In seeking permission to conduct the study, the researcher had written a letter to the head office of the Department of Social Development in Gauteng. Obtaining permission was a challenge as the researcher was redirected from one official to another, as there was no clear indication as to which unit would attend to the request letter on behalf of the HOD, and this delayed the granting of permission.

With regard to the selected sample, a limitation identified was the reliance on English as the sole method of communication for conducting the interviews. Despite the encouragement for participants to use their preferred language, English prevailed as the primary language in all interviews. Some participants were found to have difficulty in fully expressing themselves, which might have negatively affected the depth of the responses and the quality of the data collected in the study.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Social workers frequently engage with individuals and families facing intricate social, psychological, familial, and institutional issues, as they provide a distinct and important contribution in delivering suitable and focused services (Hailu, 2020:64). The focus of this study was on the utilisation of one of the social workers' methods of intervention, social group work, focusing on foster care services to advance the social competence of foster children. The study found that group work fell short compared to other methods of social intervention in foster care, compounded by various factors that extended beyond the professional control of social workers. In light of these findings, the following recommendations for social group work practice intend to address these disparities. Summary of suggestions and recommendations underpinned by the fifth objective of this study are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Recommendations based on the research findings relating to the objectives of this study

OBJECTIVES	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
<p>Objective 5: To make recommendations on how the utilisation of group work to advance the social competence of foster children could be expanded</p>	<p>5.4.1. Recommendations related to social work practice</p> <p>5.4.2. Recommendations related to social work training and education</p> <p>5.4.3. Recommendations related to social work and social welfare policy</p> <p>5.4.4. Recommendations related to future research</p>

5.4.1 Recommendations related to social work practice

Although the findings of the study seemed to convey a bleak picture about the implementation of group work with foster children, it should be taken into consideration that some social workers are still determined to implement group work against all odds. Considering the host of challenges faced by social workers when providing services, which affect the implementation of group work, it is recommended that:

The Department of Social Development should provide an enabling environment for group work practice within the field of foster care by providing the required human resources to ease high caseloads, and financial resources and organisational support in terms of adequate office space and vehicles for the social workers to effectively apply the group work method.

A safe environment should be created where managers and employees feel comfortable sharing feedback and concerns about group work implementation without fear of retribution, as this will encourage managers to engage in direct social work or team activities, stay connected to ground-level realities, and build empathy for the challenges social workers face in delivering services, including the implementation of group work.

Monitoring the implementation of group work, including groups for foster children, should be intensified by reviewing the performance contracts of social workers to ensure that the purpose, role and expected outcomes of social group work are clearly defined and aligned with the department's goals, as this will help to close the value disparities between group work and other methods of intervention. This should be sustained by securing continuous and proactive support from senior management to embed group work principles into the departmental culture, not just as a "tick-box" exercise in the performance contract.

The Department of Social Development should reduce prioritising quantifiable data and performance targets because the unquantifiable benefits of group work as a method of intervention become dismissed or undervalued in favour of the set target to reach high numbers of service users.

5.4.2 Recommendations related to social work training and education

The study has shown that although social workers have formal training on group work, more could be done to continuously develop them in this method of social work intervention. It is therefore recommended that specialised training programmes focusing on formal, ongoing training and professional development opportunities specifically focused on the theories, methods and facilitation skills required for effective group work should be developed so that social workers can continue to update their knowledge on new developments around group work. This can be done in line with the mandatory requirement of the CPD policy of the SACSSP, which requires social service professionals to maintain high standards of practice and stay current with professional knowledge.

5.4.3 Recommendations related to social work and social welfare policy

The study has revealed that there are various factors that impede the application of group work, with foster children, but also in general, which need to be coordinated at a policy level to influence change. These include dominance of individual work or casework and a lack of funding and resources for group work. It is therefore recommended that social workers should actively engage in policy practice and advocacy to ensure that policies recognise and support the value of all social work methods, including group work. It is also recommended that there must be clear memorandums of understanding between government departments and non-profit

organisations (NGOs) that promote collaboration, networking forums and partnerships to improve resource sharing for effective group work service delivery. These may include sharing spaces for group work, such as school classrooms and churches, and for the Department of Basic Education to allow children to attend group work sessions during school hours, as it emerged to be difficult to access foster children after school hours.

5.4.4 Recommendations related to future research

Social workers play a crucial role in responding to the needs of vulnerable groups, but due to the demanding nature of social work, social workers are frequently affected by a number of factors, such as demanding and challenging roles and duties that result in work-related fatigue, excessive workload, and scarce resources (Skhosana, 2020:119). The foster care sector needs additional research to describe the South African context, particularly concerning this population of young people who are seen as vulnerable and at risk of unfavourable life outcomes (Phillip, 2020:85). Future research is important to ensure that interventions are effective, strengthening the profession's credibility and moving the profession from guesswork to scientifically supported practice.

Considering the findings from the empirical study concerning the views of social workers on the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children, it is recommended that further research focuses on the views of foster children regarding the use of group work to advance their social competence, as their voices were not heard in this study. This study was only conducted with 18 social workers from nine service points at the Department of Social Development in the Tshwane region. To draw comparative conclusions of the status quo on group work within the Tshwane region, there is a need for continuous research in other regions and across the country, so as to gain insight into the dynamics regarding the implementation of group work with foster children.

5.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, a summary and conclusion in relation to the literature review and theoretical framework applied in this study were presented. This was followed by the summary and conclusion of the description of the applied research process.

The empirical findings, obtained through the semi-structured interviews, were discussed and interpreted in this chapter. The identifying details of participants, regarding aspects such as their age and the number of years they had worked in foster care services, and the number of foster children the participants had in their caseload, were summarised.

The participants' definition and understanding of social competence, participants' views on suitable methods to develop the social competence of foster children, group work as a method to advance social competence in foster children, participants' experiences in group work and work-related factors impeding the application of group work were presented.

Furthermore, in relation to the problem statement in Chapter 1, the researcher determined that group work could be used to great benefit to advance the social competence of foster children; however, several challenges prevent social workers from employing this intervention strategy. The researcher could thus determine why social workers avoid using group work by investigating challenges associated with the planning and execution of the method. These challenges comprise, yet are not restricted to, imbalanced work allocation and high caseload, lack of budget for group work activities, shortage of cars, managers' lack of interest in group work, unsuitable office infrastructure, no consequences for not conducting group work and lack of capacity building for social workers in relation to group work.

This chapter, therefore, fulfilled the final objective of this research by means of providing various suggestions and recommendations concerning the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children. The ultimate aim of the research study was also achieved since a better understanding of the views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children was gained.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abdallah, M.M.S. 2024. *The role and function of literature review in educational research studies: a pragmatic perspective*. [O]. Available from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/385003179_The_Role_and_Function_of_Literature_Review_in_Educational_Research_Studies_A_Pragmatic_Perspective [2025/09/24].

Adeboye, T.K., Guerreiro, M.D. & Hojer, I. 2019. Unveiling the experience of young people in foster care: perspective from Portugal and Nigeria. *International Social Work*, 62(1):433-446.

Adeoye, M.A. 2024. Mastering the basics: a guide to research methodology for effective writing and publication. *Chalim Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 4(1):30-41.

Adheisat, M. 2022. Family educational role in developing social skills in kindergarten children of Jordan. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(5):1236-1253.

African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). 2023. *Children without parental care in Africa*. [O]. Available from:

<https://www.acerwc.africa/en/article/activity/launch-continental-study-children-without-parental-care-africa> [2024/09/24].

Agayeva, G.S.G. 2021. Relationships in the family and their influence on the formation of the child's personality. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Economy*, 1(33):1-5.

Ahmed, S.K. 2024. *How to choose a sampling technique and determine sample size for research: a simplified guide for researchers*. [O]. Available from: <https://www.journals.elsevier.com/oral-oncology-reports>. [2025/09/15].

Alamu, O.I. 2022. Challenges of social work in Nigeria: a policy agenda. *African Journal of Social Work*, 12(3):116-122.

Ali, S.E., Ndubuisi, O.G., Obiorah, C.A.R., Aku, U.T., Nesiama, O. & Agbakhamen, C.O. 2025. Ethical standard in research: a professional imperative. *International Journal of Innovative Scientific & Engineering*, 13(1):94-104.

- Aliim, A. & Ayriza, Y. 2019. Improving the social competence of the students of SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Sleman through social skill training. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 33:304-308.
- Alzahrani, M.M. 2021. Developing children's resilience and overcome recent challenges. *International Journal of the Whole Child*, 6(2):19-26.
- Amrei, M.T., Sharifi, N. & Taheri, A. 2020. A model for practicing social competence from resilience by interpreting the mediating role of academic adjustment of medical students of Mazandaran. *International Journal of Medical Investigation*, 9(3):17-36.
- Anglin, A.H., Kincaid, P.A., Short, J.C. & Allen, D.G. 2022. Role theory perspective: past, present, and future application of role theories in management research. *Journal of Management*, 48(6):1-34.
- Antony, A. 2020. *Social group work*. [O]. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339727452_Social_Group_Work_Guidance_for_Practice. [2025/07/18].
- Anupama, K., Chaudhary, P. & Lakshmi, T. 2023. Introduction of a pilot study. *Int J Eth Trauma Victimology*, 9(2):33-35.
- Arshad, M., Khalid, A. & Hassan, M.S. 2020. Scope of social work practice in childcare social welfare institution: policies, practices and problems. *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies*, 6(2):949-957.
- Arslan, A. 2023. Characteristics, types and functions of family concept. *African Educational Research Journal*, 11(1):45-48.
- Azam, G. & Mazid, A. 2022. Social work practice in Bangladesh: contextual issues and challenges. *Addaiyan Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(8):6-21.
- Babic, M.M., Zganec, N. & Berc, G. 2021. Social worker perspective on working conditions, social attitudes towards the profession and recommendations for its advancement. *Ljetopis socijalnog rada (Social Work Annals)*, 28(2):353-373.
- Bahishti, A.A. 2022. The vital role of research methodology in addressing the research questions. *International Journal of Methodology*, 1(1):1-1.

- Bak, T. & Szot, L. 2018. Foster care as a form of support to dysfunctional families – theoretical views and social work research perspectives. *Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention*, 9(4):7-15.
- Barroga, E., Matanguihan, G.J., Furuta, A., Arima, M., Tsuchiya, S., Kawahara, C., Takamiya, Y. & Izumi, M. 2023. Conducting and writing quantitative and qualitative research. *J Korean Med Sci*, 38(37):1-16.
- Bashir, N. & Peerzada, N. 2022. Social competence: a review analysis. *Journal for Re Attach Therapy and Developmental Diversities*, 5(2):259-265.
- Bazen, A., Barg, F.K. & Takeshita, J. 2021. Research techniques made simple: an introduction to qualitative research. *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*, 141(0):241-247.
- Bhujbal, M.P. & Verma, S. 2024. The influence of peer pressure on students: cause, effect and strategies for intervention. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)*, 6(5):1-10.
- Biggs, K., Hind, D., Gossage-Worrall, R., Sprange, K., White, D., Wright, J., Chatters, R., Berry, K., Papaioannou, D., Bradburn, M., Walters, S.J. & Cooper, C. 2020. Challenges in the design, planning and implementation of trials evaluating group interventions. *School of Health and Related Research (SchARR)*, 21(1):1-16.
- Busetto, L., Wick, W. & Gumbinger, C. 2020. How to use and assess qualitative research methods. *Neurological Research and Practice*, 2(14):1-10.
- Casteel, A. & Bridier, N.L. 2021. Describing populations and samples in doctoral student research. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 16:339-362.
- Castro, C., Labra, O., Grenier, S. & Dunoyer, A. 2022. Group social intervention by social workers: challenges and issues. *Social Work With Groups*, 47(1):1-15.
- Chakraborty, C. 2024. Sampling in business research: a profound understanding. *International Journal of Research and Analytic Reviews (IJRAR)*, 11(1):520-538.
- Chibwana, M.W.T. 2019. Foster care ontologies: a qualitative study in Zimbabwe. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 11(6):118-131.

Chukwu, N., Chukwu, N.N. & Nwadike, N. 2017. Methods of social practice. In Okoye, U., Chukwu, N. & Agwu, P. (Eds.). *Social work in Nigeria*. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press Ltd.

Ciftci, H.D., Ceylan, R. & Colak, F.G. 2021. The relationship between preschool children's social competence skills and their ability to communicate with their mothers. *Participatory Education Research (PER)*, 8(2):435-459.

Coholic, D. 2024. Writing about group work and for social work with groups. *Social Work with Groups*, 47(4):299-302.

Crawford, M. 2020. Ecological systems theory: exploring the development of the theoretical framework as conceived by Bronfenbrenner. *Journal of Public Health Issues and Practices*, 4(2):1-6.

Dalgaard, N.T., Villumsen, A.M.A., Sorensen, K.M., Midgley, N., Vaever, M.S., Almlund, M. & Pontoppidan, M. 2023. Holding a foster child's mind in mind: study protocol for a cluster-randomized controlled trial of mentalization-based therapy (MBT) for foster families. *BMC Psychology*, 11(62):1-13.

Daniel, B.K. 2019. Using the TACT framework to learn the principles of rigour in qualitative research. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 17(3):118-129.

Dawadi, S. 2020. Thematic analysis approach: a step by step guide for ELT research practitioners. *Journal of NELTA*, 25(1-2):62-71.

Deedat, H.A. 2020. Perennial factors impacting foster care placement stability: Perspectives of alumni of foster care who worked directly with children and youth in foster care. *The Journal of Foster Care*, 1(1):36-48.

Department of Social Development. 2019. *National child care and protection policy: working together to advance the rights of all children to care and protection*. [O]. Available from: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202102/national-child-care-and-protection-policy.pdf [2024/09/15].

Department of Social Development. 2021. *Revised White Paper on Families in South Africa*. *Government Gazette*, Vol. 586, No. 44799 (2 July). Pretoria: Government Printer.

- Deutsch, S.A., Lynch, A., Zlotnik, S., Matone, M., Kreider, A., & Noonan, K. 2015. Mental health, behavioral and developmental issues for youth in foster care. *Curr Probl Pediatr Adolesc Health Care*, 45(10):292-297.
- Dev, K. 2024. A study of research ethics and challenges. *Global International Research Thoughts*, 12(2):7-11.
- Devkar, R.S. & Waghmare, P.D. 2024. Social workers and communication barriers in a community: the story so far. *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research*, 18(8):1-2.
- Dewi, I.G.A.A.O. 2021. Understanding data collection methods in qualitative research: the perspective of interpretive accounting research. *Journal of Tourism Economics and Policy*, 1(1):8-15.
- De-xin, T. 2018. A hands-on approach towards the application of research methods in academic paper writing. *Journalism and Mass Communication*, 8(4):196-214.
- Dhir, K.S. & Gupta, P. 2021. Formulation of research question and composing study outcomes and objectives. *Indian Pediatrics*, 58(6):584-588.
- Dhludhlu, S.L. 2024. Challenges and barriers experienced by youths leaving the foster care system in Tshwane District Municipality, Gauteng Province. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 60(3):554-574.
- Dicataldo, R., Moscardino, U., Roch, M. & Mammarella, I.C. 2023. Inhibitory control, social cognition and peer social competence among children with and without a migration background in Italy. *Education Science*, 13(7):2-15.
- Diraditsile, K. & Ntseane, D. 2022. Feasibility of entrepreneurship development as a secondary method of social work practice: food for thought. *African Journal of Social Work*, 12(1):58-66.
- Dogan, T. & Camurcu, S. 2025. Communication and the importance in child development. *Contemporary Issues of Communication*, 4(1):102-111.
- Dubey, U.K. & Kothari, D.P. 2022. *Research methodology: technique and trends*. New York: Chapman and Hall/CRC.
- Ebue, M., Uche, O. & Agha, A. 2017. *Levels of intervention in social work*. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press Ltd.

- Emovon, S., Gutura, P. & Ntombela, N. 2021. Support for non-relative female foster parents in South Africa: quality of care and placement outcomes. *Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development*, 33(1):1-17.
- Emovon, S.O., Gutura, P. & Ntombela, N.H. 2019. Caring for non-relative foster children in South Africa: voices of female foster parents. *Ubuntu: Journal of Conflict and Social Transformation*, 8(2):9-30.
- Ezhumalai, S., Muralidhar, D., Dhanasekarapandian, R. & Nikketha, B.S. 2018. Group interventions. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 60(51):4-21.
- Fallesen, P. 2013. Time well spent: the duration of foster care and early adult labour market, educational, and health outcomes. *Journal of Adolescence*, 36(6):1003-1011.
- Feeny, K.R. 2020. *Youth with disabilities in foster care: prevalence, barriers and long-term effects*. Boone, North Carolina: Appalachian State University. (Honors Thesis).
- Finne, J., Ekeland, T.J. & Malmberg-Heimonen, I. 2022. Social workers use of knowledge in an evidence-based framework: a mixed methods study. *European Journal of Social Work*, 25(3):443-456.
- Firdaus, F., Zulfadilla, Z. & Caniago, F. 2021. Research methodology: types in the new perspective. *Manazhim: Journal Manajemen dan Ilmu Pendidikan*, 3(1):1-16.
- Font, S.A. & Gershoff, E.T. 2020. Foster care: how we can, and should, do more for maltreated children. *HSS Public Access*, 33(3):1-40.
- Fouché, C.B & Geyer, L.S. 2021. Developing the research proposal. In Fouché, C.B., Strydom, H. & Roestenburg, W.J.H. 2021. *Research at grass roots: For social science and human profession*. 5th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Foudad, H. 2020. Self-confidence in children. *ACTA Psychopathologica*, 6(3):1-2.
- Frosch, C.A., Schoppe-Sullivan, S.J. & O'Banion, D.D. 2019. Parenting and child development: a relational health perspective. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, 15(1):45-59.
- Gaas, J.T. 2022. Understanding the social work methods: towards addressing the social needs of the early childhood education. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education (INT-JECSE)*, 14(08):1634-1648.

Gamage, A.N.K.K. 2025. Research design, philosophy, and qualitative approaches in scientific research methodology. *Scholars Journal of Engineering and Technology*, 13(2):91-103.

Georgevici, G.F. & Dragoi, P. 2023. *The social worker's importance in foster care cases*. [O]. Available from: <https://www.sociologiecraiova.ro/revista/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/17>. [2025/07/21].

Geyer, S. (2021). Interviews as data collection method. In Fouché, C.B. (ed.), Strydom, H. & Roestenburg, W.J.H. *Research at grass roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. 5th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Ghanad, A. 2023. An overview of quantitative research methods. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Analysis*, 06(08):3794-3803.

Gobingca, B.Z. & Mqolombeni, N. 2024. Perspective of rural teachers on the effect of peer pressure on learners' behaviour – a case of the Mqanduli Magisterial District, South Africa. *Journal for Education and Learning Technology (JELT)*, 5(10):528-540.

Goemans, A., van Geel, M., van Beem, M., & Vedder, P. 2016. Developmental outcomes of foster children: A meta-analytic comparison with children from the general population and children at risk who remained at home. *Child Maltreatment*, 21(3):198–217.

Gunhidzirai, C. 2023. An ecological systems approach to assess the well-being of street children in Zimbabwe: implications for developmental social work practice. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 59(4):282-303.

Hadler, N.L. & Van Schalkwyk, G.I. 2025. Beyond psychotropic: critical strategies for supporting youth in foster care. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 19(15):1-4.

Hailu, S. 2020. *Social work practice: roles and challenges of social worker in mental health illness rehabilitation centre in the case of Gefersa Mental Health Rehabilitation Centre*. Addis Ababa: ST. Mary's University. (MA Dissertation).

Harkin, C. & Houston, S. 2016. Reviewing the literature on the breakdown of foster care placements for young people: complexity and the social work task. *Child Care in Practice*, 22(2):98-112.

Harlow, E. 2022. Children's rights, deinstitutionalization and the development of foster care services across the world. *Practice Social Work in Action*, 34(3):171-183.

Hasan, N., Rana, R.U., Chowdhury, S., Dola, A.J. & Rony, M.K.K. 2021. Ethical considerations in research. *Journal of Nursing Research, Patient Safety and Practice*, 01(01):1-4.

Hayes, C., Tongs, C., Bhaskara, A. & Buus, N. 2023. Qualitative studies of the lived experiences of being in foster care: a scoping review protocol. *BMJ Open*, 13(2):1-4.

Hendricks, E.A. 2021. The view of foster parents' on the adequacy of foster care grant in meeting the needs of recipients in Amathole district, South Africa. *Social Work & Social Sciences Review*, 22(2):103-115.

Herselman, M., Schiller, U. & Tanga, P. 2023. Is the developmental social welfare approach to child protection services working? Voices of children, families and social workers in Eastern Cape, South Africa. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 59(2):64-87.

Indu, P.V. & Vidhukumar, K. 2020. Research designs – an overview. *Keral Journal of Psychiatry*, 32(1):64-67.

Islam, S. & Samsudin, S. 2020. Characteristics, importance and objectives of research: an overview of the indispensable of ethical research. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 10(5):331-335.

Jacobsen, H., Bergsund, H.B., Wentzel-Larsen, T., Smith, L. & Moe, V. 2020. Foster children are at risk for developing problems in social-emotional functioning: A Follow-up study at 8 years of age. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 108(7):1-10.

Johnson, J.L., Adkins, D. & Chauvin, S. 2020. A review of the quality indicators of rigor in qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 84(1):138-146.

Jones, A.M. & Morris, T.L. 2012. Psychological adjustment of children in foster care: review and implications for best practice. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 6(2):129-148.

Jowsey, T., Deng, C. & Weller, J. 2021. General-purpose thematic analysis: a useful qualitative method for anaesthesia research. *British Journal of Anaesthesia*, 21(12):472-478.

- Junge, C., Valkenburg, P.M., Dekovic, M. & Branje, S. 2020. The building blocks of social competence: contribution of the consortium of individual development. *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, 45, 100861. [O]. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcn.2020.100861> [2025/11/06].
- Kaizar, V.O. & Alordiah, C.O. 2023. Understanding the role of play in promoting cognitive, social, and emotional development in school children: implications for counsellors and evaluators. *University of Delta Journal of Contemporary Studies in Education*, 2(1):138-152.
- Kakar, Z.U.H., Rasheed, R., Rashid, A. & Akhter, S. 2023. Criteria for assessing and ensuring the trustworthiness in qualitative research. *International Journal of Business Reflection*, 4(2):150-173.
- Kamrujjaman, M.D., Demetriou, C., Alvarez, T.C. & Delgado, C.R. 2023. The role of social work for emergency medical services (EMS): a systematic review. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 38(5):628-635.
- Kang, E. & Hwang, H. 2021. Ethical conduct in qualitative research methodology: participant observation and interview process. *Journal of Research and Publication Ethics*, 2(2):5-10.
- Kapoor, T. & Sethi, S.R. 2024. The impact of family environment on self-esteem and resilience among college day scholars and hostellers. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(2):1385-1405.
- Kayili, G. & Erdal, Z. 2021. Children's problem solving skills: does drama based storytelling method work?. *Journal of Childhood, Education & Society*, 2(1):43-57.
- Kehinde, S. 2025. Writing a statement of research problem. *SAR Journal*, 8(1):93-98.
- Khanday, S.A. & Khanam, D. 2019. The research design. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 6(3):367-376.
- Khanyi, V. & Malesa, K.J. 2022. Challenges faced by social workers in rendering services to Nyaope substance users. *Social Work Journal*, 58(3):31-45.
- Khatri, K.K. 2020. Research paradigm: a philosophy of educational research. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Science*, 5(5):1435-1440.

- Kinyua, R.F. 2023. Quantitative research designs: a review of extant literature. *Journal of Technology & Socio-Economic Development*, 11(1):192-203.
- Kivunja, C. & Kuyini, A.B. 2017. Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 6(5):26-41.
- Konijn, C., Admiraal, S., Baart, J., van Rooij, F., Stams, G., Colonesi, C., Lindauer, R. & Assink, M. 2019. Foster care placement instability: a meta-analytic review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, (96)(0):483-499.
- Kumar, L. 2022. Understanding research paradigm war. *People's Dialogue on Education*, 14(2):1-13.
- Kunselman, A.R. 2024. A brief overview of pilot studies and their sample size justification. *American Society for Reproductive Medicine*, 121(6):899-901.
- Lesniewski, R. 2020. *Administrative vector map of City of Tshwane*. [O]. Available from: https://www.shutterstock.com/image-vector/administrative-vector-map-city-tshwane-metropolitan-1810191514?dd_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.co.za%2F. [2025/09/09].
- Lester, J.N., Cho, Y. & Lochmiller, R. 2020. Learning to do qualitative data analysis: a starting point. *Human Resource Development Review*, 19(1):94-106.
- Liang, M.J. 2025. The impact of supervision function and the development of new social work professional knowledge and ability on service performance – taking the case management service for individuals with disabilities in Taiwan, a City as an example. *Journal of Social Work and Social Welfare Policy*, 3(1):1-9.
- Lincoln, YS. & Guba, EG. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lim, W.M. 2025. What is qualitative research? An overview and guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 33(2):199-229.
- Machiridza, L.H. & Muringani, J. 2023. Understanding and developing a problem statement: a guide for novice researchers. *Annals of Reviews and Research*, 10(2):1-5.

- Majid, U. 2018. Research fundamentals: study design, population, and sample size. *Undergraduate Research in Natural and Clinical Science and Technology (URNCSST) Journal*, 2(1):1-7.
- Makwana, D., Engineer, P., Dabhi, A. & Chudasama, H. 2023. Sampling methods in research: a review. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (IJTSRD)*, 7(3):762-767.
- Maluleke, T. & Bhuda, G.B. 2024. The perspectives of social work supervisees on the quality of supervision in the Giyani region of Limpopo province, South Africa. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 60(2):425-448.
- Malusi, P. 2020. *The experiences of youth after exiting the foster care system in South Africa: A case study of Kou-kamma Municipality, Eastern Cape Province*. Alice: University of Fort Hare. (MA Dissertation).
- Manamela, N.P., Rapholo, S.F. & Singwane, T.P. 2024. The lived experiences of cluster foster parents in caring for foster care children with special needs in Mpumalanga, South Africa. *Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 21(3): 251-262.
- Mangolele, L.R. & Calitz, T.M. 2025. Exploring the resilience skills and strategies of social workers. *Health SA Gesondheid*, 30(0):1-8.
- Mangolele, L.R. 2024. *Exploring resilience skills and strategies of social workers: a qualitative study within the department of social development, Johannesburg*. Pretoria: University of South Africa. (MA Dissertation).
- Maphosa, N. 2022. Using group work intervention to address the psychological impact of exposure to domestic violence on adolescents. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 58(1)(4):46-60.
- Maphoto, K.S. 2020. *The views of designated social workers on the South African foster care system*. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg. (MA Dissertation).
- Marandi, B.F., Kakabarabee, K. & Hosseini, S.A. 2020. The effect of problem-solving training on social skills of preschool children. *Quarterly Journal of Child Mental Health*, 6(4):131-143.
- Marvit, E. 2025. *Engage & Empower: Foundations of Social Work Practice*. New York: Open Touro.

- Mathebane, M.S. 2020. Quizzing the 'social' in social work: social work in Africa as a system of colonial social control. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 31(2):77-92.
- Matlakala, F.K., Makhubele, J.C. & Nyahunda, L. 2022. Social workers' intervention during natural hazards. *Jamba – Journal of Disaster Risk Studies*, 14(1):1-6.
- Mattick, K., Johnston, J. & de la Croix, A. 2018. How to...write a good research question. *Clin Teach*, 15(2):104-108.
- Mehrad, A. & Zangeneh, M.T. 2019. Comparison between qualitative and quantitative research approaches: social science distances learning user interface view project. *International Journal for Research in Educational Studies*, 5(7):1-7.
- Mirza, H., Bellalem, F. & Mirza, C. 2023. Ethical considerations in qualitative research: summary guidelines for novice social science researchers. *Social Studies and Research Journal*, 11(01):441-449.
- Mlynski, J. & Czechowska-Kosacka, A. 2024. Social workers community social service manager in the era of sustainable development. *European Research Studies Journal*, XXVII(3):1058-1068.
- Mogale, M.S. 2019. *The experience of youth who have aged out of non-kinship foster care in Tshwane Metro, Gauteng*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (MA Dissertation).
- Mohammed, P. & Engler, A. 2022. The role of family and family context in the learning process of children. *Vietnam Journal of Education*, 6(1):1-9.
- Mohsin, T.R.A. & Ghalavandi, H. 2025. Investigating the relationship between social skills and social acceptance with academic performance, considering the mediating role of ethical privacy. *International Journal of Ethics & Society*, 7(1):35-44.
- Mokgalapa, M.A. & Rapholo, F.S. 2021. Foster care backlog amongst social workers in the Capricorn District, Limpopo province, South Africa. *African Journal of Social Work*, 11(6):379-387.
- Mosala, M. & Wilson, L. 2024. Challenges faced by social workers rendering foster care services in the John Taolo Gaetsewe District, Northern Cape Province. *Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development*, 36(1):1-17.

- Mosala, M.K. 2022. *Challenges faced by social workers in foster care services: a case of John Taolo Gaetsewe District, Northern Cape Province*. North-West: North-West University. (MA Dissertation).
- Mpofu, P. & Machingauta, T.T. 2024. The dynamics of foster care in the Kingdom of Eswatini: benefits, challenges and strategies for effective foster parenting. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Rural and Community Studies*, 6:1-16.
- Mshigeni, D., Borieux, M. & Shepard, E. 2022. Child welfare social workers' decision-making challenges associated with clinical practice, organisational and sociopolitical factors. *Advances in Social Work Welfare and Education: Social Work in a Climate of Change*, 24(1):27-37.
- Muzari, T., Shava, G.N. & Shonhiwa, S. 2022. Qualitative research paradigm, a key research design for educational researchers, processes and procedures: a theoretical overview. *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 03(01):14-20.
- Mwita, K.M. 2022. Factors influencing data saturation in qualitative studies. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 11(4):414-420.
- Myaka, B. 2021. *Participation in continuous professional development: exploring views of social workers in the Johannesburg child protection field*. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand. (MA Dissertation).
- Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K. & Ranfagni, S. 2024. Demystification and actualisation of data saturation in qualitative research through thematic analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 23:1-7.
- Neumann, M.M. 2023. Building resilience capacity in young children: practical insights for early childhood educators. *Childhood Education*, 99(2):32-39.
- Nkosi, W.B. 2020. *Family adjustment and support interventions in foster care families: experiences of caregivers and social workers in the Majuba District*. Kwazulu-Natal: University of Kwazulu-Natal. (MA Dissertation).
- Noble, H. & Smith, J. 2025. Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evid Based Nurs*, 0(0):1-3.
- Ntshongwana, Z. & Tanga, P. 2018. The life experiences of foster parents who nurture foster children in Zwelitsha, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. *African Journal of Social Work*, 8(1):14-20.

- Ntshongwana, Z. & Tanga, P. 2022. Social work impediments in providing effective services to families confronting family violence in South Africa. *African Journal of Social Work*, 12(1):42-49.
- Nurindahsari, S.F.E. & Rocmah, L.I. 2024. Increasing the confidence of children aged 4-5 years through role playing. *Journal of Higher Education and Academic Advancement*, 1(2):330-338.
- Nyathi, G.T. 2022. *Challenges experienced by social work graduates upon entering employment*. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg. (MA Dissertation).
- Nyongesa, W.J. & van der Westhuizen, J. 2023. The effect of performance contracting on public service delivery of employees in Huduma Centres in Western Kenya. *African Journal of Inter/Multidisciplinary Studies*, 5(1):1-16.
- O'Donnell, C. 2021. Accessing health care as a foster child. *Journal of Health Care Law and Policy*, 24(12):157-177.
- Ossorio, D.F. & De Carvalho, J. 2021. Kinship and non-kinship foster care placements: placement stability, academic attainment, and delinquency. *Journal of Education & Social Policy*, 8(3):19-31.
- Oswald, S.H., Heil, K. & Goldbeck, L. 2010. History of maltreatment and mental health problems in foster children: a review of the literature. *J Pediatr Psychol*, 35(5):462-72.
- Organisation of African Unity (1990). *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*, OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/24.9/49, Addis Ababa: OAU. [O]. Available from: <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/oau/1990/en/13798> [2025/07/20].
- Ozbey, S. & Gozeler, K.M. 2020. A study on the effect of the social skill education on the academic self respect and problem solving skills of the pre-school children. *International e-Journal of Educational Studies (IEJES)*, 4(8):176-189.
- Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. 2019. *Overview of the foster care system in South Africa*. Cape Town: Research Unit. [O]. Available from: <https://static.pmg.org.za/190904overview.pdf> [2025/07/18].
- Patel, M. & Patel, N. 2019. Exploring research methodology: review article. *International Journal of Research and Review*, 6(3):48-55.

Pawliczek, A., Navratilova, D., Kolos, P., Kolumber, S. & Chlopecky, J. 2022. Citizen behaviour in the context of organisational justice and role theory as the most popular recent topic in organizational behaviour: rapid review results. *The Journal of Organizational Management Studies*, Vol. 2022:1-15.

Pekdogan, S. & Akgul, E. 2021. Decision-making as a predictor of problem-solving skills in 5-6-year-old children. *Journal of Education and Future*, (19):25-35.

Phillip, M. 2020. *The experience of youth after exiting the foster care system in South Africa: a case study of Kou-kamma Municipality, Eastern Cape Province*. Alice: University of Fort Hare. (MA Dissertation).

Preeti & Rani, R. 2023 A study of the relationship between social skills, parental involvement and academic achievement of adolescent students. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, 11(2):129-132.

Priti, & Rani, R. 2018. Social competency among 9th grade students in relation to their self perception. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Science and Technology (IJSRST)*, 4(2):665-670.

Rajput, P. & Renu. 2024. The power of social skills: unleashing academic success and beyond. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 5(4):4055-4057.

Republic of South Africa (RSA). 2006. Children's Act 38 of 2005. *Government Gazette*, (33076) Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa (RSA). 2007. Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007. *Government Gazette*, (30884) Cape Town: Government Printer.

Republic of South Africa (RSA). 2022. Children's Amendment Act 17 of 2022. *Government Gazette*, (47828) Cape Town: Government Printer.

Republic of South Africa (RSA). 1996. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. *Government Gazette, Number 108*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa (RSA). 1997. Ministry for Welfare and Population Development. White Paper for Social Welfare. Notice 1108 of 1997. *Government Gazette*, 386(18166). Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa (RSA). 2022. Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004: Regulations relating to the application for and payment of social assistance and the requirements

or conditions in respect of eligibility for social assistance. *Government Gazette*, (464559) Cape Town: Government Notice.

Republic of South Africa (RSA). 1978. Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Riak, G.A. & Bill, D.B.A. 2022. Introduction to research methodology. *IJRDO-Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 7(8):159-178.

Risnawati, E., Rahmanadia, H., Rahmawati, O.D., Gusti, V.Y.K. 2023. The role of father's involvement and social competence on academic achievement in children. *International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education*, 5(2):282-290.

Ronad, I. 2022. The role of social worker in community development. *An International Multidisciplinary Online Journal*, 2(8):1-4.

Roostin, E. 2018. Family influence on the development of children. *Journal of Elementary Education*, 2(1):1-12.

Ruslin, R., Mashuri, S., Rasak, M.S.A., Alhabsyi, F. & Syam, H. 2022. Semi-structured interview: a methodological reflection on the development of a qualitative research instrument in educational studies. *Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, 12(1):22-29.

Sajeevanie, T.L. 2021. Literature review and academic research. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 9(1):2320-2882.

Salik, S. & Mushtaq, R. 2023. Exploring social work skills differences between fostered and housed children: a comparative study. *Pakistan Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 22(2):81-91.

Salimi, M., Dardiri, A. & Sujarwo, S. 2021. The profile of students' social skills of Bengawan Solo elementary nature school. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 10(1):211-226

Samanth, M. 2024. A brief introduction to research methodology. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 12(5):20-39.

Sarkowi, S., Widat, F., Wadifah, N.I. & Rohmatika, D. 2023. Increasing children's self-confidence through parenting: management perspective. *Journal Obsesi: Journal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 7(3):3097-3106.

Scharein, M. 2023. *Social Workers' perspectives on the support needs of foster parents in cluster foster care schemes in South Africa*. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch. (MA Dissertation).

Selimovic, Z., Selimovic, H. & Opic, S. 2018. Development of social skills among elementary school children. *International Journal of Cognitive Research in Science, Engineering and Education*, 6(1):17-30.

Sharghi, S., Khalatbari, S., Laird, A., Lapidus, J., Enders, F.T., Meinzen-Derr, J., Tapia, A.L. & Ciolino, J.D. 2024. Race, ethnicity and considerations for data collection and analysis in research studies. *Journal of Clinical and Translational Science*, 8(1):1-10.

Shaikh, S.A. 2022. Research methodology's: an overview and guidelines. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 3(6):4106-4111.

Shakir, M. & Rahman, A.U. 2022. Conducting pilot study in a qualitative inquiry: learning some useful lessons. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(10):1620-1624.

Sharma, A. & Charulatha, K. 2024. Peer pressure: a comprehensive literature review of the last two decades. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)*, 6(2):1-6.

Sharma, A. 2024. The role of family structure in child development: a sociological viewpoint. *International Journal for Research Publication and Review*, 5(6):6611-6614.

Shava, G.N., Hleza, S., Tlou, F., Shonhiwa, S. & Mathonsi, E. 2021. Qualitative content analysis, utility, usability and processes in educational research. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, V(VII):553-558.

Shrivastava, A. 2020. Social workers and community development. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 8(7): 3107-3109.

Sial, Z.Z., Naz, F.L. & Rasheed, A. 2021. Relationship between students' social skills and academic achievement at university level. *VFAST Transactions on Education and Social Sciences*, 9(3):232-241.

- Sibanda, S. & Lombard, A. 2022. The nature of family reunification services in the Gauteng province. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 58(3):332-348.
- Sibanda, S. 2025. Addressing challenges faced by social workers in providing family reunification services to children in out of home care: a South African perspective. *Practice: Social Work in Action*, 0(0):1-16.
- Siboni, F.H., Sigaroudi, A.E., Pouralizadeh, M. & Maroufizadeh, S. 2023. Social competence and its related factors in high school students: a cross-sectional study. *Journal of Holistic Nursing and Midwifery*, 33(2):140-149.
- Siddiqua, A. 2023. Critique of research methodologies and methods in educational leadership. *World Journal of Education*, 13(4):16-24.
- Silveira-Zaldivar, T., Ozerk, G. & Ozerk, K. 2021. Developing social skills and social competence in children with autism. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 13(3):341-363.
- Simonovich, J., Sharabi, M. & Shahor, T. 2021. Israeli welfare and social work: 70 years on. *Israel affairs*, 27(3):594-608.
- Singh, P.S.J. & Azman, A. 2022. System theory and ecological approach in social work practice: an actual case illustration. *Asian Social Work Journal (ASWJ)*, 7(6):24-33).
- Singh, S.P., Chandra, U. & Kumar, P. 2022. Social competency: a theoretical approach. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education (INT-JECSE)*, 14(06):2331-2339.
- Singh, T.K. & Chandel, P.K. 2022. Peer pressure and peer influence in children and adolescence. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 10(3):1791-1801.
- Skhosana, R.M. 2020. The dilemma faced by NPOs in retaining social workers: a call to revisit the retention strategy. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 56(2):109-124.
- Smit, E.I. 2017. The value of role play as a precursor to group work: second-year students' viewpoints. *Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development*, 29(2):1-19.
- Smith, M.N. 2022. Occupational therapy's role in the foster care system. *The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 10(1):1-6.

Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978. [O]. Available from: https://ci.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/content_migration/health_uct_ac_za/533/files/SocialServiceProfessionsAct.pdf [2024/09/21].

Soid., Fatih, M., Fauzi, N. & Norman, E. 2025. Effective communication in building healthy and productive relationships. *MES Management Journal*, 4(1):662-671.

Sotshononda, T. 2020. *An exploration of experiences of youth exiting foster care system*. Cape Town: University of Western Cape. (MA Dissertation).

South African Council for Social Service Professions. 2021. *Policy on continuing professional development (CPD) for social workers and social auxiliary workers*. Revised, November 2021. [O]. Available from: <https://www.sacssp.co.za/policy-and-guidelines> [2025/07/20].

South African Social Security Agency. 2021. *Branch: strategic and business development. Twelfth statistical report: payment system*. Period: March 2021. [O]. Available from: <https://www.sassa.gov.za/Pages/Statistical-Reports.aspx> [2025/10/22].

Srikandi, S. 2020. The Importance of the role of the family in protecting children: a conceptual paper. *Advances in social science, education and health research, volume 501. Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Education and Technology (ICET 2020). 04 December, Indonesia*.

Stahl, N.A. & King, J.R. 2020. Expanding approaches for research: understanding and using trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 44(1):26-28.

Stratton, S.J. 2021. Population research: convenience sampling strategies. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 36(4):1-2.

Strydom, M., Schiller, U. & Orme, J. 2020. The current landscape of child protection services in South Africa: A systematic review. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 56(4):383-402.

Suswandari, M., Siswandari, S., Sunardi, S. & Gunarhadi, G. 2020. Social Skills for primary school students: needs analysis to implement the scientific approach based curriculum. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 11(1):153-162.

Swarooprani, K. 2022. An study of research methodology. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Science, Engineering and Technology*, 9(3):537-543.

Swezey, K.M. 2018. *Developing life skills to eliminate negative behaviors among foster youth*. California: California State University. (MA Thesis).

Taherdoost, H. 2021. Data collection methods and tools for research; a step-by-step guide to choose data collection technique for academic and business research projects. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM)*, 10(1):10-38.

Taherdoost, H. 2022. What are different research approaches? Comprehensive review of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method research, their applications, types, and limitations. *Journal of Management Science & Engineering Research*, 05(01):53-63.

Tamilnadu, C. 2020. Strengthening the application of social work methods in industries. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 8(4):2281-2290.

Taylor, S., Cairns, A. & Glass, B. 2020. Role theory: a framework to explain health professional perception of expanding rural community pharmacists' role. *Pharmacy*, 8(3):1-13.

The Fostering Network. 2021. *Fostering statistics*. [O]. Available from: <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/all-about-fostering/fostering-statistics>. [2022/09/21].

Thebe, B.M.C. & Malan, H. 2025. Toolkits utilized by social workers rendering family reunification services to child offenders in foster care. *British Journal of Social Work*, 55:2099-2117.

Toseland, W.R. & Rivas, R.F. 2022. *Introduction to group work practice*. 9th ed. United Kingdom: Pearson Education Limited.

Trueba, A.F. & Pluck, G. 2021. Social support is related to the use of adaptive emotional regulation strategies in Ecuadorian adolescents in foster care. *Psych*, 3(2):39-47.

- Tsima, D.L. & Ncube, M.E. 2023. Implementing the supervision framework for the social work profession: supervisors' views and experience. *South African Journal of Social Work and Social Development*, 35(3):1-21.
- Turin, T.C., Raihan, M.M.H. & Chowdhury, N.A. 2024. Paradigms of approaches to research. *Bangabandhu Sheik Mujib Medical University Journal*, 17(2):1-4.
- Turner, T. & Burton, S. 2023. *Placement instability and its effects on the mental health of foster youth*. California: California State University. (MA Thesis).
- Ugwu, C.N. & Eze, V.H.U. 2023. Qualitative research. *IDORS Journal of Computer and Applied Science*, 8(1):20-35.
- United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, United Nations, Treaty Series, 1577:3. [O]. Available from: https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1990/09/19900902%2003-14%20AM/Ch_IV_11p.pdf [2025/07/21].
- Uranta, D.T. & Ogbanga, M. 2017. Issues in social work methods and contemporary project in Africa. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Research*, 3(7):60-68.
- Van der Waldt, G. 2024. Constructing theoretical framework in social science research. *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, 20(1):1-12.
- Velasquez, L. & Merrill, A.C. 2023. *Social workers perspective on barriers to family reunification*. California: California State University. (MA Dissertation).
- Viljoen, C. 2020. *Challenges faced by social workers rendering services to adult homeless individuals*. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch. (MA Dissertation).
- Virbaliene, R. & Cizikiene, J. 2024. *The role of the social worker in developing children's independence in community care homes*. [O]. Available from: <https://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/resources/the-role-of-the-social-worker-in-developing-childrens-independence-in-community-care-home>. [2025/07/21].
- Vyas, M. & Gupta, D. 2020. Peer pressure among teenagers. *Iconic Research and Engineering Journals*, 3(10):159-161.
- Wendler, D. 2022. Deceiving research participants: is it inconsistent with valid consent? *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 47(0):558-571.

- Willie, M.M. 2024. Population and target population in research methodology. *Golden Ratio of Social Science and Education*, 4(1):75-79.
- Woyike, C. & Uzorka, M.C. 2021. Social work practice and community development in Ikwerre local government area, Rivers State. *International Journal of Institutional Leadership, Policy and Management*, 3(2):373-381.
- Yamauchi, L.A., Ponte, E., Ratliffe, K.T. & Traynor, K. 2017. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in research on family-school partnerships. *School Community Journal*, 27(2):9-33.
- Yaun, Y. 2023. Nurturing child development: the importance of social skills. *Journal of child & Adolescent Behavior*, 11(6)1-2.
- Yin, S. 2025. Exploring alternative care options for children in China: recent developments and challenges. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 19(3):634-658.
- Younas, A., Masih, Y. & Sundus, A. 2025. Alternative to 'saturation' for greater transparency in reporting of sample size decision-making in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 28(2):77-80.
- Yurtseven, R., Baysal, U.E.A. & Ocak, G. 2021. Analysis of the relationship between decision making skills and problem solving skills of primary school students. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, 8(3):2117-2130.
- Zhukova, O.A. 2018. Social competence: the components and the functions. *International Academy Journal Web of Scholar*, 9(27):22-29.
- Zimudzi, C. & Dhludhlu, S.L. 2024. Challenges experienced by youths leaving kinship foster care in Johannesburg, South Africa. *South African Journal of Social Work and Social Development*, 36(3):1-18.
- Zubaedah, A., Sianturi, R., Nabila, N. & Resviani, R. 2024. The role of communication in building early childhood social skills an RA Arrahmah. *Journal Ilmu Sosial dan Pendidikan (JISIP)*, 8(4):2656-6753.
- Zwebathu, K. 2018. *Roles of social workers working with unaccompanied minors: experiences of social workers in Gothenburg*. Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg. (MA Thesis).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Confirmation Letter from SRC



CONFIRMATION LETTER BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SCIENTIFIC REVIEW COMMITTEE (SRC) OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Name of candidate: Mr HA Ndobe
Student number: 53594517
Qualification: Master of Social Work (MSW)
Supervisor: Prof P Botha

Working title

The views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance social competence of foster children

The Departmental Scientific Review Committee (DSRC) in the Department of Social Work at Unisa has assessed the research proposal for **MSW degree** compliance for scientific validity. The DSRC confirms that:

- The research approach, design, recruitment method(s), data collection protocol(s) and relevant ethical considerations regarding informed consent, the rights of participants/respondents to withdraw from the study, the protection of the participants' privacy, confidentiality and management of the information are clearly articulated.

The DSRC recommends that the application be reviewed for ethics acceptability.

Kind regards

Prof HM Williams
Chairperson: Departmental Scientific Review Committee

Date: 2022-12-19



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 429 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

Appendix 2: Ethics Clearance Certificate



COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

10 February 2023

Dear Mr Hlengani Aubrey Ndobe

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # :
53594517_CREC_CHS_2023

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 10 February 2023 to 10 February 2024

Researcher(s): Name: Mr. H. A. Ndobe
Contact details: 53594517@mylife.unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s): Name: Prof. P. Botha
Contact details: bothap@unisa.ac.za

Title: THE VIEWS OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING THE USE OF GROUP WORK TO ADVANCE SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF FOSTER CHILDREN

Degree Purpose: Low

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for one year.

The *low risk application* was reviewed by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (**10 February 2024**). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number 53594517_CRECHS_2023 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Signature:



Prof. KB Khan
CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson
Email: khankb@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Signature: PP



Prof ZZ Nkosi
Acting-Executive Dean: CHS
E-mail: nkosizz@unisa.ac.za
Tel: 012 429 6758



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

Appendix 3: Application to DSD to Gather Information



APPLICATION FORM TO GATHER INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPMENT & RESEARCH
SUB-DIRECTORATE: RESEARCH

✉ Private Bag X 35, JOHANNESBURG, 2000
75 Commissioner Street, M-Floor
☎ (011) 355 7892
☎ (011) 227 0130

- (a) All applications will be considered by the Sub-directorate: Research after which approval/disapproval letter will be issued to the applicant.
- (b) All applications must be submitted in English.
- (d) Applications must be accompanied by all requested documentation.

(b) Clients (specify): Social workers within Tshwane Region Statutory Service Directorate (Intake and Field)

(c) Personnel (specify): Social Workers at the nine (9) Service Points of Department of Social Development, Tshwane Region

3. CONFIDENTIALITY

I, Hlengani Aubrey Ndobe

Undertake always to follow the principles of confidentiality during my research.

I understand that this means the following:

- (a) The information made available to me is exclusive for use in my research.
- (b) I will not reveal any identifying particulars of any respondent in the research, or of any person whose particulars became known to me through official records. This applies to the publication of the research report results and any other means of communication.
- (c) Publications are subjected to the Department's approval.

Furthermore, I understand that I am solely responsible for implementing the principles of confidentiality in my research. If these are breached in any way I, and not the Department, will be held responsible for any legal action.

SIGNED AT Refilwe (Cullinan) ON THE 3rd OF April 2023

WITNESSES

- 1. Full name: ANNAH MOLAI MOLELE
Address: 1768 TSHEPONG CENTER REFILWE, CULLINAN
- 2. Full name: PRUDENCE TABADINGATA POPOTWANE
Address: 1768 TSHEPONG CENTER REFILWE, CULLINAN

Appendix 4: Permission from DSD to Gather Information



Enquiries: Dr. Sello Mokoena
Tel: 082 331 0786
File no.: 11/05/2023

Dear HA Ndobe

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Thank you for your application to conduct research within the Gauteng Department of Social Development.

Your application on the research on *"The views of Social Workers regarding the use of group work to advance social competence of foster children."* as approved by *University of South Africa* been considered and approved for support by the Department as it was found to be beneficial to the Department's vision and mission. The approval is subject to the Department's terms and conditions as endorsed on the 13th November 2019.

You have permission to interview departmental officials and beneficiaries, conduct observations and access relevant documents where necessary.

May I take this opportunity to wish you well on the journey you are about to embark on.

We look forward to a value adding research and a fruitful co-operation.

With thanks


Dr Sello Mokoena
Director: Research and Policy Coordination

Date: 11/05/2023

Appendix 5: Researcher Acknowledgement Form

RESEARCHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Research title:

The views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance social competence of foster children

Researcher:

Hlengani Aubrey Ndobe

Hereby, I Hlengani Aubrey Ndobe, ID number 8412215792085, in my personal capacity as a researcher, acknowledge that I am aware of and familiar with the stipulations and contents of the

- Unisa Research Policy
- Unisa Ethics Policy
- Unisa IP Policy

and that I shall conform to and abide by these policy requirements.



Signature:

Date: 2 November 2022

Appendix 6: Participant Information Sheet

Research title:

The views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children

Researcher:

Hlengani Aubrey Ndobe

Ethics clearance reference number:

Research permission reference number (if applicable):

19 October 2022

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Hlengani Aubrey Ndobe, and I am doing research with Petro Botha, a professor in the Department of Social work towards a Master of Social Work degree at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled “The views and concerns of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children”.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

I am conducting this research to explore the views and concerns of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance the social competence of foster children.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

The targeted sample of the study is registered social workers who have more than three years of experience in rendering foster care services, are employed in the Department of Social Development, Tshwane region and are registered at the SACSSP. Thus, you are invited because you meet the inclusion criteria to contribute to the matter under study. Your information was obtained through the permission of the Head of Department of the Gauteng Department of Social Development and through the intervention of your social work manager and social work supervisor.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The study involves one-on-one semi-structured interviews. With your consent, the interview will be recorded to assist in gathering the data. Your role is to provide honest professional responses on the matter under study. The questions to be explored in the study are about advancing the social competence of foster children, the methods of social work intervention employed by social workers during their work with foster children, and group work as a method of intervention to advance the social competence of foster children. The expected duration of participation and the time needed to complete an interview is ±50 minutes.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participate. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and there will be no negative consequences for such withdrawal.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There may not be any immediate benefits resulting from participating in this study. It may, however, lead to identifying gaps in practice and informing the foster care policy. The results and study recommendations could also inform practices to increase efficiency in utilising group work as an intervention method in the field of foster care services.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

Potential risks are the possibility of negative feelings or sensitive issues being evoked within the interview setting, which may cause some discomfort. The services of a debriefer will be arranged by the researcher should it be deemed necessary.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

All information taken from the study will be coded to protect your identity. Your name will not be recorded anywhere, and no one will be able to connect you to the answers

you give. Your answers will be given a code number, such as participant one, participant two, etc., and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods, such as journal articles and/or conference proceedings.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that the research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and the supervisor. However, these role-players will not be able to identify you.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further research ethics review and approval if applicable. Copies of the information will be destroyed, if necessary, via confidential waste such as shredding of hard copies and permanently deleting electronic copies from the computer using a relevant software programme.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Participation in the study is voluntary. No costs will be incurred by the participants for participating in the study, and no financial compensation will be made for participation in this study.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Scientific Research and Ethics Committee (SRC) of the Department of Social Work and the College Research and Ethics Committee (CREC) of Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings or need any further information about any aspect of this study, please contact Hlengani Aubrey Ndobe on 078 780 9441 or Aubrey.Ndobe@gauteng.gov.za. The findings are accessible for five years.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof Petro Botha, Bothap@unisa.ac.za, 012 429 6274 or Prof M Williams, chairperson of the departmental Scientific Research and Ethics Committee, willihm@unisa.ac.za or 012 4294269, if you have any ethical concerns.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.



.....
Hlengani Aubrey Ndobe

Appendix 7: Consent to participate in the study

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

Research title:

The views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance social competence of foster children

Researcher:

(Hlengani Aubrey Ndobe)

I, (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the semi-structured interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (please print)

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname.....(please print)

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

Appendix 8: Data collection tool(s) as per methodology/ design (including questionnaire/ interview guide/checklist)

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The views of social workers regarding the use of group work to advance social competence of foster children

BIOGRAPHICAL AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1. Age.....
- 1.2. Gender.....
- 1.3. How long have you been practising social work in the field of foster care supervision?

Work experience regarding foster care supervision service delivery	
0 - 1 years	
2 - 3 years	
4 - 5 years	
6 - 7 years	
8 - 9 years	
10 - 11 years	
12 - 13 years	
14 years or more	

- 1.4. How many foster children do you have in your caseload?
- 1.5. Which of the following methods of social work intervention are you utilising in your office as part of foster care services to foster children?

Methods of social work intervention utilised in foster care supervision services	
Social Casework/Individual Work	
Group Work	
Community Work	


1.6. If you do use group work in your office as a method of intervention in rendering foster care supervision services to foster children, how frequently do you use it and why?

Group work as a method of intervention utilised in foster care services	Always	Regularly	Seldom
Reasons			

INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

- Share with me your understanding of what social competence is all about?
- From your experience, what do you think are the benefits of social competence as a skill of foster children?
- Which intervention method/s can be used to develop the social competence of foster children?
- What role can group work as a method of intervention play in foster care services to advance social competence in foster children?
- What are your views, on the use of group work to enhance social competence of foster children?
- What recommendations can be made to improve the use of group work to enhance social competence of foster children?

Appendix 9: Turnitin Results

Sources Overview 

32%
OVERALL SIMILARITY

1	researchspace.ukzn.a... INTERNET	2%
2	scholar.sun.ac.za INTERNET	1%
3	University of South Afr... SUBMITTED WORKS	1%
4	uir.unisa.ac.za INTERNET	<1%
5	hdl.handle.net INTERNET	<1%
6	Dhludhlu, Sandile Lu... PUBLICATION	<1%
7	Ramokolo-Kutu, Mm... PUBLICATION	<1%

NAME	STUDENT NUMBER	TITLE	DATE
Hlengani Aubrey Ndobe	53594517	Final Dissertation	27 January 2026

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide a broad summary of the study's context, which

Appendix 10: Editor's Letter

Declaration of Professional Editing

19 February 2026



This letter serves to confirm that Hlengani Aubrey Ndobe submitted a dissertation to me for editing. The dissertation is entitled, **'THE VIEWS OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING THE USE OF GROUP WORK TO ADVANCE SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF FOSTER CHILDREN'**.

The following aspects were edited:

- Spelling
- Grammar
- Consistency of layout (Automating Table of Contents, List of Tables, List of Figures)
- Sentence structure
- Logical sequencing
- References (Reference checking involves proofreading and some editing with regard to the simple formatting of the references into the referencing style required, i.e. changing the order of the elements - author, date, title, series, place, publisher, journal, volume, issue, pagination, etc.)
- Cross-checking citations and the reference list
- All preliminary pages and appendices

My involvement is restricted to language use and spelling, completeness and consistency, referencing style, and formatting of headings, captions and tables of contents. I did no structural re-writing of the content and did not influence the academic content in any way. While I suggest comments and corrections as an editor, the accuracy of content and formatting in the final document remains the responsibility of the author. As the editor, I may highlight problematic text, but I am not responsible for detecting plagiarism or the use of generative AI.

Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Kim Smit

● Tel: +27 (0)78 493 6554 ● Email: editorialkns@peakedhorizons.co.za
Member of the Freelance panel for the University of South Africa
Associate Member of the Professional Editor's Guild