INVESTIGATIONS INTO PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES OF PARENTS TOWARDS FORMAL FOSTER CARE IN BINDURA DISTRICT.

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DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS) DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK

MAY 2017
i. Approval form

Supervisor

I certify that I have supervised MARUFU PAULINE for this research titled: “INVESTIGATIONS INTO PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES OF PARENTS TOWARDS FORMAL FOSTER CARE IN BINDURA DISTRICT” in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science (Honors) Degree in Social Work and recommend that it proceeds for examination.

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Chairperson of Department Board of Examiners

The Departmental Board of Examiners is satisfied that this dissertation report meets the examination requirements and I therefore recommend to the Bindura University to accept a research project by MARUFU PAULINE titled: “INVESTIGATIONS INTO PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES OF PARENTS TOWARDS FORMAL FOSTER CARE IN BINDURA DISTRICT” in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science (Honors) Degree in Social Work.

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Student Name.......................................................Signature................................Date............

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my loving mother and my husband who were with me throughout this journey. I really appreciate your support which you gave me. May the Almighty God continue to bless you.
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Many people put great effort which has resulted in the completion of this project. My greatest gratitude goes to my father Almighty God who has made it possible for me to complete this dissertation. Jesus was always with me guiding and protecting me throughout the course and I really appreciate that.

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I want to thank the Department of Child Welfare and Probation Services for granting me the authority to do this research in Bindura. I want also want to thank their staff members for providing me with information. Thanks to the staff at SOS Children’s Villages Bindura FBC department, who cooperated with me in doing this research through giving me authority to do my research in their foster care program and also for providing with the responses. You played a pivotal role towards my success. Thank you so much.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>African Charter</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFBC</td>
<td>Alternative Family Based Care</td>
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<td>AMTO</td>
<td>Assistant Medical Treatment Order</td>
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<td>BEAM</td>
<td>Basic Education Assistance Module</td>
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<td>CWC</td>
<td>Child Welfare Fund</td>
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<td>DCWPS</td>
<td>Department of Child Welfare and Probation Services</td>
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<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human Immuno Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>NAC</td>
<td>National Aids Council</td>
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<td>NAP for OVC</td>
<td>National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children</td>
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<td>UNCRC</td>
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ABSTRACT

In recent years many children are being orphaned as they lose their parents to HIV/AIDS pandemic. The Zimbabwe six tier system can help in absorbing these orphans. However, of all the options, fostering remains low and uncommon in Zimbabwe. The purpose of this study was to investigate the causes of this low fostering, perceptions and attitudes of potential foster parents and challenges of foster care in Bindura rural and urban. A qualitative research paradigm was employed while a case study approach was employed in undertaking the study. Data were collected from 20 foster parents and 20 non-foster parents using questionnaires. Two focus group discussions, one from rural and one from urban, with parents were done to solicit perceptions on fostering. Information was also collected from key informants who had knowledge on fostering: four political leaders, four traditional leaders, three church leaders and four headmasters. Respondents were sampled using purposive sampling technique for foster parents and simple random sampling for non-foster parents. The collected data were annotated to make preliminary observations. Themes were then identified from the responses, coded and analyzed using a narrative account and presented using bar graphs and pie charts. This study revealed that the major cause of low fostering in both Bindura rural and urban is lack of finances (N=24: 60% of respondents). Respondents cited that the government is no longer supporting foster parents financially and given the current economic challenges very few people will be willing to foster. Other causes of low fostering identified include fear of responsibility and lack of knowledge on fostering. Fear of avenging spirits was perceived as a major impediment to fostering (N=26: 65% of respondents). The respondents noted that they are not ready to take care of a non-relative whose totem they do not share. Even the village heads interviewed in this study strongly denied that they will not bury a non-relative in their villages as it can attract avenging spirits (ngozi). By far the major challenge was that the government takes long to process birth certificates of foster children (N=24: 60% of respondents). As such many parents noted that they give up quickly. In addition, some said that the shortage of probation officers makes the whole fostering process a long and tedious procedure thus preventing potential foster parents from taking foster children. From this study it can be concluded that parents in Bindura have the potential to foster children if their perceptions are right. Society needs to view a non-relative not as a threat to the community but as a productive member of society. In addition, with government support many people can end up fostering.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION
This chapter seeks to propose a study to investigate the perceptions and challenges of fostering in the district of Bindura. It gives the background to the research problem and highlights the questions that the research seeks to answer by conducting the study. The chapter also explores the significance of the study and the value of results that shall be obtained. It outlines the scope of the study, which delineates the parameters of the research as well as possible limitations of the study. The proposal also states the ethical considerations to be taken into account if the study is conducted.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In countries mostly affected by HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, orphanhood has increased dramatically, but the potential consequences of the increase have been mitigated by the ability of households to absorb orphans. It is estimated that not less than 5% of orphans live on the streets although this has increased in the most affected countries (Powell et al. 2004; UNICEF, 2005; Morantz and Heymann 2010). In Zimbabwe, every fourth Zimbabwean child (about 1.6 million) is orphaned, the second highest orphan rate in the world (UNICEF, 2017). In a study by UNICEF in 2007 in 40 countries, it was shown that extended families have assumed responsibility for 90% of the orphaned children with about 20% of households in Southern Africa caring for more than one orphan. The dramatic increase in orphanhood in high-HIV prevalence countries over a relatively short period of time means that a new group of children are being displaced from homes and must find space in other households other than extended families (Grant and Yeatman, 2012). In Zimbabwe, where HIV prevalence is high, high mortality among household heads and income earners is beginning to overwhelm the ability of the extended family to provide sufficient orphan care (Gregson et al. 2007). For example, there are over one million orphans in Zimbabwe and only 527,000 of these currently have access to external support and care (National AIDS Council (NAC), 2011). In addition, due to harsh economic challenges very few relatives are willing to take care of orphaned children. This challenges the idea that extended
families and communities are still able to take care of vulnerable children. As a result, increasing numbers of orphans and vulnerable children is now a burden as governments and NGOs are faced with challenge of providing them with an alternative form of care. This may be provided through either foster care, adoption, or institutionalization.

There is strong cultural resistance to the concept of adoption in Zimbabwe and insignificant numbers of children have been adopted (Powell et al, 2004). Adoption has only been done by parents who have a westernized life style or who are not deeply culturally conservative. Such people are few and are unable to absorb the huge number of orphans. Institutionalization has been used in Zimbabwe more widely to take care of the OVC especially abandoned children. However, institutionalization is only recommended as a temporary and last resort as it removes the family-like structure (Child Protection Society, 2011). Foster care, on the other hand, has been well accepted. Increasing numbers of both formal and informal fostering of orphaned and abandoned children to non-relatives are being arranged and seem to be successful (Powell et al, 2004).

Foster care is a societal intervention for orphaned, abandoned and maltreated children. Africa has a rich history of taking care of such children to redistribute the burdens of child bearing across the extended family though in an informal way (Akresh, 2009). There is usually no discontinuity between what can be conceived as normal day sharing of child rearing responsibilities among kin and proper child fostering which can intertwine the concept of extended family care and foster care. Some institutions though have initiated community based programs in surrounding communities to extend their care beyond the institution. Thus although institutions do not always house the OVC they help them within their communities. SOS has been instrumental in placing children into foster homes and assisting them with technical assistance and funds.

Formal fostering (the legal way) by non-relatives remains uncommon in Zimbabwe (Foster, 2004) partly due to cultural beliefs and partly due to poverty. The government however, allows willing persons to foster children in a formal way as guided by the Children’s Act (Chapter 5:06) and Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy (1999). However, the legal procedure of fostering a child is long and laborious which has resulted in many parents denying the system causing a serious shortage of formal foster parents. For example, of the 1.6 million orphans in the nation, government has only approved 0.5% to be placed into institutions or foster care which is quite a
small number. In some instances, the DSS has no sufficient funds and expertise to screen prospective parents. This has forced the government to fall back on the institutionalization as the only available option.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Zimbabwe is facing a serious challenge of vulnerable and orphaned children. The Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy of 1999 works on a community based model of care which is operating on the assumption that if the nuclear family is not there the extended family and the community take responsibility for the care of OVC. However, many extended families are now financially overstretched and are unable to take care of more and more children. Thus the formal foster care system can be a viable option to absorb the other vulnerable children. However, records from Department of Child Welfare and Probation Services show that in Bindura District there has been a general decline in the formal foster care system with a corresponding rise in institutionalization yet it is recommended that institutionalization be taken as the last resort. The general observation is that many parents are opting to take children from child welfare institutions for short term holidays without permanently staying with them. This observation warrants an investigation in causes of this trend in the present study area.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To determine why foster care in Bindura is failing and exploring the perceptions of people towards foster care system.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As stated in the orphan care policy, residential care institutions have not been contributing significantly to the care of children which is less than 3% of the total orphaned and vulnerable children. Therefore, the researcher wants to bring out the reasons why fostering is failing, to bring out people’s perceptions towards fostering and to find out the challenges that foster parents are facing. This information will benefit the following
1. **Department of Child Welfare and Probation Services (DCWPS)**

The DCWPS will benefit from this study as the department has the responsibility to place children in places of safety. The department will be in a position to come up with strategies to address the challenges being faced by foster parents as well as to bring awareness to parents on fostering. This may lead to parents registering to become formal foster parents and hence ensure the flow of work for the probation officer.

2. **Children’s homes**

The children’s institutions will benefit from this research as they will be able to make informed decisions when releasing children to foster parents for holidays. The research may result in improved foster care system and then helps to reduce the number of children in children’s homes.

3. **Policy makers**

The research will review the perceptions of parents towards foster care and also the challenges being faced by foster parents. The result will help the policy makers to implement new policies to overcome the challenges and perceptions or they can modify the available policies using the results from this research.

4. **Parents**

Since the research will also involve information from government and civil society, foster parents are likely to be well informed about the correct procedure of fostering and its benefits without being found on the wrong side of the law.

5. **Students**

The students will be well informed on what is happening in foster care and they will manage to come up with their own studies on some of the areas left out by this research. The results of this study will also build the knowledge base of the students on foster care.

1.5 **ASSUMPTIONS**

The researcher assumes that low fostering in Bindura district is so because foster parents are facing various challenges as they are taking care of children and people in the societies have also
various perceptions towards caring for children who are non-relative to them. Hence the researcher will bring out the correct information through this research.

1.6 OBJECTIVES:

1. To examine the causes of low fostering in Bindura district
2. To explore people’s perceptions and attitudes towards foster care.
3. To evaluate the challenges being faced by foster parents in foster care.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. Why is there low fostering in Bindura District?
2. What are people’s perceptions and attitudes towards foster care?
3. What are the challenges being faced by foster parents in fostering?

1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Child-The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a “child” as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger. Therefore, in Zimbabwe a “child” means a person under the age of sixteen years and includes an infant (Children’s Act Chapter 5:06: as amended in 2001). Generally, the definition of a child is derived from their age and usually according to their dependency on parents or guardians.

Orphan- An orphan is a child under 18 years of age whose mother, father or both parents have died from any cause (UNICEF, 2012). UNAIDS however, puts the age of an orphan at 15 years. A double orphan is one who has lost both parents while a maternal orphan is one who has lost a mother and a paternal orphan is one who has lost a father. Generally, an orphan who has lost a father is not as vulnerable as one who has lost a mother. Thus to be classified as an orphan one should have lost one parent or both through death.

Vulnerability-According to the World Vision (2002), vulnerability involves children who live in a household in which one person or more is ill, dying or deceased; children who live in
households that receive orphans; children whose caregivers are too ill to continue to look after them and children living with very old or frail caregivers. Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy identifies vulnerable children as children with unfulfilled rights.

**Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC)** therefore are children who have no or very restricted access to basic needs due to death of a parent or parents and sometimes they may have both parents but the child’s rights are denied (Skinner *et. al*, 2004).

**Foster care** - Family for Every Child’s Conceptual Framework (Family for Every Child 2012) defines foster care as “situations where children are placed by a competent authority for the purpose of alternative care in the domestic environment of a family other than the children’s own family that has been selected, qualified, approved and supervised for providing such care.”

**1.9 THESIS OUTLINE**

This research begins with Chapter one outlining the background of the study which put the research into context, the statement of the problem that explores the reasons why the research has to be carried out, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study which brings out people who are going to benefit from the research, assumptions, research objectives and research questions. Chapter two begins with the theoretical framework of this research. The systems theory was used to have framework for this work. The chapter also reviews literature that is related to the perceptions and challenges of fostering in Bindura. It also reviews the causes of low fostering in Bindura District. Chapter three comprises of the methods of collecting data and other steps which are considered before, during after collecting data. The considerations include study approach, study area, research design, target population, population size, sampling techniques, research instruments, data presentation and analysis, possible limitations and ethical issues. Chapter four consist of findings which gives answers to the research questions and objectives. The findings are presented and also discussed in relation to the literature review. Chapter five concludes the research by giving the summary of the major findings, conclusions and recommendations in relation to the findings.
1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter is very important to the research as it consist the introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, assumptions, objectives and research questions. This gives a better understanding of the research topic under study. The following chapter has the theoretical framework and literature review of the research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Foster care has been an issue studied by many disciplines. This chapter reviews some of the literature which is related to the challenges being faced by foster parents, perceptions of parents towards fostering and the causes of low fostering. It also looks at the theoretical framework related to foster care. It is through this literature review that gaps and strengths are identified then built upon to have results.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is going to use the systems theory. The family systems theory is a theory introduced by Dr. Murray Bowen that suggests that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but rather as a part of their family, as the family is an emotional unit (Nichols and Schwartz 2005). According to Seligman (2006) the system theory describes a family as a system which includes both the individuals in the family and the way these individuals function together. Further, the family system is made up of smaller systems called subsystems. Typically, subsystems within the family include the parental subsystem, the spousal subsystem, and the sibling subsystem (Turnbull and Turnbull, 2001). In any family, there are likely to be other subsystems as a result of factors. A family systems perspective holds that individuals are best understood through assessing the interactions between and among family members. The development and behavior of one family member is inextricably interconnected with others in the family. Symptoms are often viewed as an expression of a set of habits and patterns within a family. A client’s problematic behavior may serve a function or purpose for the family, be unintentionally maintained by family processes, be a function of the family’s inability to operate productively, especially during developmental transitions, or be a symptom of dysfunctional patterns handed down across generations.

Bowen identified eight interlocking concepts that are central to his theory. The foundation of his theory which is the first concept is called differentiation of self. According to Bowen this is the
ability to think through issues and act rationally instead of reacting automatically to emotional pressure. It involves the ability to separate emotion from intellect. Although used in family therapy, this concept can be crucial in a foster home. Since there will be no strong bonds at the start of fostering process emotional outbursts can be common and can cause breakdown of relationships in the foster home. The second concept of emotional triangles states that in stressful situations two people, who are in a close relationship, may include a third person to reduce the anxiety and gain stability in the situation. This concept is applicable in foster care because it helps to balance emotions within the foster home. The third concept of nuclear family emotional process is the most applicable in this study of foster care. It states that weak differentiation in the family of origin may lead to fusion in the new family relationships. In simple terms the fostering parents are from different families, the foster child is from another family of origin while the biological children, if present, form their own nuclear family. In such case, the individuals’ thoughts and emotions are not easily distinguished from the other. This fusion of thoughts and emotions can create family problems as thoughts of some family members can be suppressed.

Family projection process, the fourth concept, is the process by which parents pass on their lack of differentiation to their children. In the event of a conflict in a family the undifferentiated parent can become attached to one of the child. The child who is the object of the projection process achieves the least differentiation of self. As a result, the child becomes entangled in the parents’ conflicts. This can be difficult for a foster child who is trying to create bonds with both parents.

The fifth concept of multigenerational transmission process posits that the child who is most involved in the family’s fusion in each generation has a lower differentiation of self and more anxiety than children who are less involved. This child is more likely to pass on the undifferentiation in the next generation. Sibling position can be a source of problem in foster homes. This concept states that each child has a place in the family hierarchy, and children who grow up in the same sibling position have important common traits that affect their relationships. As an example older children have a tendency to lead while younger children have a tendency to follow. In situations where a couple choose to foster a child who is of the same age as their biological child this hierarchy is broken increasing chances of conflicts in the family. The seventh concept of emotional cut off states that some people use physical or psychological avoidance to manage their unresolved emotional issues from their families of origins. In foster
homes this can result in physical fights between biological children and foster children which can destroy the confidence of the foster child. The last concept of societal emotional process says that social influences affect how families function, and so there is the tendency for anxiety and instability to increase in the society at certain times. This concept is important in foster care because society can influence the perception and attitude of people towards foster care which influence their desire to foster children.

The systems theory offers a unitary approach by combining psychological, social and community approaches. It is also interactive thus it facilitates being able to understand the impact of people on each other, as well the impact of systems on people and other systems. This study is going to use the systems theory as the concept of foster cannot be understood in isolation but within the framework of the six tier systems. In addition, perceptions and attitudes of foster parents are built from the social, economic, political and cultural environment.

The systems theory is within the framework of the UNCRC which emphasizes the role of the family as ‘the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children.’

2.2 VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Foster care aims at taking care of vulnerable children and so it is important to discuss about the plight of vulnerable children early in this paper.

Children living without parental care have been easily summarized in a diagram by the World Bank (Fig 2.1). As can be seen from fig 2.1 at a given time a child can be affected by one or more of the circumstances listed. These circumstances expose children to abuse and so to vulnerability. Vulnerability itself is a complicated term to define since there are multiple causes and effects of vulnerability although they can be categorized into specific target groups like street children, child prostitutes, and orphaned and vulnerable children (Plan Netherlands, 2006). Factors leading to increased vulnerability vary from society to society but in Zimbabwe the chief causes are HIV, poverty, and abuse within the home working alone or in combination. According to Skinner et al (2004), there are three levels of vulnerability. The first one is the individual level which affects the child directly for instance sickness, disability or drug abuse. The second one is
the family level which includes lack of parental guidance and direction, divorced parents and abusive family members. The third level is the community level where the child is exposed to the ills of a community such as crimes, drugs and poverty. At a point in life a child is likely to be exposed to the three levels and so targeting children for foster care should make an assessment at all levels. However, The World Bank (2005) recommends that interventions in assisting vulnerable children should be based at community level and owned by the affected communities. This is because community members have better knowledge on households that have been severely affected or the cultural setting of the community thus facilitating the level of help required. It is recommended that outside organization should only come to assist through capacity building and relationship building among community members (Child Protection Society Zimbabwe)

Figure 2. 1 Orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) categories (World Bank, 2005)
2.3 CHILDREN’S RIGHTS

The rights of children are highly esteemed in Zimbabwe. The major laws and policies that govern the treatment of children in Zimbabwe are: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (AC), Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy, Children’s Act (Child Protection and Adoption Act Chapter 5:06), National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP for OVC). These policies are applicable in the context of this study as they have a bearing on foster care.

2.3.1 UNCRC

The UNCRC is the major convention championing the rights of children worldwide. It aims at making sure that children’s rights are not violated. This means children have to be recognized as part of the society and that everyone has a responsibility to keep them safe. It also involves creating a safe environment for the children. To that effect, UNCRC has seven key principles of a child rights approach.

i. Universality-Everyone has the same rights whatever the circumstances

ii. Indivisibility-We need a holistic approach because human rights are interrelated.

iii. Accountability-States and other civil societies have a duty relating to rights

iv. Non-discrimination-All children have the same rights regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability etc.

v. Best interests’-All decisions made concerning a child should be done to their best interests

vi. Participation-Children have the right to participate in any decision affecting them and should actively participate in claiming their rights.

vii. Survival and development-All children have the right to life.
2.3.2 AFRICAN CHARTER

The provisions within the AC are similar to those in the UNCRC, with a few important additions. One important addition specific to African children is the provision on the responsibilities of the child. These responsibilities include: work towards family cohesion; respect their parents, superiors and elders at all times, assisting them whenever such need exists; serve their national communities by using their physical and intellectual abilities for its services; preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity among other responsibilities. The AC also provides for the protection of children against harmful social and cultural practices.

2.3.3 CHILDREN’S ACT

This Act was established to safeguard the rights of Zimbabwean children as stated in the act:

“…..to provide for the establishment of children’s courts; to make provision for the protection, welfare and supervision of children and juveniles; to provide for the establishment, recognition and registration of certain institutions and institutes for the reception and custody of children and juveniles and for the treatment of children and juveniles after their reception in such institutions and institutes; to require the contribution by certain persons towards the maintenance of children and juveniles; to provide for the adoption of minors” (Children’s Act, Chapter 5:06)

The Act calls for the establishment of the Child Welfare Council (CWC) which will monitor the overall situation of children in need of care and to try to ensure that their welfare and rights are advanced. The CWC will also promote and encourage the co-ordination of the activities of organizations which have their object the promotion and protection of the rights of children and to administer the Child Welfare Fund.

2.3.4 ZIMBABWE NATIONAL ORPHAN CARE POLICY

The Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy was adopted in 1999, with the objective of ensuring that orphans in the country realize the rights in the UNCRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The National Orphan Care Policy recognizes that children are
important both to their immediate families and to the community. It also acknowledges the importance of traditional leaders in protecting vulnerable members of society including children.

Its objectives include: mobilize, motivate and educate all communities in the country to support orphans; assist orphans to gain access to public and private resources that can benefit them; promote research on issues affecting children and ensuring that people caring for orphans are trained and have skills to handle them. The government's strategies for achieving these objectives through the National Orphan Care Policy involve implementing the following six tier safety net system in order of priority: (i) Biological Nuclear Family, (ii) Extended Family, (iii) Community Care, (iv) Formal Foster Care, (v) Adoption and (vi) Institutional Care.

2.4 THE SIX TIER SAFETY NET SYSTEM

2.4.1 Biological nuclear family

This is the family in which a child is born, which includes immediate parents and siblings. Every child has the right to remain in his/her biological or family for protection and care. The biological family forms the nucleus and bond of every child and is seen as the best model of parental care. However, due to various challenges that include poverty and death of biological family, children tend to find safety in an extended family.

2.4.2 Extended family

The vast majority of Zimbabwean orphans (98%) are cared for by relatives. This mode of care, derived from the deeply rooted extended family system, operates informally with decisions concerning the child’s future being made by family elders. The care of a child by the extended family does not involve any official government agencies. Those appointed as guardians have no legal standing, and are not entitled to government benefits available to those who legally foster. In some instances, the extended family can fail to take care of a child. For instance, cases of abuse, mistreatment or exploitation of fostered children have been reported from the extended families. Girls in particular, may be taken in by relatives because of their economic value in carrying out domestic chores or obtaining bride price. Judging by reports from child rape centers in Zimbabwe (Child Protection Society, 2011), cases of sexual abuse of orphans also appear to
be increasing. Issues of prejudices and favoritisms have caused the contemporary family structure not to be able to incorporate foster children into families. In cases where the extended family has failed to take of vulnerable children, the child can therefore find refuge within the community.

2.4.3 Community care

Community care, which is the third tier of safety refers to informal fostering of children by non-relatives from within their community of origin. This form of care is likely to be successful in stable, long established and well-resourced communities in which the orphan’s parents were known and respected. It has been successfully utilized in worker’s compounds on commercial farms and in rural villages where traditional leaders may be instrumental in initiating and overseeing these arrangements. Community based programs encourage this mode of care and frequently include the recruitment and training of volunteers to support and assist care-giving families. Voluntary support of child headed households by neighbors and other community members through mentoring, guidance and the provision of material support, make a valuable contribution to keeping these families intact and avoiding the necessity for residential care.

According to the systems theory a person is not an island, hence the community influence the decisions that parents make. However usually the communities due to cultural norms and values, they have their own views towards fostering. If the views are negative, they tend to hinder those who want to foster from fostering children. Every child document (2012) states that, in Tanzania, one NGO reports that communities were very hesitant to accept children who have stayed in the streets though the foster carers would want to take care of the children. Thus, community influence has got great impact on the reasons why there if low fostering in Southern Africa.

2.4.4 Foster care

The term “foster care” or “fostering” is used to refer to about two approaches to child care. The first one is formal foster care which is initiated and supervised by the state or well established child welfare organizations. Formal foster-care is a legal procedure in which a child, who
through a court order is given into the temporary custody of a couple or individual who has applied to the Department of Social Services to become a foster parent. The second one is informal foster care used to describe informal, traditional care arrangements that are widely used in some regions, such as Africa. This type of fostering involves the parents deliberately placing a child into another family, irrespective of kinship bonds. Under informal foster care, family elders or community leaders decide on the placement of orphans without the participation of outside agencies and the placement is not officially registered.

Kinship care is the most prevalent form of foster care for children in Africa, Asia and Latin America, where 90% of children are in kinship care (Cantwell, 2005). Within Sub-Saharan Africa the majority of orphans are being cared for by their relatives, but with insufficient support (Save the Children 2005). Fostering is a deep rooted practice in Africa in the form of kinship systems and family networks that provide safety nets for children, not just orphans (Grant and Yeatman, 2012).

The legal procedure of placing a child into foster care involves the preparation of a report by the child’s Probation Officer, which includes an assessment of the potential foster parent’s suitability to act in this capacity. This report is then submitted to the Juvenile Court. Depending on the circumstances and information from the report, the Court may make an order giving the child into the custody of the foster parents. The issued order has a maximum validity of 3 years after which it will be reviewed. Upon review the order may be renewed or not. Under formal foster care the child remains in the state’s custody. If the fostering arrangement is unsatisfactory or if the foster parents wish to return the child, the Probation Officer may prepare a report to terminate it. All things being normal, a foster child is entitled to assistance with education and health care and a monthly grant payable to the foster parents for his or her upkeep. However, due to the current economic hardships the processing of the grant may take long or the funds may be too few to make a difference leaving the burden of taking care of the child in the hands of the foster parents.

Several types of foster care are used in different settings depending on the duration of parental care:
• Short-break foster care—where children are cared for short periods whilst parents are in hospital or to give parents a break from caring responsibilities.

• Short or medium-term foster care of a few weeks or months whilst efforts are made to reunite the child with his or her family.

• Long-term foster care for an extended period, often until adulthood, for children who cannot return to their own families, but for whom adoption is not appropriate.

• Treatment or specialized foster care, for example, juvenile offenders or children with serious behavioral difficulties or mental health problems.

The widely used and implemented foster care in Zimbabwe is the long term fostering system in which children are taken care of until adulthood. That being said, foster care in Zimbabwe is not generally considered permanent (though it may be long-term in specific legal cases), and the State generally retains guardianship of the child during this interim period of care. Formal foster care is typically used until a child can be reunited with a parent, is permanently adopted or reaches adulthood.

According to Family for Every Child’s Conceptual Framework (UN 2010; Family for Every Child 2012) foster care refers to:

“Situations where children are placed by a competent authority for the purpose of alternative care in the domestic environment of a family other than the children’s own family that has been selected, qualified, approved and supervised for providing such care.”

The practice of foster care is made possible when families are the essential building blocks of societies and states. It views families as the buffers between the child and the community, society and other organizational structures.

2.4.5 Adoption

Cultural beliefs and attitudes in Zimbabwe make it difficult to adopt a child in Zimbabwe. Most of the black adopting couples are middle class and most have a Westernized outlook and so are
unafraid of cultural taboos. Government policy generally discourages foreign adoption of Zimbabwean children and Ministerial approval is required for such an adoption to take place.

The legal procedure for adopting a child requires the establishment of a children’s court which will have jurisdiction to make adoption orders. The children’s court is then responsible for the appointment of a probation officer who will act as the guardian of the minor and safeguarding the interests of the minor. An adoption is then issued which when assessed and found to be satisfactory the adoption of the child begins (Children’s Act, Chapter 5:06). The DSS is heavily involved in the adoption process, although it is facing a myriad of challenges which compromises this service. One of the most pressing challenges is the shortage of social workers in the DSS who are supposed to act as *guardian ad litem* during the adoption process (Masuka *et al*, 2012).

This adoption policy supports the right of a child to be raised within his or her race and culture and may also reflect Zimbabwe’s wish to avoid the unseemly commercialized system of international adoption, prevalent in Eastern Europe and Asia.

### 2.4.6 Institutional care

This is an option that is taken as the last and temporary resort when all others are not possible. Even in determining the most suitable institution to place children in, family-like institutions are preferred to dormitory ones.

Historically, institutional care has been associated with dormitory like environments in which children have no opportunity to experience a caring family life (Powell *et al*, 2004). As a consequence, they often failed to acquire normal life skills and the capacity for independent thought and motivation. The condition of dependency and expectation that resulted became known as the Institutional Syndrome (Child Protection Society, 2011). The syndrome made it difficult for children who experienced long term residential care to survive outside of the institutional environment.

The concept of institutionalization has been abandoned in Western Europe and Northern America due to psychological and social damages it causes in children when they move out of the institution. Modern institutions have sought to correct many of the deficiencies of their
predecessors by creating family units within the institutional environment. There is a global concern to redefine the residential care system and to support family based care models, including prevention work with biological families a system called deinstitutionalization (O’Kane et al, 2006). As a result, there are increased efforts by a range of agencies to build upon existing family based care options such as kinship care and to develop or strengthen alternative family based care options such as foster care (UNICEF, 2012). In some cultural contexts disability is viewed with disdain and discriminatory attitude (Carter 2005). As a result, children with disability continue to contribute to institutionalized children.

Even in Africa where institutionalization is still common, it remains an inappropriate intervention because of mass orphan hood. Their ability to provide care for only a small number of children at disproportionately high cost and their tendency to undermine traditional methods of care are common criticisms. The major discouragement for institutionalization is their tendency to alienate children from their extended families, communities and culture. This can have serious implications for the eventual re-integration of orphans into their communities and for their future happiness.

Due to challenges in the other safety systems, foster care remains a viable option for many children in Zimbabwean context. However, there is worrying trend of few people willing to foster children due to several problems associated with fostering.

2.5 PROBLEMS OF FOSTER CARING

2.5.1 Religion and culture

In some settings, awareness raising is important to overcome significant cultural and religious barriers to foster care especially non-kin foster care. A culturally and religiously sensitive environment can provide a nurturing and protective foundation that children can draw upon in times of distress and need. Religious values may impact upon care opportunities available for children. For example, in Islamic societies the practice of ‘Kafala’ (Islamic adoption) may take place, whereby a family look after a child until the age of 18 years without any rights to the adopting families name or inheritance (Muslim Women’s Shura Council, 2011). This type of guardianship does not sever the biological family bonds of the child or alter the descent lines for
the adopting family. It differs from foster-parenting, since it is intended to be a permanent arrangement for a minor. It is like foster parenting and adoption, because it is mediated by the state although the process has no specific legal requirements. This means legality of the fostering even adoption may prove to be difficult as it impacts religious beliefs.

In multicultural societies, racism and different cultural values can impede the success of fostering children. Children and foster parents have to learn to live biculturally that is living within a larger, usually dominant community, as well as within specific, usually minority community. A good example is in America where the African Americans value responsibility to extended families and communal responsibility while their Native American counterparts believe in self-reliance and autonomy (Harvey and Rauch, 2011). In such instance if a person of color is fostered by a white parent cultural conflicts can arise.

In some African communities, most ethnic groups believe that a child entering the family brings with them unknown ancestors, and this can impact on the willingness to foster children from other families (World Vision 2009). Similar norms leading to a resistance to foster care have been reported in the Middle East and some parts of Asia (Tolfree, 1995). The Shona culture does not appreciate taking care of stranger instead if one does that he/she may be accused of bringing vengeful spirits (“ngozî”) into the family.

In many parts of the world particularly in contexts where strong religious beliefs are prevalent (Islamic, Christian or Hindu) the situation affecting unmarried mothers and care of their children is of particular cause for concern. A child and the mother are stigmatized and discriminated against if the child is born out of wedlock. A study conducted over an eight-year period in a center for destitute women in Bangladesh indicated that unmarried women were much more likely to abandon their child than married women (Wilson, 1999). Similarly, in Central and Eastern Europe single parenthood and very young parenthood are precipitating factors contributing to children being placed in institutional care (Carter, 2005).
2.5.2 HIV and AIDS pandemic

Zimbabwe is facing multiple challenges owing to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Zimbabwe with an adult prevalence of 13.7%, is ranked amongst the five countries hardest hit by AIDS in the world (UNICEF, 2017). An estimated total of 1.6 million children have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS to date (Child Protection Society, 2011). The high incidence of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe, has meant an increase in orphaned children and child vulnerability. Traditionally, extended families have been able to absorb orphans and take care of them after the death of their parents. However, the HIV/AIDS epidemic is tearing away at the social, cultural and economic fabric of families, the first line of protection and provision for children that safeguards against exclusion and exposure to harm (UNICEF, 2005). Burden to take care of orphans now falls on elderly, female headed, child headed or poor households raising fear of a negative cycle of child rights violations (World Bank, 2002; Tolfree, 2005). As a result, formal fostering remains a viable option to take care of these orphans. But even fostering is also showing signs of stress as there has been few people willing to foster children (Grant and Yeatman, 2012). In addition, the stigma that often accompanies children whose parents have died of AIDS sometimes results in relatives being reluctant to take in orphaned children. Children now look after themselves, bringing up other children in their own homes and on the streets, calling for the need for serious promotion of fostering.

2.5.3 Reported bad behaviors of foster children.

Numerous reviews have concurred that children in foster care are at high risk for psychological problems and that these problems present serious challenges to foster parents (Landsverk & Garland, 1999). Foster parents trying to help such children often do not receive meaningful or relevant consultation on methods for dealing with child behavior and mental health problems. Several recent surveys indicate that difficulty in understanding and managing child problem behaviors (particularly externalizing behaviors) is a primary reason foster parents decide to stop providing foster care (Peer Technical Assistance Network, 1998).

It has been noted in some researches that globally foster care parents face various challenges as they take care of children. Children can show some bad behaviors and attitudes which are not
good and this becomes a big challenge to the parent who is taking care of the child. Sinclair et al, 2000, p3) cited in Sellick (2011) stated that some foster children in Britain, (“. . might steal, lie, break things, have tantrums, refuse to eat, smear walls, wet their beds, refuse to bath, continually defy their carers, set light to their bedding, take overdoses, make sexual advances to other children, expose themselves in public, make false allegations, attack others, truant, take drugs or get to trouble with the police.” All these are behavioral difficulties which foster children show and it becomes a problem now for a parent to stay with a child who shows such behaviors. However, the researches did not clearly show how these behaviors can be challenges to the foster parents. Also considering that these were global findings there is need to come closer at district level to come up with correct challenges being faced by foster parents. So this research will show out how behavior difficulties can be a challenge to the parents at district level.

It has been noted that in Britain low fostering is so because of the difficulties other foster parents face. Spears and Cross (2003) postulates that, many parents in Britain found it upsetting and difficult to foster children. Hence there is need to find out more information why the above notion can lead to low fostering. There should be more crucial reasons as to why there is low fostering globally.

2.5.4 Financial challenges

Finance has been cited as a potential cause to low fostering. Some researches has found out that foster care parents are facing some challenges of finances in Bindura. They are also facing challenges of obtaining court orders as the process may require some money to visit the Department of Child Welfare and Probation Services. Some formal foster care parents who have court orders are claiming grants from the government to assist in taking care of children. However due to economic hardships the government has been failing to give the grants to children. This has resulted in poor living of the children in foster care as the money the parents have may not be enough (Powell et al, 2004).

Researches show that in Zimbabwe foster care parents are having challenges in the process of accessing benefits such as education, health and grants for their children. Ministry of Public
Service, Labor and Social Welfare (2004) alluded that, “In theory, a foster child is entitled to assistance with education and health care and a monthly grant payable to the foster parents for his or her upkeep. However, process of accessing these benefits on a monthly basis is often difficult and time consuming and the grant has been eroded by inflation to an insignificant level.” This clearly show that foster parents in the country are not receiving enough support from the government so as to cater for their children. Some parents may therefore fail to fulfil that gape the government is creating and this may result in some children failing to go to school and not having proper health services. However, the research needs to be done as well at districts level, which is going to be fulfilled by this research. Researches done did not show how often the government is failing to pay some grants, school fees and health services. The researches were also done at national level which is not enough. This research will answer the following questions as linked to the challenges being faced by foster parents, “how often is the government paying the grants to foster children” and “how is failure to pay grant affecting the foster parents?”.

2.5.5 Poverty

Poverty is another reason why people are hesitant to foster children. It has been found out that many people in the Southern Africa are living below the poverty datum line. According to UNICEF Report (2010), approximately 55% of people in Southern Africa live below the poverty datum line. Hence, people who live below the poverty datum line cannot meet their basic needs and therefore they live in extreme hunger and starvation. Such people are therefore incapable to take care of other children through fostering when they are failing to actually take care of themselves.

2.5.6 Understaffing

Low fostering has been so because of shortage of staff and the Department of Social Services. People can only become to know about fostering if they are conscientized by those who have been trained to do so. The researches in Zimbabwe have shown that there is shortage of staff at the DSS and this has been a cause to low fostering. Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Social
Welfare (2004) argue that, the major limitation of the program was the lack of capacity in the under-staffed DSS to carry out the screening of potential parents and preparation of the reports required by legislation. This shows that, there might parents who are able to foster children but DSS may not be in a position to recruit foster parents due to lots of other pressure and shortage of men power.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This Chapter has a theoretical framework which help explain the challenges being faced by foster parents, perceptions of parents towards fostering and also causes of low fostering in Bindura District. The Chapter also reviews the existence literature that is related to the challenges being faced by foster care parents, perceptions of parents towards fostering and causes of low fostering in Bindura District. The literature review is related to the objectives of the research.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the research method, design, procedures and techniques that were employed in the study. It will also discuss the qualitative research paradigm that was employed in this study and the rationale for the use of case study as a qualitative research method.

3.1 STUDY APPROACH

This study used a qualitative research paradigm. The researcher chose a qualitative research approach because the study warrants the collection of qualitative data to fully gather in-depth knowledge about the problem under study. In this case to better understand the subject of fostering it requires an in-depth study on people who are involved and how they feel about it. Qualitative research is a well-planned enquiry which is based on experience as researchers try to understand how other people make sense of their experience in their natural settings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). As such data were collected on foster parents in their local setting to better understand their experience on fostering. Qualitative research is also interpretive and subjective but the researcher is intimately involved in the process (Pope and Mays, 2006). This qualitative method therefore helped the researcher to understand meaning and phenomena and to gather information relevant on the causes of low fostering in Bindura district.

3.2 STUDY AREA

The study area was clustered into two areas Bindura rural and Bindura urban giving two study sites. Purposive sampling was used in choosing the wards where fostering is being practiced in the two sites. Thus two wards were chosen from Bindura rural district and two wards from
Bindura urban were chosen. Within each ward foster parents were purposively sampled while non-foster parents were randomly chosen from the same wards.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher used a case study as a research design. A case study was used because it helps to explore the performance of programs in their natural setting and their implementation processes. Bindura was used as a case study to understand how fostering is being implemented in these areas. For the purpose of this study, a case Study simply refers to a unit of analysis. Here, the unit of analysis was based on the fourth method of child care on the six tier system called foster care. Further, according to Flyvbjerg (2004) a case study can also be described as an in-depth investigation into an individual (the case) `s life and is used to reconstruct the major aspects of that case. Therefore, in this study foster parents were used as cases to understand the key issues associated with foster care.

3.4 TARGET POPULATION

The target group was foster care parents and non-foster care parents, Department of Child Welfare and Probation Services (DCWPS), SOS Children’s Village Bindura and Community leaders.

3.5 POPULATION SIZE

The population size encompassed 10 foster parents and 10 non-foster parents from Bindura urban and the same number from Bindura rural giving a sample size of 40.

3.6 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Purposive sampling was used to select the foster parents and key informants that were interviewed. According to Kumar (2005), the primary consideration of purposive sampling is deliberating on who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the study. In purposive sampling, respondents who were willing to give desired information were chosen because they are known to hold specific offices and roles that gives them privileges to information on foster care.
Within each village non-foster parents were selected using the simple random sampling technique. The technique was necessary as it allowed equal participation of respondents in the information gathering process. Not every non-foster parent was interviewed and so simple random sampling gave the researcher the opportunity to have a representative population on this group.

Foster and non-foster parents who participated in the focus group discussions were selected using convenience sampling technique. Since the aim of the study is to generate an in-depth analysis issues of representativeness are less important.

3.7 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

In this study a triangulation of methods was used (focus group discussions, key informant interviews and questionnaires) to increase the reliability and validity of the data. Triangulation, adopted from surveyors, helps in observing something from different viewpoints or angles, to get a true location. Applied to social research, it means it is a better look at something from several angles than to look at it one way. Use of different methods is important because they have complementary strength.

3.7.1 Focus group discussion

This research used focus group discussions in collecting data. Focus groups are important as they allow the researcher to explore people’s thoughts and feelings and obtain detailed information about a particular issue (Sherraden, 2001). Two focus groups were established: parents from Bindura Urban and parents from Bindura rural. Each focus group was composed of seven people with a mixture of male and female parents. This size is small enough to manage and large enough to yield a variety of viewpoints (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The discussion in each foster group lasted for one hour to keep people engaged. Ten key questions were asked each lasting for 6 minutes (See Appendix 1 for details). These questions helped to come out with what is causing low fostering, perceptions of people towards foster care and the challenges being faced by foster parents. However, the researcher faced some challenges in administering focus
group discussions as other members of the group would not participate. There were curtain individuals who would dominate the discussion. Some could ask interrogatory questions which were out of context and this would slow down the discussion.

3.7.2 Key informant interviews

This research also used key informant interviews to collect data. The researcher interviewed four groups of informants. The questions asked for each key informant are attached in Appendix 2.

a) Political leaders. One M.P, one D.A, one youth leader and one counselor were interviewed. These people have influence in the communities and they have much of the information to do with the challenges being faced by people in their communities and they also know the type of people in their communities. This helped in gathering information on what is causing low fostering, what people think of fostering and those who are doing fostering. This group is crucial because it works with people on daily basis. Hence they are very good source of information.

b) Traditional leaders are also sources of information. Two chiefs and two village heads were interviewed. These leaders have got more information as they are the rulers of communities. This group is the one which is very close to people. They know people’s perceptions towards fostering and the challenges that those who are in fostering are facing. This group can be also a hindrance to fostering that is they have the power to barn foster care system if they do not want it. It is important then hear their views.

c) Religious leaders are also important in this research as they live in communities and some leaders usually encourages people to foster children. Three church leaders were interviewed.

d) Headmasters in schools were also be included as they are the ones who take much time also with parents in communities. Two secondary school and two primary school heads were interviewed. They also impact people in the communities in many ways and therefore it is important to know what they think towards foster care. They can also bring out some challenges being face by foster care parents in their communities.
3.7.3 Questionnaires

The researcher sampled 20 people from Bindura urban and 20 from Bindura rural. Questionnaires were self-administered. They contained both closed ended and open ended questions which give parents the room to express their thoughts on fostering. However, some of the parents had very important information but they could not be able to write hence the researcher had to ask questions whilst filling the questionnaires of such parents. Others would need explanation on how to answer questionnaires due to low level of education which was really time consuming. The questions asked are attached in Appendix 3.

3.8 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed using thematic data analysis following the 5 stages below (Cresswell, 2009):

- Reading and annotating the scripts to make preliminary observations.
- Identifying themes. Themes were then identified by summarizing the text and grouping information that is related into one section.
- Developing a coding scheme. The themes that were developed were then gathered together and a coding scheme was developed using numbers.
- Coding the data. The codes were then applied to the whole data set and subjected to computer analysis.
- Narrative analysis. To make sure the story of each respondent is not lost the exact words said by a respondent were quoted verbatim and linked to major themes identified above.

Pie charts and graphs were then used to present data. Microsoft Excel was used to construct the pie charts and graphs.

3.9 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS

Some parents did not want to divulge information on fostering because it was sensitive. The parents were also reluctant to let the researcher know that they are taking care of children who
are non-relatives to them because of cultural reasons or stigma. It became a challenge to the researcher to get the information from such parents. Hence the researcher was able to overcome this since she already developed some relationships with the foster care parents during Alternative Family Based Care (AFBC) program run by SOS Children’s Villages Bindura during her industrial attachment. In this program, she worked with many foster parents in Bindura District beginning from registration process for them to become foster parents, home visits, monitoring them on how they were taking care of children and she provided them capacity building among other things.

3.10 ETHICAL ISSUES

Confidentiality is important in the process of research. This is to keep the information that one has collected as private. Informed consent is also an important ethical consideration. Everyone who participated in this study freely consented to participation, without being coerced or unfairly pressurized. This was achieved by informing participants about what participation entailed, and reassured them that declining will not affect any services they receive. For instance, in Bindura, it was important to seek permission from the chief and the village heads to carry out the research.

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This Chapter brings out how data was collected, where data was collected and also from whom. It shows all what was considered so as to collect data. It has the study approach, study area, research design, target population, population size, sampling techniques, research instruments, data presentation and analysis, possible limitations and ethical issues. The next Chapter focuses on data presentation and analysis.
CHAPTER 4
DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter focuses on presenting and discussing the data which was collected by the researcher. Data is presented in form of written words, graphs and pie charts. Data is going to be presented in a way which will answer the research questions and objectives.

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

![Pie chart showing gender distribution](image)

Figure 4.1 Number of people interviewed by gender.

From figure 4.1 above, 55% or 22 of the respondents were female while 45% or 18 respondents were male. This shows that there was approximately equal number of participants by gender. The number of female foster parents identified and interviewed were 14 while only 6 were males. This shows that more females are ready to foster children than their male counterparts. Most females in general take care of children and so it is easier for female parents to foster non relatives.
There were just three respondents (8%) in the younger age group of 18-25, 7 respondents or 18% in the 26-35 age group while most of the respondents (n=14; 35%) were in the middle age group of 36-45 years. In the 46-55 age group there were 23% or 9 respondents while the oldest age group of greater than 55 years had 18% or 7 respondents.

Figure 4. 2. The age groups of respondents interviewed in the study.

58% or 23 respondents had stayed for longer than 10 years in the area they were interviewed from while 18% or 7 respondents had stayed for 6-10 years. Those that had stayed for 1 to 5 years were 10 or 25% (Figure 4.3). This shows that generally respondents were long term

Figure 4. 3. The length of stay of respondents in Bindura District
residents. These respondents were either permanent villagers for those interviewed in Bindura rural while those in Bindura urban had stable jobs so they have been in Bindura for a long time.

Figure 4.4 above shows that the respondents were moderately educated with 50% or 20 respondents having attained only secondary education in both the rural and urban area. 10% or 4 respondents had attained some college education while 25% or 10 respondents had university education. Among all the respondents no one (0%) had no education.

Figure 4.5. Source of employment of respondents
Figure 4.5 above shows that all the respondents in this study had source of income being self-employed (50% or 20 respondents), working for wages (32% or 13 respondents) or civil servants (18% or 7 respondents). These results show that by far the respondents were self-employed. Due to the economic hardships many people have turned into some form of self-employment usually vending. The number of those formally employed is now reduced as many people were retrenched due to the economic meltdown. Those who work for wages are people who get temporary jobs in the local mining industry usually 1 to 3 months.

**4.2 CAUSES OF LOW FOSTERING**

During data collection a number of issues were raised by respondents as being the causes of low fostering. In both the rural and urban areas financial challenges was cited as the major cause of low fostering with more than 50% or 20 respondents in both areas although urban dwellers were more than rural dwellers. This was followed by fear of responsibility, lack of government support and lack of knowledge (Figure 4.6). Other causes included shortage of accommodation, lack of resources and cultural differences.

Figure 4. 6. Causes of low fostering identified in Bindura urban and rural areas.
4.2.1 Financial Challenges

As shown in figure 4.6 above the major challenge highlighted by many respondents (50% or 10 respondents from Bindura rural and 60% or 12 respondents from Bindura Urban) was that many people are reluctant to foster children because of financial challenges. Lack of finances means many people cannot afford decent food, accommodation, school fees and clothing. There has been an increase in job losses in Zimbabwe with many people living on vending. One of the foster granny interviewed highlighted that she was struggling to take care of the foster child because business was low in recent years.

20% or 4 respondents from Bindura rural and 35% or 7 respondents from Bindura urban (Figure 4.1) also noted that the government is not helping the situation as it is no longer supporting foster parents. As noted by one key informant psychologist “The government is not in a position to provide for families with food, fees and clothing due to economic challenges, and. people who wish to foster are not financially stable”. She gave several programs that are no longer functional. She noted that BEAM is no longer paying fees for rural school going children, government is no longer prioritizing foster parents during drought relief programs and those programs that do support (e.g. SOS and AMTO) only provide partial support. For instance, AMTO cannot buy medicine while SOS is only providing fees for children. She also added that the national budget does not priorities children’s plight thus their budget towards children remains minimal. If there is enough support from government, then many people would be willing to foster increasing the number of foster parents in Bindura. One of the village head noted that it would be better to put orphans in children’s homes because these have more resources than individual families. These sentiments were echoed by the key informant pastor who recommended that “the government should put a tax benefit to the foster parents so that there is a ready source of income for those who wish to foster”.

These sentiments are consistent with various researches and observations from other studies. For example, according Save the Children (2005) the majority of orphans are being cared for by their relatives, but with insufficient support from both family members and the government.
4.2.2 Fear of responsibility

Fear of responsibility was cited by 25% or 5 respondents from Bindura Rural and 20% or 4 respondents from Bindura urban (Figure 4.6). One of the respondents noted that usually when minors break the law, police take the parents for questioning. Some parents expressed displeasure at such questioning. In addition, it can potentially destroy their good name. Someone actually said “...in our family there is no record of criminal activities...imagine I bring this stranger and commits a crime it spoils all our good name”. Indeed, many African parents fear to be responsible for the behaviour of strangers. Another dimension brought about by another respondent was that “...relative may fail to accept the foster child after my death”. This may be a genuine fear because if relatives do not accept the foster child or the concept of fostering from the onset; the death of the foster parent may present a new challenge. Some foster parents were afraid that after notifying the child about their true status they may become a problem in wanting to know their true parents or relatives. This fear was noted as one of the major causes of low fostering as it frequently happens in Zimbabwean culture.

4.2.3 Lack of knowledge on fostering

Respondents noted that there is lack of knowledge on fostering (40% of total respondents, Figure 4.6). Even people who were being asked did not quite understand fostering unless it was explained to them. For example, many parents did not know the difference between fostering and adoption. Thus many potential foster parents are lost in the process. While many respondents agreed that kinship fostering has been practised since time immemorial in Zimbabwe, non-kinship fostering and adoption are new to Africa. According to one respondent “...adoption is a foreign concept and that Africans are deeply spiritual people who do not readily accept strangers”. Thus when there is no clear separation of the two concepts fostering can decline. The recommendation by two key formants was that the government should raise awareness and do massive advocacy for the success of fostering.

4.2.4 Lack of government support

30% or 12 respondents noted that the government does not adequately support foster care in Zimbabwe (Figure 4.6). As a result, very few people are unwilling to foster. Frequent problems from the government that were mentioned included lack of financial support, delay in processing court orders and over protection of the child. Three foster parents in particular were unhappy with the way they started fostering which called “dumping” by the government. Like one parent recounted “..I was given the child for her to find a place of safety but the government never came back to take the child..” The child should be placed at a place of safety for 21 days but the government fail to come and take the child at that given time. This result in foster parents avoiding to take children. Powell et al (2004)’s study also states that the government does not support enough the foster care program. They argued that, “…the main constraint to formal fostering has been the inability of the DSS to screen prospective parents and to process their applications…” The probation officers are responsible for placing children in foster care but they are resource constrained which hinder them to do proper investigations, they therefore place children in institutions as the only readily accessible solution (Powell et al 2004). This explain that fostering is low also because the DSS is failing to recruit more foster parents otherwise people who need to foster are there in the country. There is therefore need to increase the number of probation officers nationwide for the work to be done properly.

4.3 PEOPLE’S PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS FOSTER CARE

The majority of the respondents (Bindura rural = 65% or 13 respondents and Bindura urban = 45% or 9 respondents) perceived that fear of avenging spirits is a problem in foster care (Figure 4.7). Other perceptions included jealous from community members, waste of resources, that foster children are an unnecessary burden and that relatives will not accept strangers in the family.
4.3.1 Fear of avenging spirits

As shown on figure 4.7 above, over half of the respondents (22 respondents or 55%) perceived that many people have an attitude towards foster care for fear of avenging spirits (ngozī). Many respondents (65%) from the rural areas noted that people have deep cultural myths towards foster children. As the psychologist recounted “a child without a totem may bring evil spirits into the family”. One of the village heads emphasized that “Hazviite kuti tichengete mutorwa watisingazive dzinza rake. Akafa hatikwanisi kumuviga mumusha medu. Hazvibvumidzwi patsika dzedu.” (We cannot take care of a stranger, whose lineage/family origin we don’t know. If he/she dies we cannot bury them in our village. It is not culturally acceptable). The sentiments by the village head agree with those of many respondents because even one of the respondents said that she is afraid to take care of non-relative orphans because “village heads will not give such a child a place to stay when they grow up” All these perceptions show that people are generally reluctant about taking care of non-relatives because of the deep cultural beliefs especially the one about totems.

Figure 4. 7 Attitudes and perceptions of community members towards foster care in Bindura urban and rural areas.
4.3.2 Jealous/resentment from community members

Figure 4.7 shows that about 25% or 10 foster parents had the opinion that when you are taking care of foster children, community members usually think that you will be getting some financial support from the government. As one respondent said “people (community members) think that there is benefit from caring the child and that you are getting money from the government”. This view was prevalent in the rural areas where other people think fostering is done to get benefit from NGOs or government especially if they see regular visits by government or NGO officials.

4.3.3 Waste of resources

From figure 4.7 above, 20% or 8 respondents were of the view that taking care of non-relative children is waste of resources as you will not benefit from the process. One foster parent said that “if the child grows up and get financially stable, they will forget about you”. In addition, one parent noted that after taking care of a girl child, her lobola did not come to her instead she sends it to her relatives. Thus she benefited nothing in the fostering process. Some of the parents highlighted that, the relatives would want one to look after orphans within the family first before going outside to look after non-relatives.

4.3.4 Foster homes are better than institutions

80% or 10 key informants agreed with the view that it is better to put orphans and vulnerable children in foster families than in institutions (Figure 4.7). The major merit cited by many key informants was that fostering system creates a family environment and this has many advantages. As noted by the pastor “in an institution there is no father figure who acts as the final authority in a family”. As a result, he said, many children raised outside a family environment struggle to respect authority. He also noted that life in an institution is artificial because that mothers only work to protect their jobs not to raise a well cultured child, as a result many institutions raised children are not well prepared to integrate into the community. The psychologist also weighed in
by saying that when children are raised in foster families they will be culturally rooted thus they are raised within the context of societal values and norms. However, the headman was of the view that institutionalizing children is better because there are no cultural issues in children’s homes. His argument was that there can be challenges when it comes to issues of totem and burial of non-relatives. Delinquency behavior was noted as a problem in many institutions by the psychologist because of peer pressure. In an institution, children of almost the same age dwell together in one institution and this tend to create a bond among them creating conditions for peer pressure and bad behavior. This problem is less pronounced in a foster family. The social worker interviewed was of the opinion that monitoring and supervision of children is better in foster families than in institutions because in a foster home a child can get individual attention from the parent.

4.4 CHALLENGES BEING FACED BY FOSTER PARENTS IN FOSTER CARE.

![Figure 4.8 Challenges faced by foster parents in foster care](image)

4.4.1 Legal challenges

From figure 4.8 above, 60% or 12 of the formal foster parents interviewed in this study had a common problem: the process of getting a birth certificate for a foster child is rather too long and tedious. In addition, others said even the process of becoming a foster parent is too long. Some of
them said they have waited for years to secure a birth certificate or to become a formal foster care. The legal procedure of placing a child into foster care involves the preparation of a report by the child’s Probation Officer, which includes an assessment of the potential foster parent’s suitability to act in this capacity. This report is then submitted to the Juvenile Court. Depending on the circumstances and information from the report, the Court may make an order giving the child into the custody of the foster parents. The court order that entitles someone to foster a child is valid for three years upon which it will be reviewed. In addition, each child must have a separate order. This whole process is long which wards off potential foster parents. In addition, the government has a shortage of probation officers which makes the preparation of the assessment report rather long. For example, in Bindura District there is only one probation officer. This corroborates with a previous study by Masuka et al., (2012) who noted that there is shortage of social workers in the DSS who are supposed to act as guardian ad litem during the adoption process and probation officers during the fostering process.

4.4.2 Religious or cultural challenges

As shown in figure 4.8, 20% or 8 respondents cited religious and cultural problems as impediments to foster care. The major religious related problem was different in beliefs between the foster parent and child. For example, if the parent is a Moslem and the child is a Christian there will be friction in beliefs which presents problems in fostering. One parent noted “…I am a Christian and the child I wanted to foster was Moslem” (the child was 10 years old). She then decided not to take care of the child as she was afraid of the different beliefs. This may be true as one parent noted that her child did not want to go to the same church as hers. One parent said that the government does not allow children to be “…to believe in too much religion or tradition”. One example she noted was that the government does not allow children to use traditional medicine. She then expressed her worry that while I have raised my own children that way (treatment with traditional medicine), the government forces me to seek medical attention for just the foster child.
4.4.3 Problems from the fostered child

The major challenges towards fostering that are child related were delinquency behavior, bad influence on biological children and lack of self-confidence and these were mentioned by 10% or 4 of the respondents as shown in figure 4.8. Many children from institutions are associated with delinquency behavior. This could be associated with the change of environment from a protected and restricted environment (institution) to a perceived “free” environment (in the community). Generally, foster parents noted that foster children tend to be bad influence biological children. Some parents expressed displeasure over the government’s over protection of child rights. One parent said “…once you correct or discipline a foster child they immediately rush to report to the police”. The government must balance their teaching on child responsibility and child rights in order to eliminate the over protectionist concept. This is a challenge in African culture because when you correct a child as a parent you do not expect interference from the police. This is also in line with Craft (2016)’s research where he found out that fostered children’s behaviors can be challenging to parents. He emphasized that children come into foster care for various reasons like physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, or a birth parent's incarceration. These challenges may result in children expressing their feelings through rough behaviors such as tantrums, bed-wetting, cussing, masturbating, stealing, or running away. (Craft 2016). All these show that fostered children are actually a challenge to the foster parents. Landsverk and Garland (1999) postulate that children in foster care are at heightened risk for mental health problems due to the negative effect of separation from their family. Hence, these have negative impacts to the foster parent.

4.4.4 Societal challenges

Society generally does not accept strangers into their community. According to 4 respondents, society expect you to look after relatives before you take care of non-relatives. Taking care of a stranger before relatives is viewed as an act of irresponsibility. Many respondents also noted that community members are the real challenge in fostering children. For example, they are a source of bad influence, like one mother said “…vanhu ndivo vanoudza vana vaunenge uchichengeta kuti ava havasi vabereki vako, iwewe uri mutorwa mumusha imomo” (Community members tell
the foster children that you are not their biological parents and that the foster child is a stranger). Such sentiments are not good as they reduce they lower the self-esteem of the foster child. Even if they are then corrected they feel that they are being unfairly treated just because they are not part of the family.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This Chapter presents the findings of the research under study. It focuses on the causes of low fostering, people’s perceptions and attitude towards foster care and the challenges being faced by foster parents in foster care. The findings are also discussed in relation to the literature review.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter comprises of summary of the major findings, conclusions and recommendations in relation to what needs to be done as identified by the study. It marks the end of the research on investigations into perceptions and challenges of parents towards formal foster care in Bindura District.

5.1. SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the cause of low fostering, perceptions and challenges of foster care in Bindura. It has been revealed that the major cause of low fostering in both Bindura rural and urban is lack of finances. Respondents cited that the government is no longer supporting foster parents financially and given the current economic challenges very few people will be willing to foster. Findings from this study also shows that some people are reluctant to foster because they are afraid of responsibilities. Generally, respondents were afraid to be responsible for the upkeep and protection of a non-relative. Lack of knowledge on fostering was also cited as a cause of low fostering. 25% or 10 respondents noted that many people cannot distinguish between fostering and adoption. Actually many of the respondents thought fostering and adoption were the same. Such ignorance has been cited as an obstacle to fostering.

When it comes to perceptions, 65% or 26 respondents especially from rural areas perceived that fear of avenging spirits is an impediment to fostering. Fear of avenging spirits ("ngozi") manifested in different forms from the respondents. Some noted that a non-relative can bring evil spirits into the clan while some were of the view that totemism is held with high honor in the Shona culture. As such, taking care of someone whose totem is not known could bring curses to the clan. Still others noted that the death of such a child presents challenges as elders usually refused to bury a non-relative in their shrines. Even the village heads interviewed in this study vehemently denied that they will not bury a non-relative in their villages as it can attract ngozi.
Still another perception especially in the rural areas was that many members of the society become jealous when someone fosters because they think that they will be getting financial benefits from the government or NGOs which is false.

20% or 8 respondents perceived that taking care of a non-relative is a waste of resources as one will not benefit from the kind gesture. It was revealed in this study that many people who had fostered did not derive a direct benefit from their act of kindness.

This study revealed several challenges related to fostering. By far the major challenge was that the government takes long to process birth certificates of foster children. As such many parents noted that they give up quickly. In addition, some said that the shortage of probation officers makes the whole fostering process a long and tedious procedure thus preventing potential foster parents from taking foster children. It was also found that different religious beliefs between the parent and the foster child can present a major challenge in fostering a child. This is true to those religions that have slightly different beliefs e.g. Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Still other foster parents noted that delinquency behavior among the fostered children is major challenge on fostering. Respondents especially noted that foster children that would have been taken from institutions have higher levels of delinquency behavior and most of the time fail to integrate into the community.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

From this study it can be concluded that parents in Bindura have the potential to foster children if their perception is right. Society needs to view a non-relative not as a threat to the community but as a productive member of society. It can also be concluded that the major cause of low fostering is lack of finances which if the government and NGOs come in to help the level of fostering in Bindura can increase. This study also showed that there is a great fear of avenging spirits which is greatly contributing to low fostering in Bindura. Avenging spirits or “ngozi” has deep cultural roots and better ways of addressing it should be sought. From the study it can also be concluded that the major challenge of fostering is that it takes long to process birth certificates and becoming a foster parent.
5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

These findings can be used to recommend several things to different stakeholders:

- It is recommended that more finances be availed either by the government or NGOs so that the number of foster parents can be increased. In addition, the government should assist in the processing of birth certificate and reduce bureaucracy. It can also train and employ more probation officers so that the processing of papers is faster. That way many potential foster parents can be satisfied.
- There is need to do awareness programs in communities to educate people about foster care, its benefits and why one should become a foster parent. This way many people can actually get interest in fostering.
- It is recommended that more education be done in communities to demystify the concept of “ngozi”. Because it is a deep cultural belief it can present a major challenge on foster care. Here traditional leaders and religious leaders can play an important role.
- The government must work together with traditional leaders to smoothen the fostering process. For example, the government can provide burial ground in case of the death of a non-relative foster child since many respondents noted that burial of a non-relative was difficult especially in rural shrines.

5.4. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This Chapter outlined the summary of the major findings in the research, the conclusions of the research as well as the recommendations made which will help in the improvement of foster care system. The finding will help in the improvement of foster care if responsible stakeholders take this study into consideration.
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APPENDIX 1. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION

My name is Pauline Marufu. I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education studying “Investigations into perceptions and challenges of parents towards formal foster care in Bindura district.”

These discussion questions are meant to find out challenges of formal foster care in your community. Your cooperation will help to come up with true results which will help this research to come up with solutions and suggestions that will help the government and civil society in coming up with solutions to fostering problems. Responses will be strictly presented privately and confidential to pursue academic fulfilment. The researcher is not going to mention individual names in the project.

1. Discussion questions: __________
2. Date: _____.____.____   Time: __________
3. Area Name ________________________________
4. Group Number:__________________________

Section A: Discussion questions

1. What do you understand about foster care?
2. Why would you wish to foster non relative children?
3. What are some of the challenges being faced by foster parents in your area?
4. How do people view the taking care of children who are non-relatives?
5. What are some of the bad behaviors shown by foster children?
6. Why would you think fostering children is important in your area?
7. Can you highlight some of the barriers to formal foster care?
8. Are there any other stakeholders who provide you with information about foster care?
9. Which type of support do you think should be given to foster parents?
10. What are your recommendations in terms of fostering children?

Thank you
APPENDIX 2. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTRODUCTION
My name is Pauline Marufu. I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education studying “Investigations into perceptions and challenges of parents towards formal foster care in Bindura district.”

This interview guide is meant to find out challenges of formal foster care in your community. Your cooperation will help to come up with true results which will help this research to come up with solutions and suggestions that will help the government and civil society in coming up with solutions to fostering problems. Responses will be strictly presented privately and confidential to pursue academic fulfilment. The researcher is not going to mention individual names on the interview guide

1 Interview guide Number: ____________  
2 Date: ____.__.____ Time: ____________  
3 Area Name ______________________________________________  

POSITION: ................

Section A: Interview Guide
4. For how long have you been in Bindura?  
5. What do you understand about foster care?  
7. Which one do you think is a better method of taking care of children between foster care and putting them in children’s homes (Institutionalization)? Give reasons.  
8. What are the reasons given by people for not taking care of orphaned and vulnerable children?  
9. In your opinion what challenges do people face in fostering children?  
10. How do people view the taking care of children who are non-relatives?

Thank you.
APPENDIX 3. QUESTIONNAIRE

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

INTRODUCTION
My name is Pauline Marufu. I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education studying towards a Bsc degree in Social Work. I am currently doing a research project on a topic titled “Investigations into perceptions and challenges of parents towards formal foster care in Bindura district.”

This questionnaire is meant to find out challenges of formal foster care in your community. Your cooperation will help to come up with true results that will assist the government, civil society and foster care parents which will benefit orphans and vulnerable children. Responses will be strictly presented privately and confidential and are only used for academic purposes. The researcher is not going to mention individual names on the questionnaire.

Thank you, please do not write your name on the questionnaire

Name: Marufu Pauline
Student ID: B1335723
Phone NO//: 0775653952
Email Address:plnmarufu00@gmail.com

1.) Date:……………………………….
2.) Area name:……………………………….
SECTION A: RESPONDENT DETAILS

3.). Please tick the appropriate box
   a) How long you have you lived or worked in this area?
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&gt;1 yr</th>
<th>1-5 yrs</th>
<th>6-10 yrs</th>
<th>&gt;10 yrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

   b) Sex:
   Male | Female |

   c) Age group (years)
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>18-25</th>
<th>26-35</th>
<th>36-45</th>
<th>46-55</th>
<th>&gt;56</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

   d) Highest education completed
   Primary | Secondary | College | University | None | Other |

   e) Occupation
   Self-employed | Work for wages | Civil servants | Other (specify) |

SECTION B: QUESTIONNAIRE

4.) Are you a foster parent? Yes/No (If no please skip to question 9)

5.) How many children are you fostering?............

6.) For how long have you been fostering children?..................

7.) What is your relationship to the child you are fostering?.................................

8.) Is the type of fostering you are practicing formal or informal? Yes/No.
   a) If you are practicing formal foster care are you getting any financial assistance from the
government, NGOs or Individuals? Yes/No
   b) Where is the greatest percentage coming from? ..........

9.) What are the reasons given by people for not taking care of orphaned and vulnerable
children?
   ............................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................

10.) In your opinion what challenges do people face in fostering children (Please explain under
the sub headings):

53
a) Legal……………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

b) Religious/Cultural………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

......

c) Society (e.g relatives and community
members)………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

d) The fostered child
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

e) Other challenges (please
specify)………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

11.) Would you continue fostering? Yes/No. Give reasons
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

12.) What are your recommendations concerning foster care to the following:
    a) Government
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
    b) People who would want to foster
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
    c) Children’s institutions
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

13.) Please write any other issues you have concerning foster care.
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE
APPENDIX 4: LETTER OF PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
P. Bag 1020
BINDURA, Zimbabwe
Tel: 263 - 71 – 7531-6, 7621-4
Fax: 263 – 71 – 7534
Social Work Department
conyoni@buse.ac.zw
Cell 0772 973 898

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

.................................

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO UNDER TAKE RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR AREA

This serves to introduce the bearer ……………………………………….. who is an HBSec SOCIAL WORK student in the Department of SOCIAL WORK, Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in your area.

Your usual co-operation and assistance is therefore being sought.

Thank you for the continued support.

Yours faithfully

DR. C. NYONI
CHAIRPERSON – SOCIAL WORK

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED ……………………………………….. DATE ………………….

DIRECTOR

10 JAN 2017
13 January 2017

To whom it may concern,

RE: AUTHORIZATION FOR PAULINE MARUFU TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH PROJECT

This letter serves to inform you that the Department of Child Welfare has authorised the above mentioned student to undertake her research entitled ‘AN INVESTIGATION ON THE CHALLENGES BEING FACED BY FOSTER PARENTS’ and that the findings will be used for academic purposes only.

Thank you for your usual co-operation

TUNHUMA H6

For: Provincial Child Welfare Officer

MASHONALAND CENTRAL PROVINCE